

# **What Makes a Great Resume: A Research-Backed Analysis**

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## **Abstract**

This paper reviews the academic literature on resume effectiveness across four dimensions: structure, content, length, and format. We draw primarily from peer-reviewed research in industrial-organizational psychology and labor economics, supplemented by practitioner insights from senior hiring leaders. The paper concludes with actionable principles for building resumes that survive both algorithmic screening and the 7-second human scan.

# 1. How Resumes Are Actually Screened

Any discussion of what makes a resume effective must start with how resumes are actually evaluated, because the screening process itself determines what "effective" means.

## 1.1 Time Under Review

TheLadders (2018) equipped 30 professional recruiters with eye-tracking devices and monitored their screening behavior over 10 weeks across hundreds of resumes. The median initial screen lasted **7.4 seconds**, up from 6 seconds in a prior recession-era iteration of the study when applicant volume was higher.

The resulting heat maps showed a consistent attention pattern:

- The **upper-left quadrant** (name, current title, current employer) received the most sustained fixation.
- The **first two to three bullet points** under the most recent role were reliably read.
- **Section headers** served as navigation anchors; their content was processed but the body text beneath them often was not.
- The right side of the page and anything below the fold received minimal attention.

Sánchez-Monedero et al. (2023) extended this work by combining eye-tracking data with machine learning classifiers to predict approve/reject decisions. Their key finding: **longer dwell time predicted positive outcomes**. This implies the 7.4-second average is pulled down by a large number of instant-reject scans; resumes that survive the initial gate receive considerably more time. When recruiters did spend that additional time, it concentrated on the **Experience and Education sections**, which were the strongest predictors of an approve decision. Time spent looking *outside* the resume content (i.e., the recruiter pausing to think) was also highly predictive of approval, suggesting that the best resumes gave the reviewer something worth deliberating on (*Machine Learning and Knowledge Extraction*, 5(3)).

A Novoresume (2025) survey of HR professionals reported that 42% spend less than 10 seconds on initial review, and 64.9% reach their first decision in under 15 seconds.

**Takeaway: A resume must communicate its core value proposition in the top third of page one. Information architecture matters more than total content volume.**

## 1.2 Applicant Tracking Systems

**Do ATS systems automatically reject resumes?** The frequently cited claim that "75% of resumes are rejected by ATS before a human sees them" traces to Preptel, a company that went out of business in 2013. No methodology has ever been published for this figure (HR Gazette, 2025). A 2025 HR.com survey found that 92% of recruiters manually review applications, and only 8% configure their ATS to automatically reject based on content or match scores. Outright algorithmic rejection is rarer than the mythology suggests.

**The real problem is volume, not rejection.** Entry-level and customer service roles average 400 to 600 applicants; remote tech roles regularly exceed 1,000 in the first week (CoverSentry, 2025). Most ATS systems do not reject resumes outright. Instead, they rank and sort. But the hiring funnel data shows how steep the drop-off is: the average applicant-to-interview conversion rate in 2024 was **3%**, with employers receiving an average of **180 applicants per hire** (Gem Recruiting Benchmarks Report, 2025). A prospective applicant is 3x less likely to get hired for a role today than three years ago, while the average recruiter now manages 2,500+ applications across 14 open requisitions (Gem, 2025). In a pool that large, being ranked 500th instead of 50th produces the same outcome for the candidate: no callback. From the applicant's perspective, deprioritization is

rejection.

**Formatting failures compound the problem.** The HR.com (2025) survey found that **43% of rejections** were attributed to formatting, parsing, or arbitrary filter failures rather than actual qualification gaps. These are candidates who were qualified but whose resumes were not correctly read by the system. Poor formatting does not just make a resume look bad; it can cause the ATS to misparse section headers, miss keywords, or scramble work history, pushing the candidate down the ranking through no fault of their own.

**Hard filters still exist for specific criteria.** Fuller and Raman (2017) at Harvard Business School surveyed 600 business and HR leaders and found that **61% reported discarding resumes** that lacked a four-year degree, even when applicants were otherwise qualified. Degree filters in ATS systems contributed to an estimated 6.2 million jobs affected by degree inflation. Unlike the soft ranking described above, these are binary gates: if the checkbox is not met, the resume is excluded regardless of everything else on it.

