



# badlanguage.net **20 killer words and 13 words that kill**

by LAURA CONNELL AUG. 6, 2010

People make buying decisions based on rational and emotional motivations. When structuring your writing you need to identify how you can appeal to both.

In “Confessions of an Advertising Man” David Ogilvy listed the **20 most persuasive words in advertising**:

1. suddenly
2. now
3. announcing
4. introducing
5. improvement
6. amazing
7. sensational
8. remarkable
9. revolutionary
10. startling
11. miracle
12. magic
13. offer
14. quick
15. easy
16. wanted
17. challenge
18. compare
19. bargain
20. hurry

Persuasive words strike the fine balance between being rational and emotive whereas powerless words lack purpose and undermine the credibility of your writing.

## **Words to avoid**

1. But
2. Try
3. Don't
4. Should
5. Need to
6. Have to
7. Could
8. Maybe
9. Perhaps
10. Might
11. Possibly
12. Potentially
13. Think

# 6 Words That Make Your Resume Suck

January 19, 2009 by Fox *This article is part of a series called How to Write a Resume. To start this series from the beginning, read the [introduction](#).*

I've used a few bad words in my life. S\$it, you probably have too. But when the wrong words appear on your resume, it sucks. These sucky words are not of the four-letter variety. These words are common. They are accepted. They litter the average resume with buzzword badness. **Hiring managers can identify sucky words in seconds, leaving your resume work worthless.** So how do you write a wicked resume without the suck? How do you turn the wrong words into right? To help you land the job interview, **here's how to spin the 6 sucky resume words into skills that sizzle.**

## 1. Responsible For

My lips pucker and make sour sucking noises when I read "Responsible For" on a resume. Of course you're responsible for something. But how many? How long? Who? What? When? Rather than waste the hiring manager's time reading a vague list of responsibilities, be specific and [use quantitative figures](#) to back up your cited skills and accomplishments.

**Employers want the numerical facts.** Write percentages, dollar amounts, and numbers to best explain your accomplishments. Be specific to get the point across quickly. Prove you have the goods to get hired.

- **BAD:** Responsible for writing user guides on deadline.
- **GOOD:** Wrote six user guides for 15,000 users two weeks before deadline.
- **BAD:** Responsible for production costs.
- **GOOD:** Reduced production costs by 15 percent over three months.

The resume that avoids vague "responsibilities" and sticks to facts detailing figures, growth, reduced costs, number of people managed, budget size, sales, and revenue earned *gets the job interview*.

## 2. Experienced

[Are you experienced?](#) Sexy. Rather than cite Jimi Hendrix on your resume, please just say what your experience entails. Saying you're experienced at something and giving the facts on that experience are two very different approaches.

- **BAD:** Experience programming in PHP.
- **GOOD:** Programmed an online shopping cart for a Fortune 500 company in PHP.

**Hiring managers want to know *what* experience, skills, and qualifications you offer.** Do tell them without saying, "I am experienced."

## 3. Excellent written communication skills

Yes, I realize this isn't a single word but rather a phrase. This phrase must die. It's on most resumes. Is it on yours?

- **BAD:** I have excellent written communication skills.

- **GOOD:** Wrote jargon-free online help documentation and reduced customer support calls by 50 percent.

If you've got writing skills, do say what you write and how you communicate. Are you writing email campaigns, marketing materials, or user documentation? Are you word smithing legal contracts, business plans, or proposing proposals? However you wrap your words, be sure to give the details.

#### 4. Team Player

Are we playing baseball here? Unless you want to be benched with the other unemployed "team players" then get some hard facts behind your job pitch.

- **BAD:** Team player working well in large and small groups.
- **GOOD:** Worked with clients, software developers, technical writers, and interface designers to deliver financial reporting software three months before deadline.

If you want to hit a home run then do explicitly say what teams you play on and qualify the teams' achievements.

#### 5. Detail Oriented

What does detail oriented mean? Give the specifics to the details with which you are oriented. Please, orient your reader to the details.

- **BAD:** Detail oriented public relations professional.
- **GOOD:** Wrote custom press releases targeting 25 news agencies across Europe.

**If you have the details, do share them with the hiring manager.** Give the facts, the numbers, the time lines, the dollar figure, the quantitative data that sells your skills and disorients the competition.

#### 6. Successful

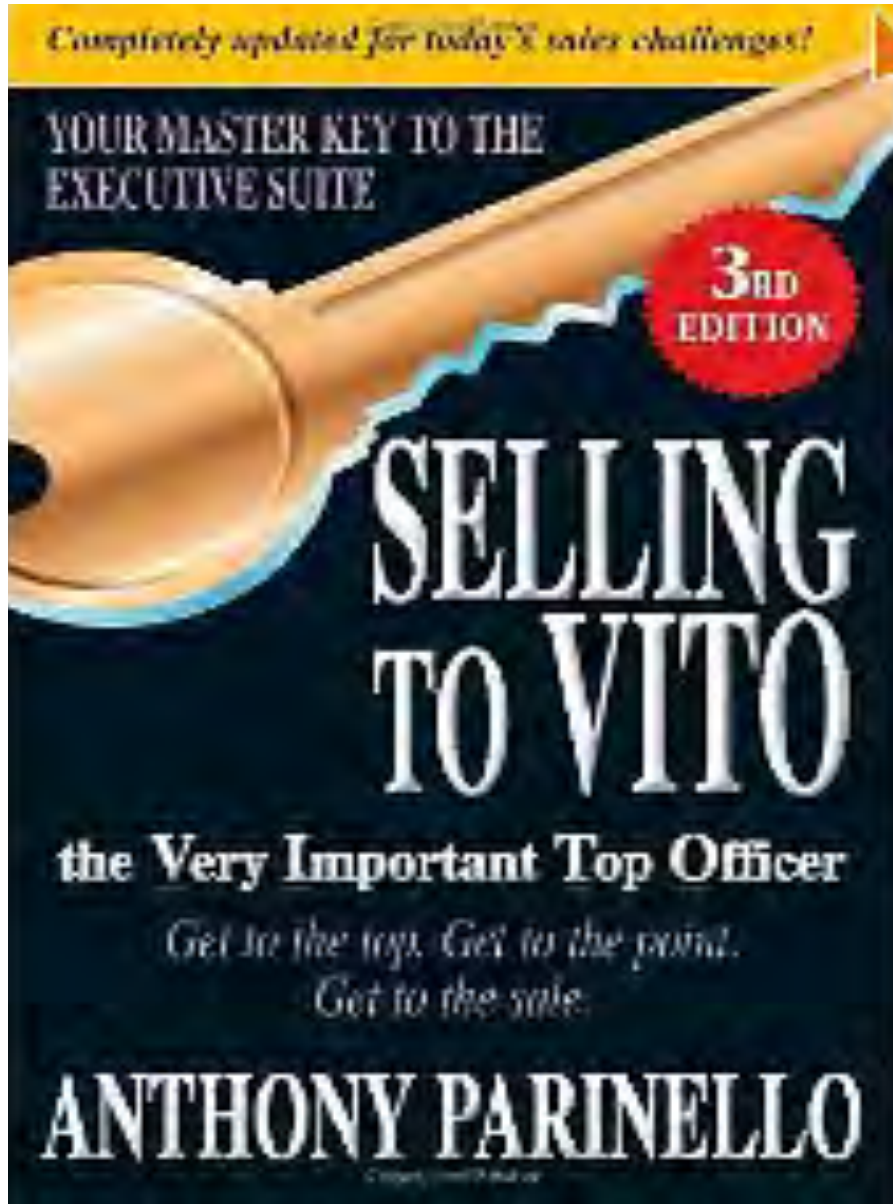
Hopefully you only list the successes on your resume. So if everything is a success, then why write the s-word? Stick to **showing your success** by giving concrete examples of what you've done to be successful! Let your skills, qualifications, and achievements speak for you.

