

Pursuing Opportunity in a Changing Job Market

by Marilyn Tullius, M.S.

*The relegation of hard skills. The rise of soft skills.
The emerging roles of values, attributes, and traits.*



Summary of Job Search Issues and Changes

Year	Event/Change
2000	Resumes that were stuck in the electric typewriter era without word processing enhancements looked outdated
2005	Many resumes showed creative visual elements including headshots and graphics features
2010	Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) gained acceptance. The ATS digital scanning rejected resumes with complex formatting such as columns, images, italics, text boxes, and certain graphics features
2014-15	ATS systems emphasized using key word matching. Software emerged to allow candidates to see their match scores. Only 15 to 20% of resumes submitted online were ever seen by a human
2015	IT functions absorbed portions of organizational domains, creating new jobs, roles, terminologies, and titles
2020	The Covid pandemic accelerated flexibility around work-from-home options
2024	Artificial Intelligence quickly gained widespread acceptance as the way of the future, introducing new tools and terminologies. AI also threatened some jobs
2025	U.S. Government policies increased risk in many industry sectors, slowing investments in growth and expansion and limiting demand for jobs

Misleading Advice and Problems

1. Changes and new rules emerge continuously, requiring job seekers to retrain and rethink job targets. IT and AI influences are creating new functions, jobs, requirements, terminologies, roles, and titles
2. Too many job candidates prepare their resumes with the goal of passing through Application Tracking Systems. Key word matching is only the baseline beginning, not the end goal. Job searchers need focus on empowering their resumes to impress hiring managers and delivering memorable impact
3. Job seekers are advised erroneously to restrict their resumes to the five basic sections: Contact, Summary, Skills, Experience, and Education. Yet this means submitting a resume that conveys minimal information about the applicant



4. Resume templates offered by Canva, Adobe, and MS Word, and others should be tested for their ATS System readiness. Test by saving the templated resume in plain text (.txt) format, which strips away all enhancements. Observe the result
5. Be aware that headers, text boxes, and shapes disappear during conversion of resumes as they are prepared for ATS scanning
6. Two-page resumes are now standard, but inappropriate advice still circulates to restrict resume length to a page. One-page resumes can prevent sufficient key word density

Significant Implications and Possibilities

As an applicant, your resume may have become commoditized. Meaning: No different from anyone else's. Think of your resume as a potato in a bin of potatoes. Employers are generating job announcements with AI and applicants are creating resumes with AI, resulting in your resume blending in rather than standing out.

Fix by: Adding specific detail that is unique to you. Add relevant numbers to achievements. Sprinkle in compliments received. Show follow-on benefits of accomplishments and changes attributable to your work performance, such as training and mentoring others.

Your resume may over-emphasize hard skills. Some hard skills are now performed by AI rather than humans. AI is increasingly performing hard skills very well and could threaten the need for human employees for some jobs.

Fix by: Editing your resume to shift the content toward leadership and interaction skills, communication strengths, soft skills, attributes, traits, and values. Include ways this shift in emphasis has made you a stronger contributor.

Your resume may not provide the reader with ANY impression of you. The drive for efficiency using digital screening of ATS systems and AI resources has led to ineffective quantification and a void of characteristics critical to human effectiveness, namely, creativity, critical thinking, and interpersonal skills.

Fix by: Adding a tagline that identifies your commitment, mission, and zeal. Work soft skills into your bullet points. Consider adding testimonials. Follow trends in your industry and areas of expertise to bring emerging developments into conversations.

Mindsets, Tools, and Strategies to Pursue Your Advantage in a Complex Job Market

1. **Differentiate your job from your career.** Shift your mindset: Think of job as an event on your career journey. Make an inventory of your capabilities, assets, and strengths to bring to your next opportunity. Use your inventory of assets as a checklist to ensure capturing all of your capabilities for further review. Bring capabilities, assets, and other elements of your inventory onto your resume when they match requirements posted in the job announcement.
2. **Think hard about Job-Itis and its close cousin Title-Itis.** Job-Itis is over-emphasizing the expectation that your most recent job function will be a viable target for your next position. Likewise Title-It is an expectation that the title you just had will stay the same for future jobs. Your most recent job and title may not serve as viable models for your next position.
3. **Conduct a thorough analysis of job postings.** Study job postings relevant to your function, technology, level, and career positioning. Analyze 12-18 job postings in your industry and function (manually or AI-aided). Examine job postings to understand changes in organization structure, job content, scope, and skill requirements.



4. Recognize and showcase your skills and knowledge growth. Become clear about all that you have to offer to an employer Go beyond to include content such as assets and strengths you have acquired from lived experiences, life transitions, maturity, raising a family, and volunteer and service roles. Note:
Add personal development capabilities to your career assets inventory to help you fully recognize added knowledge and value you offer in a new position.

5. Add sections to your resume. These sections will carry skills in management of initiatives and teams, as well as soft skills, personality traits, and attributes.

Target Headline	Leadership and Productivity
Tag Line or Persona Statement	Effectiveness Factors ("Known for" or "Known as")
Summary (Avoid paragraph)	Accolades or Testimonials

6. Embolden your experience section bullet points. Lead with verbs that enliven your input and impress the hiring manager that you have met challenges, instigated changes, led initiatives, and made a difference. Examples:

Reversed (bad situation)	Improved process efficiency
Identified needs and led initiatives	Coordinated across functions
Integrated functions/business units	Resolved discrepancies

7. Lead bullet points with a result followed by the processes used to accomplish the result. Begin with the result accomplished followed by how you did it. Example:
Think "What" (result) followed by "capability" "How" that led to the achievement.

8. Understand your industry, most recent company, and job functions or roles.
Follow news, industry trade papers, topics featured at conferences, research organizations reports, and individual influencers.

9. Become a trend follower. Develop an informed sense of forces that will create career opportunities or become threats. Assess your positioning with respect to core skills that have been identified* as gaining in importance by 2030.

Technological literacy	Leadership and social influence
Curiosity and lifelong learning	Analytical thinking
Creative thinking	Systems thinking
Resilience, flexibility	Empathy and active listening
Motivation, self-awareness	*Source: World Economic Forum, 2025

10. Learn from the websites of top executive search firms. Observe strengths and achievements they are concentrating on. What are they looking for in bringing in new talent? Top Executive Search firms:

A.T. Kearney	Spencer Stuart	Egon Zehnder
Korn Ferry	Heidrick & Struggles	Diversified Search Group
Robert Half	Russell Reynolds	DHR Global

11. Strengthen your personal/professional presence. Develop poise and skills in expressing your ideas and voice. Become confident and effective in asserting your views and contributing to problem solving. Look for groups where you can gain practice:
Public speaking groups: Toastmasters or Meetup Groups
Book Clubs or World Affairs Study Groups

12. Follow online influencers. Identify and follow influencers who are speaking on topics that resonate with you. You might select a few sources and regard them as mentors. Here are several that represent a beginning:

Presence: Personal/Professional	Nancy Duarte, Mel Robbins, Rebecca Okimoto, Joanne McCall
Job Boards	John Shields
Ageism	John Tarnoff
Applicant Advocates to Follow	John Corcodilos, Helen Ryan, Ashley Couto