**Takeaway: The ATS layer presents three distinct risks. Hard filters (degree requirements, years of experience) can exclude qualified candidates outright. Formatting failures can cause misparsing that buries a strong resume. And sheer applicant volume means that even correctly parsed resumes must rank near the top to be seen. Clean, parseable formatting is not a nice-to-have; it is a prerequisite for being seen at all.**

### 1.3 Resume Screening Is Inference, Not Evaluation

Resume screening is not an objective evaluation of qualifications. Multiple studies show that recruiters engage in rapid inference-making that goes well beyond what the document literally contains.

Cole, Feild, Giles, and Harris (2009) showed that recruiters make **personality inferences from resume content**: neat formatting signals conscientiousness, extracurricular activities signal extraversion, and so on. These inferences significantly influenced hiring recommendations, even though their accuracy in predicting actual personality was limited (*Journal of Business and Psychology*, 24, 5-18).

Tsai, Chi, Huang, and Hsu (2011) found that resume content affects hiring recommendations **through perceived person-job and person-organization fit**, not through direct evaluation of qualifications. Recruiters are not asking "is this person qualified?" so much as "would this person fit here?" (*Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 60(2), 231-263).

Arnulf, Tegner, and Larssen (2010) tested this more directly. They presented 90 respondents (half professional recruiters, half students) with 12 candidates of equal qualification in three different layout formats: formal on white paper, colored, and "creative." The graphical design had a **substantial impact on shortlisting probability**, with formal designs preferred over creative ones. Professional recruiters were only slightly less influenced by layout than nonprofessionals (*European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 19, 221-230).

The inference-based nature of screening also means that factors outside a candidate's control can affect outcomes. Correspondence studies have demonstrated significant callback disparities based on name, race, age, and national origin (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004; Oreopoulos, 2011; Quillian et al., 2017). These biases are real and well-documented, but they fall outside the scope of what a resume tool can address directly.

What a resume tool *can* do is maximize the controllable signals. The research on signaling suggests several strategies that help all candidates, and particularly those who may face implicit bias:

- **Lead with quantified accomplishments.** Concrete outcomes ("reduced costs by \$200K," "scaled system to 5M users") are harder to dismiss through bias than abstract credentials. They force the evaluator to engage with what you did, not who you are.

- **Adopt a skills-forward hybrid format.** A skills summary at the top of the resume front-loads competence signals before the reader reaches any section (education, work history) where bias might enter. The 2025 Novoresume survey found 47.5% of HR professionals now prefer skills-based formats.
- **Include a LinkedIn profile link.** ResumeGo found a 71% callback improvement for resumes with comprehensive LinkedIn profiles. A strong LinkedIn presence provides social proof and depth that can offset a thin or unconventional resume.
- **Localize experience signals.** Oreopoulos (2011) found that for immigrants with foreign-sounding names, listing local work experience increased callbacks by 86%. Emphasizing locally recognized employers, certifications, or industry involvement helps bridge familiarity gaps.

**Takeaway: Screening is an inference process, not a qualification checklist. Bias exists in that process, and while a resume tool cannot eliminate it, it can ensure that every controllable signal on the document is optimized. The strongest defense is a resume so rich in specific, quantified evidence of impact that it is difficult to dismiss on any grounds.**

## 2. Structure

### 2.1 Format Type: Chronological vs. Functional vs. Hybrid

The three dominant resume structures are reverse-chronological (roles listed most recent first), functional or skills-based (grouped by skill categories, de-emphasizing timeline), and hybrid (a skills summary at top followed by chronological experience).

A 2025 Novoresume survey found that **47.5% of HR professionals now prefer skills-based resumes**, overtaking reverse-chronological at 39.1%. This likely reflects the broader adoption of skills-based hiring frameworks. That said, the reverse-chronological format remains dominant in actual usage and has the broadest ATS compatibility.

Cole, Rubin, Feild, and Giles (2007) found that recruiters use **resume structure itself as a signal**. A well-organized chronological resume was perceived as evidence of the applicant's orderliness and conscientiousness. The format was the message (*Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 56(2), 319-343).

Lou Adler, CEO of the Adler Group and author of *Hire With Your Head*, takes a different view. His Performance-based Hiring framework holds that hiring managers screen for comparable accomplishments, not format. The strongest resumes, in his view, are structured around deliverables and outcomes, not responsibilities or timelines (Adler, 2007).