- **BAD:** Successfully sold the product.
- **GOOD:** Increased sales of organic chocolate by 32 percent.

When it comes to your successes, please don't be shy. Boast your best, sing your praises, and sell your skills.

#### Final Words

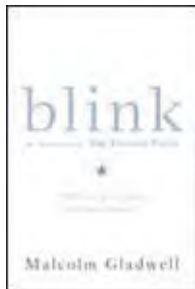
There you have it. Six of the suckiest words (or phrases) commonly found on resumes today. By focusing on the facts, detailing the details, and qualifying your qualifications you may just land yourself the job interview. There are soooo many sucky words found on resumes today. Got one to add? Do share the suck.



*P.S. I will call your office on Thursday, April 16 at 10:00 am. If this is an inconvenient time, please have Tommy inform me as to when I should place the call.*

# "Blink" by Malcolm Gladwell

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## ONE

### The Theory of Thin Slices: How a Little Bit of Knowledge Goes a Long Way

Some years ago, a young couple came to the University of Washington to visit the laboratory of a psychologist named John Gottman. They were in their twenties, blond and blue-eyed with stylishly tousled haircuts and funky glasses. Later, some of the people who worked in the lab would say they were the kind of couple that is easy to like—intelligent and attractive and funny in a droll, ironic kind of way—and that much is immediately obvious from the videotape Gottman made of their visit. The husband, whom I'll call Bill, had an endearingly playful manner. His wife, Susan, had a sharp, deadpan wit.

They were led into a small room on the second floor of the nondescript two-story building that housed Gottman's operations, and they sat down about five feet apart on two office chairs mounted on raised platforms. They both had electrodes and sensors clipped to their fingers and ears, which measured things like their heart rate, how much they were sweating, and the temperature of their skin. Under their chairs, a "jiggle-o-meter" on the platform measured how much each of them moved around. Two video cameras, one aimed at each person, recorded everything they said and did. For fifteen minutes, they were left alone with the cameras rolling, with instructions to discuss any topic from their marriage that had become a point of contention. For Bill and Sue it was their dog. They lived in a small apartment and had just gotten a very large puppy. Bill didn't like the dog; Sue did. For fifteen minutes, they discussed what they ought to do about it.

The videotape of Bill and Sue's discussion seems, at least at first, to be a random sample of a very ordinary kind of conversation that couples have all the time. No one gets angry. There are no scenes, no breakdowns, no epiphanies. "I'm just not a dog person" is how Bill starts things off, in a perfectly reasonable tone of voice. He complains a little bit—but about the dog, not about Susan. She complains, too, but there are also moments when they simply forget that they are supposed to be arguing. When the subject of whether the dog smells comes up, for example, Bill and Sue banter back and forth happily, both with a half smile on their lips.

Sue: Sweetie! She's not smelly . . .

Bill: Did you smell her today?

Sue: I smelled her. She smelled good. I petted her, and my hands didn't stink or feel oily. Your hands have never smelled oily.

Bill: Yes, sir.

Sue: I've never let my dog get oily.

Bill: Yes, sir. She's a dog.

Sue: My dog has never gotten oily. You'd better be careful.

Bill: No, you'd better be careful.

Sue: No, you'd better be careful. . . . Don't call my dog oily, boy.

### **1. The Love Lab**

How much do you think can be learned about Sue and Bill's marriage by watching that fifteen-minute videotape? Can we tell if their relationship is healthy or unhealthy? I suspect that most of us would say that Bill and Sue's dog talk doesn't tell us much. It's much too short. Marriages are buffeted by more important things, like money and sex and children and jobs and in-laws, in constantly changing combinations. Sometimes couples are very happy together. Some days they fight. Sometimes they feel as though they could almost kill each other, but then they go on vacation and come back sounding like newlyweds. In order to "know" a couple, we feel as though we have to observe them over many weeks and months and see them in every state—happy, tired, angry, irritated, delighted, having a nervous breakdown, and so on—and not just in the relaxed and chatty mode that Bill and Sue seemed to be in. To make an accurate prediction about something as serious as the future of a marriage—indeed, to make a prediction of any sort—it seems that we would have to gather a lot of information and in as many different contexts as possible.

But John Gottman has proven that we don't have to do that at all. Since the 1980s, Gottman has brought more than three thousand married couples—just like Bill and Sue—into that small room in his "love lab" near the University of Washington campus. Each couple has been videotaped, and the results have been analyzed according to something Gottman dubbed SPAFF (for specific affect), a coding system that has twenty separate categories corresponding to every conceivable emotion that a married couple might express during a conversation. Disgust, for example, is 1, contempt is 2, anger is 7, defensiveness is 10, whining is 11, sadness is 12, stonewalling is 13, neutral is 14, and so on. Gottman has taught his staff how to read every emotional nuance in people's facial expressions and how to interpret seemingly ambiguous bits of dialogue. When they watch a marriage videotape, they assign a SPAFF code to every second of the couple's interaction, so that a fifteen-minute conflict discussion ends up being translated into a row of eighteen hundred numbers—nine hundred for the husband and nine hundred for the wife. The notation "7, 7, 14, 10, 11, 11," for instance, means that in one six-second stretch, one member of the couple was briefly angry, then neutral, had a moment of defensiveness, and then began whining. Then the data from the electrodes and sensors is factored in, so that the coders know, for example, when the husband's or the wife's heart was pounding or when his or her temperature was rising or when either of them was jiggling in his or her seat, and all of that information is fed into a complex equation.

On the basis of those calculations, Gottman has proven something remarkable. If he analyzes an hour of a husband and wife talking, he can predict with 95 percent accuracy whether that couple will still be married fifteen years later. If he watches a couple for fifteen minutes, his success rate is around 90 percent. Recently, a professor who works with Gottman named Sybil Carrère, who was playing around with some of the videotapes, trying to design a new study, discovered that if they looked at only three minutes of a couple talking, they could still predict with fairly impressive accuracy who was going to get divorced and who was going to make it. The truth of a marriage can be understood in a much shorter time than anyone ever imagined.

John Gottman is a middle-aged man with owl-like eyes, silvery hair, and a neatly trimmed beard. He is short and very charming, and when he talks about something that excites him—which is nearly all the time—his eyes light up and open even wider. During the Vietnam War, he was a conscientious objector, and there is still something of the '60s hippie about him, like the Mao cap he sometimes wears over his braided yarmulke. He is a psychologist by training, but he also studied mathematics at MIT, and the rigor and precision of mathematics clearly moves him as much as anything else. When I met Gottman, he had just published his most ambitious book, a dense five-hundred-page treatise called *The Mathematics of Divorce*, and he attempted to give me a sense of his argument, scribbling equations and

impromptu graphs on a paper napkin until my head began to swim.

Gottman may seem to be an odd example in a book about the thoughts and decisions that bubble up from our unconscious. There's nothing instinctive about his approach. He's not making snap judgments. He's sitting down with his computer and painstakingly analyzing videotapes, second by second. His work is a classic example of conscious and deliberate thinking. But Gottman, it turns out, can teach us a great deal about a critical part of rapid cognition known as thin-slicing. "Thin-slicing" refers to the ability of our unconscious to find patterns in situations and behavior based on very narrow slices of experience. When Evelyn Harrison looked at the kouros and blurted out, "I'm sorry to hear that," she was thin-slicing; so were the Iowa gamblers when they had a stress reaction to the red decks after just ten cards.

