



The Science of the Job Search, Part VI: Job Applicants With Resume Objectives Were ~30% Less Hireable

Today, we're looking at the age-old question: **Do you need an objective for your resume?** [Lots](https://web.archive.org/web/20200618144140/https://www.resumecoach.com/write-a-resume/objective/) [of](https://web.archive.org/web/20200618144140/https://www.evolution-coaching.com/resumes-cvs/resume-objective-examples/) [folks](https://web.archive.org/web/20200618144140/https://www.thebalancecareers.com/resume-objective-examples-and-writing-tips-2063595/) [say](https://web.archive.org/web/20200618144140/https://money.howstuffworks.com/business/professional-development/what-is-a-career-objective.htm) [yes](https://web.archive.org/web/20200618144140/https://susanireland.com/job-lounge/sample-resume-summary-statements-state-career-objectives/) [lots](https://web.archive.org/web/20200618144140/https://money.usnews.com/money/blogs/outside-voices-careers/2012/06/20/10-things-to-leave-off-your-resume/) [of](https://web.archive.org/web/20200618144140/https://www.fastcompany.com/40531306/add-this-to-your-resume-after-deleting-your-objective-statement/) [folks](https://web.archive.org/web/20200618144140/http://time.com/money/4621066/free-resume-word-template-2017/) [say](https://web.archive.org/web/20200618144140/https://www.boston.com/jobs/job-doc/2017/01/16/is-an-objective-needed-on-a-resume/) [no](https://web.archive.org/web/20200618144140/http://www.mass.gov/lwd/employment-services/job-seekers-services/job-hunting-information/creating-resumes/resume-layout/objective-and-summary.html). We sampled 6,231 recent job applications, resumes and applicants across 681 cities and 115 roles and figured out the real-world answer for you.

tl;dr: Don't put an objective on your resume (minus a few exceptions, see below). Not only are they unnecessary, but **job applicants whose resume contained an objective were 29.6% less hireable** than those who didn't specify an explicit objective.

Objectives Hurt Everyone (Except Recent Grads)

 resume-objective-is-bad-for-everyone-except-recent-grads.png

After 1+ year of experience, job applicants whose listed an objective were 20% to 67% less hireable (varying based on experience) than those who didn't.

Controlling for experience, **job applicants whose resume included an objective got 20.1% to 67.1% fewer job interviews** compared to those who didn't.

The only exception to this rule was for recent college graduates: **for job applicants with <1 year of work experience, listing an explicit objective got ~7% more interviews**. This isn't a statistically significant gain, but it's a significant contrast to everyone else.

Resume Tip: If you have less than ~8 months of experience, you might want to consider adding an objective. [+7% HIREABILITY BOOST]

Resume Tip: If you have 1+ years of experience, you should delete your objective. (See one more exception below.) Although it varies based on your specific experience, you'll likely see a big hireability boost. [+20-67% HIREABILITY BOOST]

What's Going On?

With the usual caveat that no one has any idea (anyone who claims otherwise is lying), I can give you my best theory as an experienced hiring manager. **Here's the short version: Most objectives are crap.**

For example (anonymized to protect the innocent):

■ Focused and hard-working individual looking to develop new skills to serve the greater good.

■ Ambitious student working towards a B.S. in Epidemiology (pending graduation May, 2019).

“To acquire, and maintain employment. To utilize the training and skills I’ve received in the past 5 years.”

Like, really? As a hiring manager, I don’t really care if you want to “maintain employment.” (And honestly, this is a bit like [saying your hamburger is 100% beef](https://web.archive.org/web/20200618144140/https://www.cnet.com/news/pink-slime-in-burgers-mcdonalds-hires-former-mythbuster-to-find-out/) (<https://web.archive.org/web/20200618144140/https://www.cnet.com/news/pink-slime-in-burgers-mcdonalds-hires-former-mythbuster-to-find-out/>). If that’s the best compliment you can give yourself, you might have a bigger problem (<https://web.archive.org/web/20200618144140/https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/legal-separation/>).