**Recommended approach: Reverse-chronological remains the safest default for ATS compatibility and recruiter expectations. A hybrid format (targeted skills summary followed by chronological detail) optimizes for both machine parsing and human scanning. Functional formats should be reserved for career changers and used with caution, as they can raise suspicion about gaps.**

### 2.2 Visual Hierarchy and Cognitive Load

Bernard et al. (2002) at Wichita State University found that adding white space around text blocks **improves reading comprehension by up to 20%**. Applied to resume design, this has direct practical consequences given the time constraints documented in Section 1.1.

The TheLadders eye-tracking data confirmed that recruiter attention concentrates at the top of the page and along the left margin, consistent with the F-pattern identified in web usability research by the Nielsen Norman Group. Well-structured documents with clear headers can distribute attention more evenly, but the default scanning behavior strongly favors content placed in the upper portion of page one.

A Resume Genius (2025) survey found that 73% of hiring managers prefer visually appealing resumes, and **25% will reject a resume on design alone**.

Arnulf et al. (2010) add an important caveat: "visually appealing" does not mean "creative." Their experimental data showed that formal, clean layouts outperformed stylized designs for shortlisting, even when qualifications were identical. The goal is **clarity, not flair**.

**Recommended approach: Use clear section headers as navigation anchors. Maintain consistent formatting throughout. Allocate adequate white space. Front-load the most important content in the upper-left quadrant where attention naturally concentrates.**

### 2.3 Section Order

Section order should be driven by what is strongest for the specific candidate and target role:

Career Stage	Recommended Order
Student / New Graduate	Education, Skills, Experience, Projects
Early Career (2-5 yrs)	Summary, Experience, Skills, Education
Mid-Career (5-15 yrs)	Summary, Experience, Skills, Education/Certs
Senior / Executive	Summary, Experience, Leadership, Skills, Education

The principle is straightforward: **lead with your strongest signal**. For new graduates, that is typically education and academic performance. For experienced professionals, it is recent accomplishments and scope of impact (Cole et al., 2007; UNC Career Services Recruiter Roundtable, 2025).

## 3. Content

### 3.1 Accomplishments vs. Responsibilities

The single most consistent finding across both the academic and practitioner literature is that **accomplishment-oriented bullet points dramatically outperform responsibility-oriented ones.**

Laszlo Bock, former SVP of People Operations at Google, articulated this as the **XYZ Formula** based on reviewing more than 20,000 resumes personally: "Accomplished [X] as measured by [Y] by doing [Z]" (Bock, 2015, *Work Rules!*).

Consider the difference:

**Responsibility-oriented:** *"Responsible for managing team projects and coordinating deployments."*

**Accomplishment-oriented:** *"Reduced deployment failures by 73% over six months by implementing an automated CI/CD pipeline with rollback capabilities, as measured by monthly incident reports."*

The first describes what the person was supposed to do. The second describes what actually happened, with evidence.

Industry data reinforces the point, though the precise magnitudes are less certain than commonly claimed. The widely cited figure that quantified resumes produce "3.2x more callbacks" is attributed to Harvard Business Review across dozens of advice sites, but no original HBR study can be located. What we do have: a Resume-Now (2025) analysis of 18.4 million U.S. resumes found that **only 10% included measurable results**, and a Jobscan (2025) survey found that **58% of recruiters say measurable achievements are what make a resume stand out most**. Executives who highlighted quantified achievements were **25% more likely to be shortlisted** compared to those listing only responsibilities (iCareer Solutions, 2026).

The competitive advantage is less about a specific multiplier and more about the gap between supply and demand: recruiters overwhelmingly want to see quantified impact, and the vast majority of applicants fail to provide it.

**Recommended approach:** Every bullet point should answer three questions: **what was accomplished, how was it measured, and what action produced the result. Where exact figures are unavailable, reasonable approximations ("reduced by approximately 40%," "team of 8") are far better than no quantification at all.**

### 3.2 Impression Management and Self-Presentation

Knouse (1994) studied the effect of impression management statements in resumes using a factorial design that varied education relevance, experience relevance, and the presence of self-promotional language. Results showed that impression management produced positive perceptions of interpersonal skill, self-confidence, and hireability (*Journal of Business and Psychology*, 9, 33-45).