Thin-slicing is part of what makes the unconscious so dazzling. But it's also what we find most problematic about rapid cognition. How is it possible to gather the necessary information for a sophisticated judgment in such a short time? The answer is that when our unconscious engages in thin-slicing, what we are doing is an automated, accelerated unconscious version of what Gottman does with his videotapes and equations. Can a marriage really be understood in one sitting? Yes it can, and so can lots of other seemingly complex situations. What Gottman has done is to show us how.

## **2. Marriage and Morse Code**

I watched the videotape of Bill and Sue with Amber Tabares, a graduate student in Gottman's lab who is a trained SPAFF coder. We sat in the same room that Bill and Sue used, watching their interaction on a monitor. The conversation began with Bill. He liked their old dog, he said. He just didn't like their new dog. He didn't speak angrily or with any hostility. It seemed like he genuinely just wanted to explain his feelings.

If we listened closely, Tabares pointed out, it was clear that Bill was being very defensive. In the language of SPAFF, he was cross-complaining and engaging in "yes-but" tactics—appearing to agree but then taking it back. Bill was coded as defensive, as it turned out, for forty of the first sixty-six seconds of their conversation. As for Sue, while Bill was talking, on more than one occasion she rolled her eyes very quickly, which is a classic sign of contempt. Bill then began to talk about his objection to the pen where the dog lives. Sue replied by closing her eyes and then assuming a patronizing lecturing voice. Bill went on to say that he didn't want a fence in the living room. Sue said, "I don't want to argue about that," and rolled her eyes—another indication of contempt. "Look at that," Tabares said. "More contempt. We've barely started and we've seen him be defensive for almost the whole time, and she has rolled her eyes several times."

At no time as the conversation continued did either of them show any overt signs of hostility. Only subtle things popped up for a second or two, prompting Tabares to stop the tape and point them out. Some couples, when they fight, fight. But these two were a lot less obvious. Bill complained that the dog cut into their social life, since they always had to come home early for fear of what the dog might do to their apartment. Sue responded that that wasn't true, arguing, "If she's going to chew anything, she's going to do it in the first fifteen minutes that we're gone." Bill seemed to agree with that. He nodded lightly and said, "Yeah, I know," and then added, "I'm not saying it's rational. I just don't want to have a dog."

Tabares pointed at the videotape. "He started out with 'Yeah, I know.' But it's a yes-but. Even though he started to validate her, he went on to say that he didn't like the dog. He's really being defensive. I kept thinking, He's so nice. He's doing all this validation. But then I realized he was doing the yes-but. It's easy to be fooled by them."

Bill went on: "I'm getting way better. You've got to admit it. I'm better this week than last week, and the week before and the week before."

Tabares jumped in again. "In one study, we were watching newlyweds, and what often happened with the couples who ended up in divorce is that when one partner would ask for credit, the other spouse wouldn't give it. And with the happier couples, the spouse would hear it and say, 'You're right.' That

stood out. When you nod and say ‘uh-huh’ or ‘yeah,’ you are doing that as a sign of support, and here she never does it, not once in the entire session, which none of us had realized until we did the coding.

“It’s weird,” she went on. “You don’t get the sense that they are an unhappy couple when they come in. And when they were finished, they were instructed to watch their own discussion, and they thought the whole thing was hilarious. They seem fine, in a way. But I don’t know. They haven’t been married that long. They’re still in the glowy phase. But the fact is that she’s completely inflexible. They are arguing about dogs, but it’s really about how whenever they have a disagreement, she’s completely inflexible. It’s one of those things that could cause a lot of long-term harm. I wonder if they’ll hit the seven-year wall. Is there enough positive emotion there? Because what seems positive isn’t actually positive at all.”

What was Tabares looking for in the couple? On a technical level, she was measuring the amount of positive and negative emotion, because one of Gottman’s findings is that for a marriage to survive, the ratio of positive to negative emotion in a given encounter has to be at least five to one. On a simpler level, though, what Tabares was looking for in that short discussion was a pattern in Bill and Sue’s marriage, because a central argument in Gottman’s work is that all marriages have a distinctive pattern, a kind of marital DNA, that surfaces in any kind of meaningful interaction. This is why Gottman asks couples to tell the story of how they met, because he has found that when a husband and wife recount the most important episode in their relationship, that pattern shows up right away.

“It’s so easy to tell,” Gottman says. “I just looked at this tape yesterday. The woman says, ‘We met at a ski weekend, and he was there with a bunch of his friends, and I kind of liked him and we made a date to be together. But then he drank too much, and he went home and went to sleep, and I was waiting for him for three hours. I woke him up, and I said I don’t appreciate being treated this way. You’re really not a nice person. And he said, yeah, hey, I really had a lot to drink.’” There was a troubling pattern in their first interaction, and the sad truth was that that pattern persisted throughout their relationship. “It’s not that hard,” Gottman went on. “When I first started doing these interviews, I thought maybe we were getting these people on a crappy day. But the prediction levels are just so high, and if you do it again, you get the same pattern over and over again.”

One way to understand what Gottman is saying about marriages is to use the analogy of what people in the world of Morse code call a fist. Morse code is made up of dots and dashes, each of which has its own prescribed length. But no one ever replicates those prescribed lengths perfectly. When operators send a message—particularly using the old manual machines known as the straight key or the bug—they vary the spacing or stretch out the dots and dashes or combine dots and dashes and spaces in a particular rhythm. Morse code is like speech. Everyone has a different voice.

In the Second World War, the British assembled thousands of so-called interceptors—mostly women—whose job it was to tune in every day and night to the radio broadcasts of the various divisions of the German military. The Germans were, of course, broadcasting in code, so—at least in the early part of the war—the British couldn’t understand what was being said. But that didn’t necessarily matter, because before long, just by listening to the cadence of the transmission, the interceptors began to pick up on the individual fists of the German operators, and by doing so, they knew something nearly as important, which was who was doing the sending. “If you listened to the same call signs over a certain period, you would begin to recognize that there were, say, three or four different operators in that unit, working on a shift system, each with his own characteristics,” says Nigel West, a British military historian. “And invariably, quite apart from the text, there would be the preambles, and the illicit exchanges. How are you today? How’s the girlfriend? What’s the weather like in Munich? So you fill out a little card, on which you write down all that kind of information, and pretty soon you have a kind of relationship with that person.”

The interceptors came up with descriptions of the fists and styles of the operators they were following. They assigned them names and assembled elaborate profiles of their personalities. After they identified the person who was sending the message, the interceptors would then locate their signal. So now they knew something more. They knew who was where. West goes on: “The interceptors had such a good



handle on the transmitting characteristics of the German radio operators that they could literally follow them around Europe—wherever they were. That was extraordinarily valuable in constructing an order of battle, which is a diagram of what the individual military units in the field are doing and what their location is. If a particular radio operator was with a particular unit and transmitting from Florence, and then three weeks later you recognized that same operator, only this time he was in Linz, then you could assume that that particular unit had moved from northern Italy to the eastern front. Or you would know that a particular operator was with a tank repair unit and he always came up on the air every day at twelve o'clock. But now, after a big battle, he's coming up at twelve, four in the afternoon, and seven in the evening, so you can assume that unit has a lot of work going on. And in a moment of crisis, when someone very high up asks, 'Can you really be absolutely certain that this particular Luftwaffe Fliegerkorps [German air force squadron] is outside of Tobruk and not in Italy?' you can answer, 'Yes, that was Oscar, we are absolutely sure.'

