

HOW TO GET YOUR RESUME THROUGH EMPLOYERS' APPLICANT SCREENING SYSTEMS

You don't have to be an astronomer to know about one kind of black hole: the online job application process.

But have hope. There are things you can do to increase the chances of getting your résumé through employers' applicant screening systems, say experts Josh Bersin, CEO of human-resources consulting firm Bersin & Associates and Rusty Rueff, career and workplace expert at Glassdoor.

Below, five tips to up your odds:

- 1.** Forget about being creative. Instead, mimic the keywords in the job description as closely as possible. If you're applying to be a sales manager, make sure your résumé includes the words "sales" and "manage" (assuming you've done both!).
- 2.** Visit the prospective employer's website to get a sense of the corporate culture. Do they use certain words to describe their values? If a firm has a professed interest in environmental sustainability, include relevant volunteer work or memberships on your résumé. The company may have programmed related keywords into its resume screening software.
- 3.** Keep the formatting on your résumé simple and streamlined—you don't want to perplex the software. With a past position, the system "sometimes gets confused about which is the company, which is the position, and which are the dates you worked there," especially if they're all on a single line, says Mr. Bersin. To make sure you hit all the categories, put them on separate lines. And "don't get cute with graphics and layout," says Mr. Rueff.
- 4.** Some screening systems assign higher scores to elite schools. You may not have gotten your B.A. from a top-tier university, but if you attended a continuing-education class at one, include such qualifications on your résumé.
- 5.** But don't ever lie or exaggerate just to get through the screening process. Recruiters and ATs are savvy about tricks jobseekers use (such as typing false qualifications in white font). "You don't want to get through the black hole and find out it's a worse hole you got yourself into," Mr. Rueff says.