However, this effect has limits. Waung, McAuslan, and colleagues found that high-intensity self-promotion was **ineffective for male applicants and potentially detrimental for female applicants**. Lower-intensity self-promotion and ingratiation (matching language to the employer's values) increased perceptions of person-job and person-organization fit (*Journal of Business and Psychology*, 2017).

Brown and Campion (1994) demonstrated that recruiters use biographical information on resumes to **infer abilities**, not just to verify credentials. Education and work experience sections are treated as proxies for cognitive ability and conscientiousness, respectively (*Journal of Applied Psychology*, 79, 897-908).

**Recommended approach: Self-promotion should be embedded in accomplishment statements, not stated as abstract claims. "Results-driven leader" is an empty assertion. "Led a team of 12 engineers through a 6-month platform migration serving 2M users" communicates the same thing with evidence. Let the facts promote the candidate.**

### 3.3 Tailoring and Keyword Alignment

A ResumeGo field experiment found that tailored resumes received **31% more interview callbacks** than generic ones (ResumeGo, 2018). A Harvard Business School study reported that 88% of employers said their ATS systems filter out qualified candidates who do not precisely match the job description's language.

Meanwhile, 54% of candidates do not tailor their resume to each application (Jobscan, 2025). This represents a significant opportunity gap.

Tailoring is not simply keyword insertion. Tsai et al. (2011) showed that hiring recommendations are mediated by **perceived fit**, which means the same accomplishment can resonate or fall flat depending on whether it mirrors the vocabulary and priorities of the target role. A resume optimized for "Software Engineer" at a fintech company should use different framing than one for the same title at a healthcare company, even if the underlying experience is identical.

**Recommended approach: Resume generation must be target-aware. Tailoring should involve reframing accomplishments through the target role's vocabulary and priorities, not just inserting matching keywords.**

### 3.4 What Recruiters Actually Weigh

For recent graduates, Cole et al. (2007) found a consistent evaluation hierarchy:

1. **Academic qualifications** (GPA, institution, relevant coursework)
2. **Work experience** (relevance and recency more than duration)
3. **Extracurricular activities** (as evidence of personality and soft skills)

Strong academic qualifications could compensate for weaker work experience, and vice versa. The dimensions were partially substitutable.

For experienced hires, the evaluation shifts. The Novoresume (2025) survey found that 89% of hiring managers look for problem-solving skills and 88% focus on hard/technical skills. Leadership, relevant experience, and perceived person-job fit dominate the evaluation.

The Schmidt and Hunter (1998) meta-analysis, one of the most cited papers in I/O psychology (*Psychological Bulletin*, 124(2), cited 10,000+ times), established that general mental ability tests have the highest predictive validity for job performance ( $\rho = .51$ ), while biodata (the structured information found on resumes) shows moderate validity ( $\rho = .35$  for empirically-keyed biodata). Sackett, Zhang, Berry, and Lievens (2022) revisited these estimates in *Journal of Applied Psychology* and found some had been overcorrected, but biodata remained a meaningful predictor.

**Recommended approach: Resume content should demonstrate cognitive capability (complex problems identified and solved, systems designed at scale) and conscientiousness (results delivered consistently, quality maintained). These are the traits most predictive of job performance and most inferable from resume content.**

### 3.5 The LinkedIn Effect

A ResumeGo study found that resumes including a link to a comprehensive LinkedIn profile receive **71% more interview callbacks** (13.5% vs. 7.9% callback rate). Recruiters appear to use LinkedIn as a validation and enrichment layer: the resume opens the door, and the LinkedIn profile provides depth and social proof.

**Recommended approach: Resumes should include a LinkedIn URL. The resume and LinkedIn profile should be consistent and complementary, not duplicative.**

## 4. Length

### 4.1 The One-Page Rule Reconsidered

The advice to keep a resume to one page is one of the most persistent conventions in career guidance. The evidence does not support it as a universal rule.

**ResumeGo (2018)** conducted the most rigorous study on this question, putting 482 recruiting professionals through a hiring simulation involving 7,712 resumes. Half were one page; half were two pages, with each one-page resume having a matched two-page counterpart representing a candidate with similar credentials.

The results were unambiguous:

- Recruiters were **2.3 times more likely to prefer the two-page version**.
- Two-page resumes scored **21% higher** on average (8.6 vs. 7.1 on a 10-point scale).
- Recruiters spent **nearly twice as much time** on two-page resumes, and this additional time correlated with more favorable evaluations.
- The preference held even for entry-level candidates, though the gap was smaller.