The key thing about fists is that they emerge naturally. Radio operators don't deliberately try to sound distinctive. They simply end up sounding distinctive, because some part of their personality appears to express itself automatically and unconsciously in the way they work the Morse code keys. The other thing about a fist is that it reveals itself in even the smallest sample of Morse code. We have to listen to only a few characters to pick out an individual's pattern. It doesn't change or disappear for stretches or show up only in certain words or phrases. That's why the British interceptors could listen to just a few bursts and say, with absolute certainty, "It's Oscar, which means that yes, his unit is now definitely outside of Tobruk." An operator's fist is stable.

What Gottman is saying is that a relationship between two people has a fist as well: a distinctive signature that arises naturally and automatically. That is why a marriage can be read and decoded so easily, because some key part of human activity—whether it is something as simple as pounding out a Morse code message or as complex as being married to someone—has an identifiable and stable pattern. Predicting divorce, like tracking Morse Code operators, is pattern recognition.

"People are in one of two states in a relationship," Gottman went on. "The first is what I call positive sentiment override, where positive emotion overrides irritability. It's like a buffer. Their spouse will do something bad, and they'll say, 'Oh, he's just in a crummy mood.' Or they can be in negative sentiment override, so that even a relatively neutral thing that a partner says gets perceived as negative. In the negative sentiment override state, people draw lasting conclusions about each other. If their spouse does something positive, it's a selfish person doing a positive thing. It's really hard to change those states, and those states determine whether when one party tries to repair things, the other party sees that as repair or hostile manipulation. For example, I'm talking with my wife, and she says, 'Will you shut up and let me finish?' In positive sentiment override, I say, 'Sorry, go ahead.' I'm not very happy, but I recognize the repair. In negative sentiment override, I say, 'To hell with you, I'm not getting a chance to finish either. You're such a bitch, you remind me of your mother.'"

As he was talking, Gottman drew a graph on a piece of paper that looked a lot like a chart of the ups and downs of the stock market over the course of a typical day. What he does, he explains, is track the ups and downs of a couple's level of positive and negative emotion, and he's found that it doesn't take very long to figure out which way the line on the graph is going. "Some go up, some go down," he says. "But once they start going down, toward negative emotion, ninety-four percent will continue going down. They start on a bad course and they can't correct it. I don't think of this as just a slice in time. It's an indication of how they view their whole relationship."

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**WILL YOUR RELATIONSHIP SURVIVE?  
FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE  
By Marlene and Bob Neufeld**

The four attitudes that most predict the dissolution of a relationship, especially in combination, are criticism, defensiveness, contempt and stonewalling. Dr. John Gottman, a psychologist at the University of Washington, studied more than 2,000 married couples over two decades. He discovered patterns about how partners relate to each other which can be used to predict – with 94% accuracy – which marriages will succeed and which will fail. Gottman says that each horseman paves the way for the next.

In our work with couples, we have found that unhappy couples are usually doing some form of relationship dance involving some combination of pursue-withdraw. In other words, the more one person tries to get close the more the other person withdraws; and the more the other person withdraws, the more the first person tries to get close. Criticism and defensiveness are common aspects of the pursue part of the dance and contempt and stonewalling are common aspects of the withdraw part of the dance. What we are really saying when we are pursuing through criticism and defensiveness is “Notice me. Be with me. Pay attention to me. I need you.” What we are really saying when we are withdrawing even when done with contempt and stonewalling is “I don’t want you to hurt me. Leave me alone. I am trying to stay in control.” Either way, these behaviours are serious indicators that the relationship is in trouble. For more about these patterns see [http://www.marleneandbob.com/articles.htm/THE\\_DANCE\\_OF\\_RELATIONSHIP.doc](http://www.marleneandbob.com/articles.htm/THE_DANCE_OF_RELATIONSHIP.doc).

1. **Criticism:** Attacking your partner’s personality or character, usually with the intent of making someone right and someone wrong
  - Generalizations: “you always...” “you never...”“you’re the type of person who ...”
  - “why are you so ...”
2. **Contempt:** Attacking your partner’s sense of self with the intention to insult or psychologically abuse him/her
  - Insults and name calling: “bitch, bastard, wimp, fat, stupid, ugly, slob, lazy...”
  - Hostile humor, sarcasm or mockery
  - Body language & tone of voice: sneering, rolling your eyes, curling your upper lip
3. **Defensiveness:** Seeing self as the victim, warding off a perceived attack
  - Making excuses (e.g., external circumstances beyond your control forced you to act in a certain way) “It’s not my fault...”, “I didn’t...”
  - Cross-complaining: meeting your partner’s complaint, or criticism with a complaint of your own, ignoring what your partner said
  - Disagreeing and then cross-complaining “That’s not true, you’re the one who ...”
  - Yes-butting: start off agreeing but end up disagreeing
  - Repeating yourself without paying attention to what the other person is saying
  - Whining “It’s not fair.”
4. **Stonewalling:** Withdrawing from the relationship as a way to avoid conflict. Partners may think they are trying to be “neutral” but stonewalling conveys disapproval, icy distance, separation, disconnection, and/or smugness
  - Stony silence
  - Monosyllabic mutterings
  - Changing the subject
  - Removing yourself physically

See [www.marleneandbob.com/articles.htm](http://www.marleneandbob.com/articles.htm) for a Self-test to determine if you are riding the 4 horsemen.

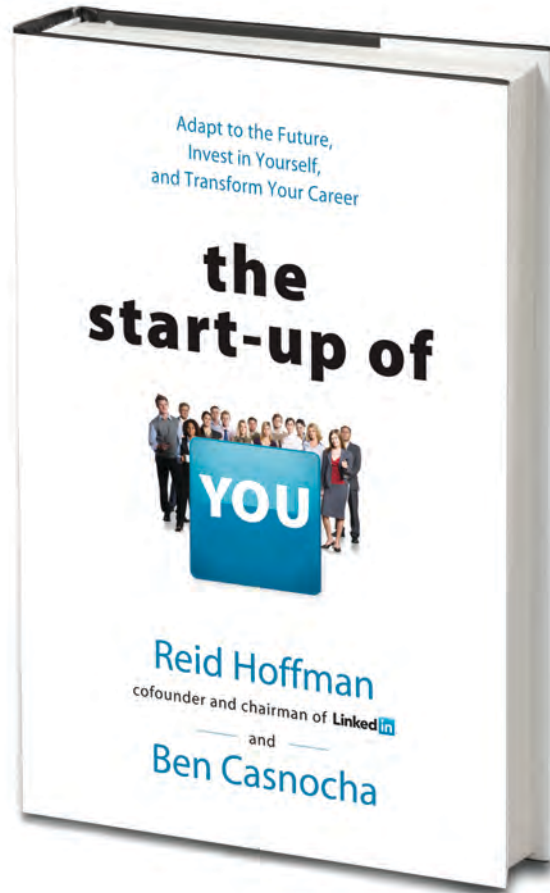
**So what can you do if you notice yourself participating in criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and/or stonewalling?** (for more details see <http://www.marleneandbob.com/articles.htm>)

1. Learn to make specific complaints & requests (when X happened, I felt Y, I want Z)
2. Learn to communicate consciously by speaking the unarguable truth
3. Learn to listen generously. Listen for accuracy, for the core emotions your partner is expressing and for what your partner really wants.
4. Validate your partner (let your partner know what makes sense to you about what they are saying; let them know you understand what they are feeling, and what they want; see through their eyes)
5. Shift to appreciation (5 positive interactions are necessary to compensate for one negative interaction)
6. Claim responsibility: “What can I learn from this?” & “What can I do about it?”
7. Re-write your inner script (notice when you are thinking critical, contemptuous or defensive thoughts; replace thoughts of righteous indignation or innocent victimization with thoughts of appreciation, and responsibility that are soothing & validating)
8. Practice getting undefended (allowing your partner’s utterances to be what they really are: just thoughts and puffs of air) and let go of the stories that you are making up

*Marlene & Bob Neufeld practice body-centered Coaching and Psychotherapy. They specialize in “2 on 2 couples coaching/psychotherapy” in person, on the phone and on Skype and in couples workshops and retreats. They are a couple who help couples learn life-changing skills and create closer, more loving relationships with one another. To learn more, see [www.marleneandbob.com](http://www.marleneandbob.com) or call 613-594-9248 to arrange a complimentary 1-hour introductory session.*

# Connect to Human Networks

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“Opportunities do not float like clouds. They are firmly attached to individuals. If you are looking for an opportunity, you’re really looking for *people*....A company doesn’t offer you a job, *people* do.”