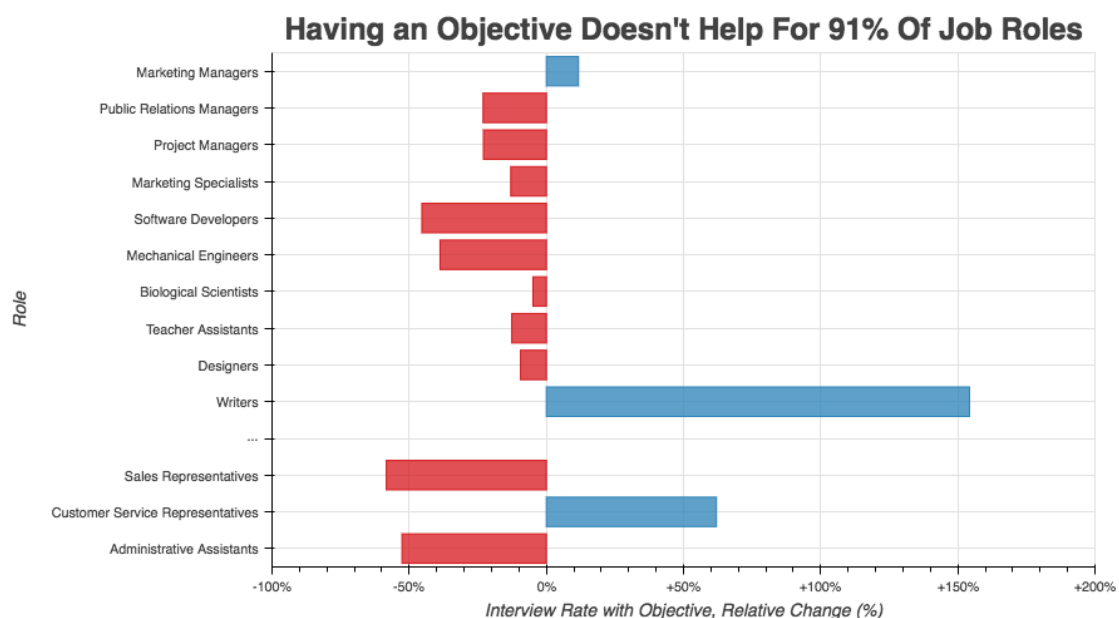
What I do care is that you can do the job. Your objective gives me zero information about that and it’s something I have to wade past to get to the real stuff. But, if while wading past, I see something... well, it can definitely rule you out. For instance: spelling and grammar mistakes (rare), mismatch of interests (possible), a seed of doubt (common).

Here’s my theory: Most objectives convey zero information to hiring managers. **At best, you can hope hiring managers will ignore it. At worst, it’ll give hiring managers an excuse to disqualify you.**

This theory also explains why recent grads with objectives get slightly more interviews. Entry-level jobs get a deluge of applicants with no work history, and there’s basically no way to tell apart good applicants. If you can write a good objective (see below), you can squeeze out an edge over your competition.

Does Your Industry or Role Matter?

Controlling for role and industry, having an explicit objective still hurts (or doesn’t help) the overwhelming majority of job applicants.



It’s hard to make definitive claims about every specific role or industry (underwater welding, anyone?), but the overall trend is clear:

- Only 2 out of 116 industries had statistically significant [*] higher hireability for applicants with an explicit objective. (Marketing Managers were statistically insignificant with a p-value of 0.902.)

- There was a clear pattern for where it helped: they (a) were over-saturated, entry-level jobs where it was hard to distinguish good applicants, or (b) were in mission-driven fields where applicants' motivations were especially important.

[* This of course doesn't mean it only helps for 2 industries in reality, it just means that it either *actually* doesn't help or the difference wasn't big enough to be statistically detectable.]

Based on our holistic knowledge (we've helped hundreds of thousands of people with their job search) and this analysis, here's the **full list of roles and industries where we believe an explicit objective *might* be helpful** (even if there wasn't a statistically significant difference):

Role	Hireability Gain (%)	P-value	Why?
Budget Analysts	121%	0.187	Hard to distinguish good applicants.
Credit Analysts	144%	0.456	Hard to distinguish good applicants.
Financial Analysts	105%	0.410	Hard to distinguish good applicants.
Counselors	~500%	-	Mission-driven field.
Social Workers	~500%	-	Mission-driven field.
Elementary Teachers	~250%	-	Mission-driven field.
High School Teachers	~250%	-	Mission-driven field.
Writers	154%	0.060	Hard to distinguish good applicants.
Retail Salespeople	50%	-	Hard to distinguish good applicants.
Customer Service Representatives	62%	-	Hard to distinguish good applicants.

Which Kinds of Objectives Work In The Real World?

We took a look at the underlying resumes where objectives were correlated with increased hireability. Here are 3 objectives (details modified again to protect the innocent) from applicants who were 1+ standard deviation more hireable than their industry means:

■ Seeking a customer service position where I can utilize my multi-tasking abilities and attention to detail to assist in a fast-paced environment. Skills: real-world clerical experience, organizational skills, interpersonal skills.

■ Summa cum laude graduate with BS in communications studies, graduated May 2015. Proficient in Spanish.