A longitudinal analysis comparing 50,000 resumes from 2018 to 2023 found that average resume length rose from 312 words to 503 words, approaching two full pages (Resumly, 2023). A 2025 survey found that 78% of hiring managers spend over one minute reviewing each resume, which contradicts the idea that longer resumes are automatically discarded.

### 4.2 When Length Becomes a Liability

Length hurts when it is achieved through padding: generic responsibility statements, irrelevant early-career roles, or redundant skill listings. It also hurts when the additional content lacks clear visual hierarchy, creating a wall of text that discourages engagement.

The Purdue OWL (2024) recommends one page per 10 years of experience as a rough guide, which is a reasonable heuristic though not a hard rule.

### 4.3 The Governing Principle

The evidence supports replacing the one-page rule with a different standard: **no wasted space**. Every line should justify its inclusion by demonstrating relevant capability or a specific accomplishment. A tight one-page resume is better than a padded two-page resume, but a substantive two-page resume outperforms a cramped one-page resume that compresses meaningful experience to meet an arbitrary constraint.

**Recommended approach: Optimize for density of relevant accomplishments, not page count. If a second page contains substantive, tailored content, it will improve outcomes, not hurt them.**

## 5. Format

### 5.1 File Type: PDF vs. DOCX vs. LaTeX

This is the least-studied of the four dimensions. The available evidence is primarily practitioner-derived.

**PDF** is the most widely recommended format for resume submissions. It renders consistently across devices and operating systems, and all modern ATS systems can parse well-structured PDFs. The risk is that complex layouts (multi-column designs, embedded graphics, text-in-tables) can confuse older parsers (Recrew, 2025).

**DOCX** has the broadest ATS compatibility because most ATS systems were originally built around Microsoft Word's document model. The trade-off is that formatting can shift across Word versions and operating systems, which undermines the visual consistency that matters for recruiter perception.

**LaTeX** produces typographically superior output with better kerning, ligatures, and consistent spacing. In academic and technical fields, a LaTeX resume signals technical competence. However, LaTeX-generated PDFs can create parsing problems for ATS systems. The text extraction from LaTeX PDFs sometimes introduces unexpected line breaks, page breaks, and formatting artifacts. One practitioner source describes LaTeX as "often the worst offender" for ATS compatibility because it prioritizes visual output over text structure (Medium, 2024).

### 5.2 Alternative Approaches

MIT's Career Advising office recommends choosing a format "that will focus on the content (words) of your resume and not anything else" when ATS compatibility is a priority (MIT CAPD, 2025).

An emerging approach is **HTML-to-PDF generation**, which uses web technologies to produce resumes that combine visual polish with clean, parseable text output. This avoids both Word's formatting fragility and LaTeX's parsing issues (Kaiser, 2024).

### 5.3 Design Principles

Bock (2014) from Google: "Unless you're applying for a designer role, your focus should be on making your resume clean and legible." Specifically:

- Standard fonts at 10-12pt. Avoid decorative typefaces.
- Consistent formatting throughout. If one role uses a bold title, all roles should.
- 58% of resumes contain typos (Bock, 2014). Flawless proofreading is a stronger signal of quality than creative design.
- 5-10% of resumes received at Google contained confidential information from previous employers. This results in automatic rejection.

Arnulf et al. (2010) provide the academic backing: among candidates of equal qualification, **formal layouts outperformed creative designs** for shortlisting probability, and even professional recruiters were influenced by layout.

**Recommended approach: PDF output from a clean, single-column, ATS-compatible template is the optimal default. Good typography can be achieved through careful CSS and PDF generation without taking on LaTeX's parsing risks.**

## 6. Synthesis: Principles for Resume Effectiveness

### Principle 1: Front-load impact.

Recruiters spend 7 to 15 seconds on initial review (TheLadders, 2018; Novoresume, 2025). Eye-tracking confirms attention concentrates on the upper portion of page one, particularly the Experience and Education sections (Sánchez-Monedero et al., 2023). The most relevant accomplishment must appear there. Everything below is read conditionally, if at all.