# THE START-UP OF YOU

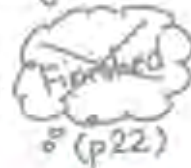
Notes by Sacha Chua, @sachac, livinganawesomelife.com 2012



## COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE



You remake yourself as you grow and as the world changes.



Adopt the permanent beta mindset! (p22)

## ABZ PLANNING



Z-plan: baseline

## PROFESSIONAL NETWORK

Focus on helping others.



Create an "interesting people" fund. (p.139)

## OPPORTUNITIES



## INTELLIGENT RISK

Pursue opportunities that have lower risk than your peers think, but which are still high-reward. (p193)



Regular volatility makes surprises survivable. (p184)

## NETWORK INTELLIGENCE

- Private observations (p199)
- Personalized advice
- Filtered information
- Better thoughts in dialogue
- Better questions: (p208)
- Converse, don't interrogate.
- Adjust the lens
- Frame and prime
- Follow up and probe

# Ten Ways to Use LinkedIn to Find a Job

Searching for a job can suck if you constrain yourself to the typical tools such as online jobs boards, trade publications, Craigslist, and networking with only your close friends. In these kinds of times, you need to use all the weapons that you can, and one that many people don't—or at least don't use to the fullest extent, is [LinkedIn](#).

LinkedIn has over thirty-five million members in over 140 industries. Most of them are adults, employed, and not looking to post something on your Wall or date you. Executives from all the Fortune 500 companies are on LinkedIn. Most have disclosed what they do, where they work now, and where they've worked in the past. Talk about a target-rich environment, and the service is free.

Here are ten tips to help use LinkedIn to find a job. If you know someone who's looking for a job, forward them these tips along with an invitation to connect on LinkedIn. Before trying these tips, make sure you've filled out your profile and added at least twenty connections

1. **Get the word out.** Tell your network that you're looking for a new position because a job search these days requires the "law of big numbers" There is no stigma that you're looking right now, so the more people who know you're looking, the more likely you'll find a job. Recently, LinkedIn added "status updates" which you can use to let your network know about your newly emancipated status.
2. **Get LinkedIn recommendations from your colleagues.** A strong recommendation from your manager highlights your strengths and shows that you were a valued employee. This is especially helpful if you were recently laid off, and there is no better time to ask for this than when your manager is feeling bad because she laid you off. If you were a manager yourself, recommendations from your employees can also highlight leadership qualities.
3. **Find out where people with your backgrounds are working.** Find companies that employ people like you by doing an advanced search for people in your area who have your skills. For example, if you're a web developer in Seattle, search profiles in your zip code using keywords with your skills (JavaScript, XHTML, Ruby on Rails) to see which companies employ people like you.
4. **Find out where people at a company came from.** LinkedIn "Company Profiles" show the career path of people before they began work there. This is very useful data to figure out what a company is looking for in new hires. For example, [Microsoft employees worked at Hewlett-Packard and Oracle](#).
5. **Find out where people from a company go next.** LinkedIn's "Company Profiles" also tell you where people go after leaving the company. You can use this to track where people go after leaving your company as well as employees of other companies in your sector. (You could make the case that this feature also enables to figure out which companies to avoid, but I digress.)
6. **Check if a company is still hiring.** Company pages on LinkedIn include a section called "New Hires" that lists people who have recently joined the company. If you have real chutzpah, you can ask these new hires how they got their new job. At the very least you can examine their backgrounds to surmise what made them attractive to the new employer.
7. **Get to the hiring manager.** LinkedIn's job search engine allows you to search for any kind of job you want. However, when you view the results, pay close attention to the ones that you're no more than two degrees away from. This means that you know someone who knows the person that posted the job—it can't get much better than that. (Power tip: two degrees is about the limit for getting to hiring managers. I never help friends of friends of friends.) Another way to find companies that you have ties to is by looking at the "Companies in Your Network" section on LinkedIn's Job Search page.
8. **Get to the right HR person.** The best case is getting to the hiring manager via someone who knows him, but if that isn't possible you can still use LinkedIn to find someone inside the company to walk your resume to the hiring manager or HR department. When someone receives a resume from a coworker even if she doesn't know the coworker, she almost always pays attention to it.
9. **Find out the secret job requirements.** Job listings rarely spell out entirely or exactly what a hiring manager is seeking. Find a connection at the company who can get the inside scoop on what really matters for the job. You can do this by searching for the company name; the results will show you who in your network connects you to the company. If you don't have an inside connection, look at profiles of the people who work at the company to get an idea of their backgrounds and important skills.
10. **Find startups to join.** Maybe this recession is God telling you it's time to try a startup. But great startups are hard to find. Play around with LinkedIn's advanced search engine using "startup" or "stealth" in the keyword or company field. You can also narrow by industry (for example, startups in the Web 2.0, wireless, or biotech sectors). If large companies can't offer "job security," open up your search to include startups.
11. **Build your network before you need it.** As a last tip, no matter how the economy or your career is doing, having a strong network is a good form of job security. Don't wait until times are tough to nurture your network. The key to networking (or "schmozing"), however, is filled with counter-intuitiveness. First, it's not who you know—it's who knows of you. Second, Great schmoozers are not thinking "What can this person do for me?" To the contrary, they are thinking, "What can I do for this person?" Read more: <http://blog.guykawasaki.com/2009/02/10-ways-to-use.html#ixzz216YFC2bb>

# The real way to build a social network January 24, 2012: 5:00 AM ET

If there is a guru of networking, it is Reid Hoffman. Here he explains how to do it right -- and wrong -- in an excerpt from his new book with Ben Casnocha, *The Start-Up of You*.



PHOTO: GREGG SEGAL

Reid Hoffman travels with several devices so that he can constantly stay in touch.

FORTUNE -- *Forget Dale Carnegie. He understood how important connections were, but missed out on the authenticity part -- which, say Reid Hoffman and Ben Casnocha, authors of The Start-Up of You, is the key to building a truly helpful professional network. Here's how to leverage that network into the career you only dreamed of.*

Many people are turned off by the topic of networking. They think it's slimy, inauthentic. Picture the consummate networker: a high-energy fast talker who collects as many business cards as he can and attends mixers sporting slicked-back hair. Or the overambitious college kid who frantically e-mails alumni, schmoozes with the board of trustees, and adds anyone he's ever met as an online friend. Such people are drunk on networking Kool-Aid -- and are looking at a potentially nasty hangover.