“ Experienced with Windows, Mac OS X, and Linux OSes; popular social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram); OpenTable, AldeloPRO, and NoWait restaurant management software

And here again are the 3 mediocre, low-hireability ones from above (these were all 1+ standard deviation below their industry hireability means):

“ Focused and hard-working individual looking to develop new skills to serve the greater good.

“ Ambitious student working towards a B.S. in Epidemiology (pending graduation May, 2019).

“ To acquire, and maintain employment. To utilize the training and skills I've received in the past 5 years.

What do you see? Here's what I see in the low-hireability objectives:

- They were generic and basically conveyed zero information to a hiring manager.
- They spoke to the applicants' wants & desires (not the hiring managers' wants & desires).
- Worse, they sometimes contained spelling or grammar mistakes. (Strictly speaking, the above weren't grammatically incorrect, but two had awkward punctuation.)

On the other hand, **the increased-hireability objectives all name-drop specific qualifications.**

In fact, they're almost not even real objectives! They're objective sections *acting as a trojan horse to casually name-drop qualifications in the first few words of the resume*. That's brilliant!

In other words, good objectives weren't actually objectives at all: rather than summarizing their own personal objectives, **well-crafted objective statements gave their audience (hiring managers) what *they* wanted instead.**

Resume Tip: If you have to include an objective, don't talk about your own wants and desires. Instead, use it to casually name-drop a few of your skills that might appeal to hiring managers (in over-saturated fields) or summarize your motivation (in mission-driven fields).

What Can You Do?

We understand sorting through all the conflicting job search advice (and, hell, even the sheer amount of advice) can be overwhelming. That's why we try to boil everything down to specific, actionable tips for your resume and back up everything we can with real-world data and concrete examples [*].

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On average, job applicants whose resume included an explicit objective or professional summary were ~30% less hireable than those who didn't.

Resume Tip: Barring a few exceptions (less than 8 months of work experience, the list of industries above), you should delete your objective ASAP. [+30% HIREABILITY BOOST]

[* If they're mining your data to sell you crap you don't need, why not mine *their* data to help you get a job instead? That's what we think at least.]

Even so, in just this post itself, we suggested 4 new resume tips. In total, across our six [The Science of the Job Search](https://web.archive.org/web/20200618144140/https://talentworks.blog/category/hacking-job-search/) (<https://web.archive.org/web/20200618144140/https://talentworks.blog/category/hacking-job-search/>) posts this year, we've suggested a total 39+ real-world resume & job search tips. (I stopped counting after awhile.) They're all highly actionable, data-driven tips but honestly, it's just hard to keep track of it all after awhile.

If you're looking for a job, you might be interested in signing up for TalentWorks. Among other things:

- Our **AI-driven ApplicationAssistant** (https://web.archive.org/web/20200618144140/https://talent.works/automate-your-job-search?utm_source=blog) automatically pre-fills personalized cover letters for you from a template so you don't have to worry about writing nice things for each of the 100+ job applications you'll have to submit.
- Our **ResumeOptimizer** (https://web.archive.org/web/20200618144140/https://talent.works/accelerate-your-job-search/?utm_source=blog) will instantly scan your resume for all of 39+ tips we've written about to date, including optimizing your objective section.

For most things job search, we can just take care of it for you. And if not, one our wonderful [TalentAdvocates](https://web.archive.org/web/20200618144140/https://talent.works/automate-your-job-search?utm_source=blog) (https://web.archive.org/web/20200618144140/https://talent.works/automate-your-job-search?utm_source=blog) can help you.

Methodology

First, we took a random sample of 6,231 recent job applications, applicants and outcomes across 681 cities and 116 roles and industries from recent activity on TalentWorks.

For each resume and job, we respectively calculated the MAP global parse tree using a custom, dynamic-vocabulary PCFG ([our ResumeParser](https://web.archive.org/web/20200618144140/https://talent.works/accelerate-your-job-search/?utm_source=blog) (https://web.archive.org/web/20200618144140/https://talent.works/accelerate-your-job-search/?utm_source=blog)) and extracted the objective subtree if present and extracted the MAP job role along with 10 other bits of metadata from our index of ~91 million job postings. Finally, we independently regressed hireability for each sub-population with a blended constant-Matern kernel using a Gaussian process.

We did all of the analysis with in-house algorithms and sklearn/scipy in python. All plots were generated with Bokeh in python.

Why Are We Doing This?

With ApplicationAssistant right now, we can boost the average job-seeker's hireability by ~5.8x. (https://web.archive.org/web/20200618144140/https://talent.works/automate-your-job-search/?utm_source=blog) But, what makes ApplicationAssistant work has been an internal company secret until now. We're fundamentally a mission-driven company and we believe we can help *more* people by sharing our learnings. So, that's exactly what we're doing.

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