Luckily, building your network doesn't have to be like that. Old-school networkers are transactional. They pursue relationships thinking solely about what other people can do for them. Relationship builders, on the other hand, try to help others first. They don't keep score. And they prioritize high-quality relationships over a large number of connections.

Building a genuine relationship with another person depends on at least two abilities. The first is seeing the world from another person's perspective. No one knows that better than the skilled entrepreneur. Entrepreneurs succeed when they make stuff people will pay money for -- and that means understanding what's going on in the heads of customers. Likewise, in relationships it's only when you put yourself in the other person's shoes that you begin to develop an honest connection.

The second ability is being able to think about how you can collaborate with and help the other person rather than thinking about what you can get. We're not suggesting that you be so saintly that a self-interested thought never crosses your mind. What we're saying is that your first move should always be to help. A study on negotiation found that a key difference between skilled and average negotiators was the time spent searching for shared interests and asking questions of the other person.

Follow that model. Start with a friendly gesture and genuinely mean it. Dale Carnegie's classic book on relationships, despite all its wisdom, has the unfortunate title *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. This makes Carnegie widely misunderstood. You don't "win" a friend. A friend is not an asset you own; a friend is an ally, a collaborator. When you can tell that someone is attempting sincerity, it leaves you cold. It is like the feeling you have when someone calls you by your first name repeatedly in

conversation. Novelist Jonathan Franzen gets it right when he says inauthentic people are obsessed with authenticity.

### **Strengthen your alliances**

The best way to engage with new people is not by cold calling or by "networking" with strangers at cocktail parties, but by working with the people you already know. Of the many types of professional relationships, among the most important are your close allies. Most professionals maintain five to 10 active alliances. What makes a relationship an alliance? First, an ally is someone you consult regularly for advice. Second, you proactively share and collaborate on opportunities together. You keep your antennae attuned to an ally's interests, and when it makes sense to pursue something jointly, you do. Third, you talk up an ally. You promote his or her brand. Finally, when an ally runs into conflict, you defend him and stand up for his reputation, and he does the same for you.

I [Reid] first met **Mark Pincus** while at PayPal in 2002. I was giving him advice on a startup he was working on. From our first conversation, I felt inspired by Mark's wild creativity and how he seems to bounce off the walls with energy. I'm more restrained, preferring to fit ideas into strategic frameworks instead of unleashing them fire-hose-style. But it's our similar interests and vision that have made our collaborations so successful.

We invested in Friendster together in 2002. In 2003, the two of us bought the Six Degrees patent, which covers some of the foundational technology of social networking. Mark then started his own social network, Tribe; I started LinkedIn (**LNKD**). When Peter Thiel and I were set to **put the first money into Facebook in 2004**, I suggested that Mark take half of my investment allocation. I wanted to involve Mark in any opportunity that seemed intriguing, especially one that played to his social networking background. In 2007, Mark called me to talk about his idea for **Zynga (ZNGA)**, the social gaming company he co-founded and now leads. I knew almost immediately that I wanted to invest and join the board, which I did. An alliance is always an exchange, but not a transactional one. A transactional relationship is when your accountant files your tax returns and you pay him for his time.

An alliance is when a co-worker needs last-minute help on Sunday night preparing for a Monday morning presentation, and even though you're busy, you agree to go over to his house and help. You cooperate and sacrifice because you want to help a friend in need but also because you figure you'll be able to call on him in the future when you are the one in a bind. That isn't being selfish; it's being human.

### **The diversity of weak ties**

Allies, by the nature of the bond, are few in number. By contrast, there are potentially hundreds or thousands of looser connections that also play a role in your professional life. These are the folks you meet at conferences, old classmates, co-workers, or just interesting people. Sociologists refer to these contacts as "weak ties": people with whom you have spent low amounts of low-intensity time but with whom you're still friendly.

Weak ties in a career context were formally researched in 1973, when sociologist Mark Granovetter asked a random sample of professionals how they had found their new job. It turns out that 82% of them found their position through a contact they saw only occasionally or rarely. In other words, the contacts who referred jobs were "weak ties." Granovetter accounts for this result by explaining that your good friends tend to be from the same industry, neighborhood, religious group, etc. Consequently, their information is similar to yours -- a job a good friend knows about, you probably already know about too.

Weak ties, however, usually sit outside the inner circle. Thus, there's a greater likelihood that a weak tie will be exposed to new information or a new job opportunity you'd otherwise miss. To be sure, weak ties are uniquely helpful so long as they hail from a different social circle or industry niche and



therefore bring new information and opportunities. A weak-tie acquaintance whose job and background is identical to yours is unlikely to offer unique network intelligence. So when connecting with acquaintances, prioritize diversity in order to broaden the overall reach of your network.

Just as a digital camera cannot store an infinite number of photos and videos, you cannot maintain an infinite number of allies or acquaintances. The maximum number of relationships we can realistically manage -- the number that can fit on the memory card, as it were -- is described as Dunbar's Number, after the evolutionary psychologist Robin Dunbar. In the early 1990s, Dunbar studied the social connections within groups of monkeys and apes. He theorized that the maximum size of their overall social group was limited by the small size of their neocortex. Based on our neocortex size, Dunbar calculated that humans should be able to maintain relationships with roughly 150 people at a time. He also found that many businesses and military groups organize their people into cliques of about 150. Hence, Dunbar's Number of 150.

There is indeed a limit to the number of relationships you can maintain, but a crucial qualifier is that there is not one blunt limit of 150; in fact, there are different limits for different types of relationships. Think back to the digital camera. Either you can take low-resolution photographs and store 100 of them in total, or you can take high-resolution photographs and store 40. In relationships, you may have only a few close buddies you see every day, yet you can stay in touch with many distant friends if you e-mail them only once or twice a year. But there's a twist: You can actually maintain a much broader social network than the people you currently "know."

### **Three degrees of separation**

Your allies, weak ties, and the other people you know right now are your first-degree connections. But your friends know people you don't know. These friends of friends are your second-degree connections. And those friends of friends have friends -- those are your third-degree connections.

Stanley Milgram's and Duncan Watts's "small world" research shows the planet Earth as one massive social network; every human being is connected to every other via no more than about six intermediaries. Academically the theory is correct, but when it comes to meeting people who can help you professionally, **three degrees of separation** is what matters. Three degrees is the magic number because when you're introduced to a second- or third-degree connection, at least one person personally knows the origin or target person. That's how trust is preserved.

Suppose you have 40 connections, and assume that each friend has 35 other friends in turn, and each of those friends of friends has 45 unique friends of his own. If you do the math ( $40 \times 35 \times 45$ ), that's 63,000 people you can reach via an introduction. People's extended networks are frequently larger than they realize, which is why an early tagline at LinkedIn was "Your network is bigger than you think." So how do you actually reach those connections? Via an introduction from someone you know, who knows the person you want to reach.

I receive about 50 entrepreneur pitches by e-mail every day. I have never funded a company directly from a cold solicitation, and my guess is that I never will. When an entrepreneur comes referred by introduction, it's as if he has a passport at a national border -- he can walk right through, because someone I trust has already vetted that entrepreneur. Anytime you want to meet a new person in your extended network, you should ask for an introduction. You need to ask, directly and specifically, and you do need to present a compelling reason for why your connection should do it: "I'd love to meet Rebecca because she works in the technology industry." Not good enough. "I'm interested in talking to Rebecca because my company is looking to partner with companies just like hers." Better, as it appears to benefit both parties.

OkCupid, a free online dating site, analyzed more than 500,000 first messages between a man

or a woman and a potential suitor. They found that those with the highest response rates included phrases like "You mention ..." or "I noticed that ..." In other words, phrases that showed that the person had carefully read the other's profile. People do this in online dating, but when it comes to professional correspondence, it doesn't happen. People send out appallingly unresearched and generic requests. If you spend 30 minutes researching a person's professional profile, your request will stand out. For example, "I noticed you spent a summer working at a German architecture firm. I once worked for an ad agency in Berlin and am thinking about returning -- perhaps we could swap notes about business opportunities?"

You can conceptualize and map your network all you want, but if you can't effectively request and broker introductions, it adds up to a lot of nothing. Take it seriously. If you are not receiving or making at least one introduction a month, you are probably not fully engaging your extended professional network.

### **The best network: Wide and (selectively) deep**

Several years ago sociologist Brian Uzzi did a study of why certain Broadway musicals made between 1945 and 1989 were successful and others flopped. The explanation he arrived at had to do with the people behind the productions. For failed productions, one of two extremes was common. The first was a collaboration between creative artists and producers who tended to all know one another. When there were mostly strong ties, the production lacked the fresh, creative insights that come from diverse experience. The other type of failed production was one in which none of the artists had experience working together. When the group was made up of mostly weak ties, teamwork and group cohesion suffered.

In contrast, the social networks of the people behind successful productions had a healthy balance: There were some strong ties, some weak ties. There was some established trust, but also enough new blood in the system to generate new ideas. Think of your network of relationships in the same way: The best professional network is both narrow/deep (allies with whom you collaborate regularly) and wide/ shallow (weak-tie acquaintances who offer fresh information and ideas).

### **Giving helpful help**

The best way to strengthen a relationship is to do something for another person. But how? Here's a good example. When **Jack Dorsey** was co-founding **Square** -- the mobile-payments company -- he had loads of investor interest. **Digg and Milk founder Kevin Rose** had seen a prototype of the Square device and immediately realized the potential. When he asked Jack whether there was room for another person to join the initial funding round, Jack told him it was full. But Kevin still wanted to be helpful. He noticed that Square didn't have a demo on its website showing how the device worked. So he put together a high-definition video and then showed it to Jack. Impressed, Jack turned around and invited Kevin to invest in the Series A round of financing.

To be truly helpful, as Kevin was, you need to have a sense of your friend's values and priorities. What keeps him up at 2 a.m.? What are his talents? His challenges? Once you understand his needs, think about offering him a small gift. A small gift is something that's easy for you to give, unique to the relationship, and unusually helpful for the other person. Classic small gifts include relevant information, introductions, and advice. A really expensive big gift is actually counterproductive -- it can feel like a bribe. When deciding what to give, reflect on your unique experiences and capabilities. What might you have that the other person does not?

My passion for entrepreneurship and my interest in board game design led me to introduce many of my entrepreneur friends to the German board game The Settlers of Catan.

### **Set up an "interesting people" fund**

Relationships are living, breathing things. Feed, nurture, and care about them; they grow. Neglect them;

they die. You might be nodding your head at the importance of staying in touch. But behavioral change isn't easy. That's why Steve Garrity budgeted and precommitted real time and money to it.

Garrity studied computer science at Stanford and interned at startups over the summers. After graduating from a master's program in 2005, he was convinced that he wanted to start a tech company of his own in Silicon Valley. But he had spent his entire adult life in the Bay Area and was worried that he would be tied down to one location for many more years. So he took a job as an engineer at Microsoft (**MSFT**) to work on its mobile-search technology.

Garrity had one big worry: What would happen to his network of Silicon Valley entrepreneurs, venture capitalists, and friends? He knew he would someday move back to start a company. He did not want his local network to become stale. So he set aside time and money in advance to keep his network up-to-date.

The state of Washington doesn't tax personal (or corporate) income, so Garrity figured he was saving a meaningful amount of money by living there. Upon moving to Seattle, he declared that \$7,000 of his savings would be "California money." Anytime someone interesting in the Valley invited him to lunch, dinner, or coffee, Garrity would fly to San Francisco to do the meeting. One of his old Stanford professors called him, not realizing he had left town, and invited him over to meet some interesting students. The following evening, he arrived at the professor's house, suitcase in hand. Because he had allocated money, he didn't have to worry about the cost of flights or the stress of decision-making.

Over his 31/2 years at Microsoft, Garrity visited the Bay Area at least once a month. After returning to California in 2009, he started a company, **Hearsay Labs**, with a friend whose couch had served as his bed during his regular pilgrimages to the Bay Area from Seattle. It shows the power of what we call Iwe: Your capabilities and potential get magnified exponentially by an active, up-to-date network.

### **Reid's rules**

**In the next day:** Look at your calendar for the past six months and identify the five people you spend the most time with -- are you happy with their influence on you?

**In the next week:** Introduce two people who do not know each other but ought to. Then think about a challenge you face and ask for an introduction to a connection in your network who could help. Imagine you got laid off from your job today. Who are the 10 people you'd e-mail for advice? Don't wait -- invest in those relationships now.

**In the next month:** Identify a weaker tie with whom you'd like to build an alliance. Help him by giving him a small gift -- forward an article or job posting.

Create an "interesting people fund" to which you automatically funnel a certain percentage of your paycheck. Use it to pay for coffees and the occasional plane ticket to meet new people and shore up existing relationships.

*--Reid Hoffman is a partner at Greylock and founder and executive chairman at LinkedIn. Ben Casnocha is an award-winning entrepreneur and author. This article is from the February 6, 2012 issue of Fortune. Reprinted from The Start-Up of You: Adapt to the Future, Invest in Yourself, and Transform Your Career. © 2012 by Reid Hoffman and Ben Casnocha. Published by Crown Business, a division of Random House, Inc.*

# Keeping an eye on recruiter behavior

NEW STUDY CLARIFIES RECRUITER DECISION-MAKING

Here is every job seeker's dream world:  
*a place where they know exactly how recruiters' minds work; where the reasons for hiring decisions are obvious; where the criteria for an effective resume and job search are as clear as day.*

Of course, that world doesn't exist. We can't read recruiters' minds, and certainly not with any level of scientific accuracy. Or can we?

According to a new report,\* *TheLadders* recently conducted the first formal, quantitative study of recruiters' on-the-job behavior. This groundbreaking research employed a scientific technique called "eye tracking" – a technologically advanced assessment of eye movement that records and analyzes where and how long a person focuses when digesting information or completing activities. The study gauged specific behaviors of actual recruiters as they performed online tasks, including resume and candidate profile reviews. Thirty professional recruiters took part in the study during a 10-week period.

The findings provided specific data regarding the following:

- *Individual resume and online profile details viewed by participating recruiters*
- *Specific items that captured recruiters' attention during reviews*
- *How long recruiters spent viewing each item*
- *How quickly their eyes moved from item to item*
- *What content was overlooked*

It's tempting to call the results eye-opening, but they clearly offer valuable insight into recruiters' real-world behavior. The information is also useful to recruiters themselves for increasing efficiency and effectiveness.

## Exploring the issues

The research investigated three primary issues. First, did recruiters perceive and process professionally written resumes differently than those generated by job seekers? Second, how long did recruiters actually spend reviewing each candidate's resume? This section sought to evaluate research (based on recruiters' self-reports) suggesting that recruiters spend as much as **4 to 5 minutes per resume**.

Lastly, the study scrutinized the process recruiters use to review online profiles. The researchers measured where recruiters look, what information is most valuable to them, and what data they use to determine a candidate is a potential fit. The study hypothesized that some types of online profiles are significantly less efficient than others when recruiters are searching for qualified candidates.

## Making every second count

According to the research, recruiters tend to follow a consistent visual path when reviewing both resumes and online profiles, so an organized layout is crucial. Because professionally written resumes have a clear visual hierarchy and present relevant information where recruiters expect it, these documents quickly guide recruiters to a yes/no decision.

In fact, the study found that, using a Likert-like scale\*\* ranking of 1 to 7, recruiters gave professionally re-written resumes an average rating of **6.2 for “usability.”** This was a **60% improvement** compared with a **3.9** rating before the re-write. This finding supports participating recruiters' comments that the re-written resumes were **“easier to read.”**

Professionally prepared resumes also scored better in terms of organization and visual hierarchy, as measured by eye-tracking technology. The “gaze trace” of recruiters was erratic when they reviewed a poorly organized resume, and recruiters experienced high levels of cognitive load (total mental activity), which increased the level of effort to make a decision. Professional resumes had less data, were evenly formatted and were described as “clearer.” They achieved a mean score of **5.6** on a seven-point Likert-like scale, compared with a **4.0** rating for resumes before the re-write – **a 40% increase**.

# 6

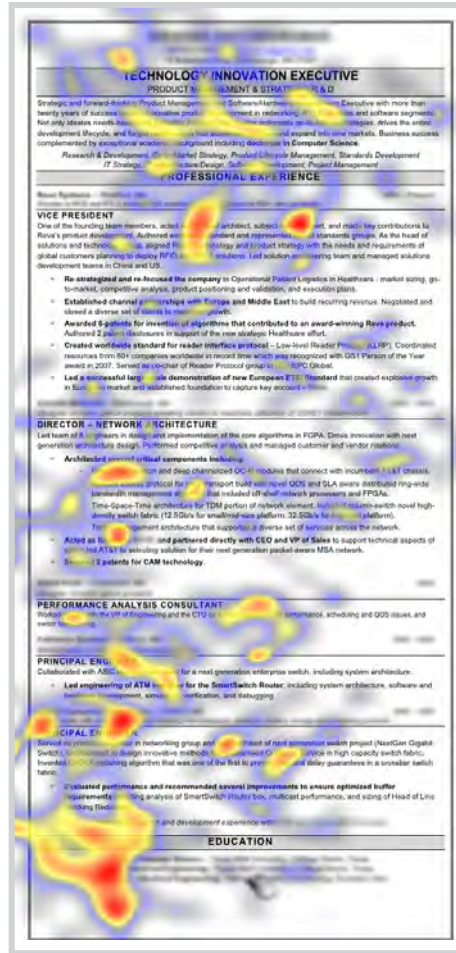
## SECONDS

The study found that recruiters spend only 6 seconds reviewing an individual resume.

\*\* A Likert Scale is a psychometric ranking system that offers users a series of choices ranging (for example) from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” This type of scale is used in a wide variety of questionnaires in many fields.



Recruiters rated resumes with an obvious information hierarchy as “easier to read.” On a Likert scale of 1 to 7, self-written resumes (above left) averaged **3.9** versus **6.2** for the professionally rewritten resume (above right), a **60% increase**.



Regarding online profiles, reviewers were clearly distracted by common visual features such as pictures, ads, etc. These distractions wasted time and detracted from more pertinent and useful candidate information such as experience and skills. Such visual elements reduced recruiters’ analytical capability and hampered decision-making. In some cases, irrelevant data such as candidates’ age, gender or race may have biased reviewers’ judgments.

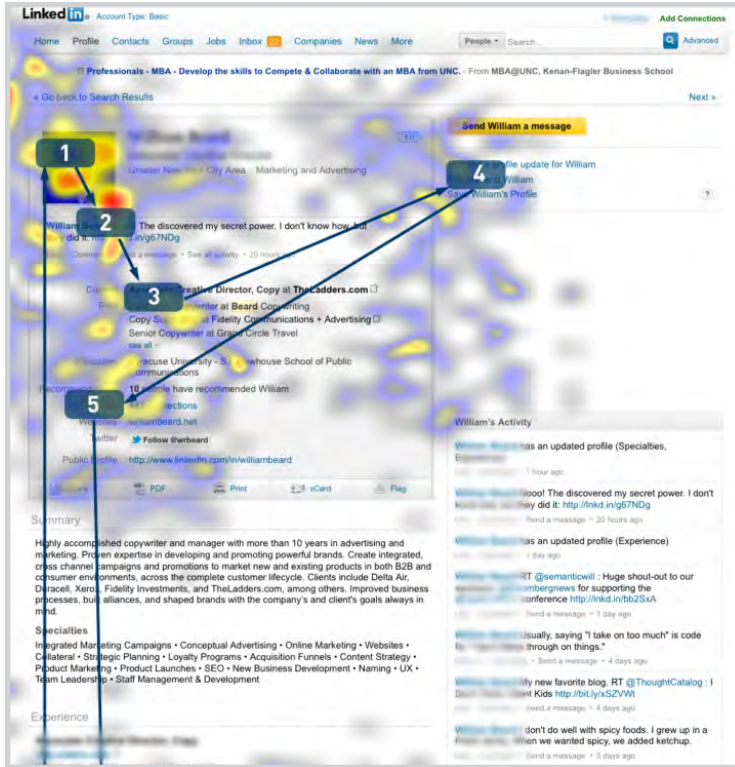
Some of the most surprising findings involved the fundamentals of recruiters’ resume review process. For example – and despite recruiters’ different

self-reports – the study found that recruiters **spend only 6 seconds reviewing an individual resume.**

The study’s “gaze tracking” technology showed that recruiters spent **almost 80%** of their resume review time on the following data points:

- Name
- Previous position start and end dates
- Current title/company
- Current position start and end dates
- Previous title/company
- Education

Beyond these six data points, recruiters did little more than scan for keywords to match the open position, which amounted to a very cursory “pattern matching” activity. Because decisions were based mostly on the six pieces of data listed above, an individual resume’s detail and explanatory copy became filler and had little to no impact on the initial decision making. In fact, the study’s eye tracking technology shows that recruiters spent about **6 seconds** on their initial “fit/no fit” decision.



Recruiters' eyes, while reviewing LinkedIn profiles (above) fixated on strong visual elements, spending **19% of their time looking at profile pictures**. In contrast, recruiters viewing TheLadders candidate profiles (below) reviewed more key information in less time, a **55% improvement in readability over LinkedIn**.



## That profile photo isn't helping

The study showed that recruiters who used the TheLadders candidate profiles (versus LinkedIn) experienced a significantly lower cognitive load. They were able to review key data points faster because TheLadders profiles were **55% easier to read than LinkedIn**.

LinkedIn's profiles had higher levels of visual complexity, and their ease of use suffered substantially as a result. Advertisements and "calls-to-action" created clutter that reduced recruiters' ability to process the profiles. Finally, eye tracking-based "heat maps" of LinkedIn profiles showed that recruiters fixated for an average **19% of the total time spent** – on profile pictures, instead of examining other vital candidate information.

## Key recommendations

Turn to a professional for resume rewrites; insist on an organized layout and a strong visual hierarchy; and make sure online profiles are easy-to-read, without distracting visuals – that is, it makes sense to follow the style found on TheLadders.com.

In conclusion, consider the expression, "The eyes are the window to the soul." In this case, the eyes and eye-tracking technology have given us valuable insight – and valid data – about recruiters' behavior. While we may never be able to read recruiters' minds, this study gives us a much clearer view of what they are thinking and how they make decisions.

[Click here](#) to learn more about TheLadders resume re-writing services >