### Principle 2: Lead with your strongest signal.

Section order should be driven by what is most compelling for the specific candidate and target role. For new graduates, education typically leads. For experienced professionals, recent accomplishments and scope of impact come first (Cole et al., 2007). Resume dimensions are partially substitutable: strong academic qualifications can compensate for weaker work experience, and vice versa, so the ordering should emphasize wherever the candidate is strongest.

### Principle 3: Write accomplishments, not responsibilities.

Kessler et al. (2019) showed that employers value the substance of prior work experience over its duration. Jobscan (2025) reports 58% of recruiters say measurable achievements are what make a resume stand out. A Resume-Now (2025) analysis of 18.4 million resumes found that only 10% included measurable results, meaning candidates who quantify their work gain an outsized competitive advantage simply because so few others do. Randazzo (2020) found that employers consistently weighted relevance and demonstrated impact over other evaluative criteria.

### Principle 4: Tailor to the target role.

ResumeGo found a 31% increase in callbacks for tailored resumes in a field experiment. Tsai et al. (2011) showed that hiring recommendations are mediated by perceived fit, which tailoring directly addresses. Effective tailoring means reframing accomplishments in the target role's vocabulary and priorities, not just inserting matching keywords. 54% of candidates do not tailor at all (Jobscan, 2025), so even basic tailoring creates differentiation.

### Principle 5: Use a hybrid structure.

Reverse-chronological remains the safest default for ATS compatibility, but a hybrid format (skills summary at the top followed by chronological detail) optimizes for both machine parsing and human scanning. The 2025 Novoresume survey found 47.5% of HR professionals now prefer skills-based formats. A skills-forward layout also front-loads competence signals before the reader reaches sections where unconscious bias may enter (Oreopoulos, 2011).

### Principle 6: Design is the gate; content is the evaluator.

Poor design causes rejection before content is read: Resume Genius (2025) reports 25% of hiring managers reject on design alone. Arnulf et al. (2010) experimentally demonstrated that formal layouts increase shortlisting

probability over creative designs, even among professional recruiters. Bernard et al. (2002) showed white space improves comprehension by up to 20%. But design alone cannot compensate for weak content. Once the resume is being read, substance determines the outcome (Bock, 2014). "Visually appealing" means clean and formal, not creative or stylized.

### **Principle 7: Let substance drive length.**

The ResumeGo simulation (2018) found strong preference for two-page resumes, though the study's conditions (2-4 minutes per resume) were more generous than typical screening conditions (7-15 seconds). The benefit of a second page depends on whether anyone reads it. The safest guidance: a second page is valuable if its content would be compelling even if partially unread. Nothing critical should appear exclusively on page two. The rule is "no wasted space," not "one page."

### **Principle 8: Ensure parseability.**

43% of rejections stem from formatting or parsing failures rather than qualification gaps (HR.com, 2025). In applicant pools of 400 to 2,000+, deprioritization through parsing failure is functionally equivalent to rejection. Clean, single-column PDF from a simple template is the safest output format. HTML-to-PDF generation is an emerging approach that combines visual polish with reliable text extraction (Kaiser, 2024).

### **Principle 9: Signal through evidence, not assertion.**

Multiple peer-reviewed studies confirm that recruiters infer personality and fit from resume content, not just qualifications (Cole et al., 2009; Tsai et al., 2011; Knouse, 1994). Waung et al. (2017) showed that high-intensity self-promotion backfires while evidence-embedded, lower-intensity self-promotion improves perceived fit. "Results-driven leader" is an empty claim. "Led a team of 12 engineers through a 6-month platform migration serving 2M users" communicates the same thing with evidence.

### **Principle 10: Include a LinkedIn profile.**

Resumes that link to a comprehensive LinkedIn profile receive 71% more interview callbacks (13.5% vs. 7.9% callback rate) according to a ResumeGo study. Recruiters use LinkedIn as a validation and enrichment layer. The resume and LinkedIn profile should be consistent and complementary.

### **Principle 11: Zero errors is a baseline requirement.**

58% of resumes contain typos (Bock, 2014). Flawless proofreading signals conscientiousness more reliably than any other formatting choice. 5-10% of resumes received at Google contained confidential information from previous employers, resulting in automatic rejection. Error-free presentation is not a differentiator; it is a minimum standard whose absence is actively penalized.

### **Principle 12: Maximize controllable signals.**

Screening is an inference process subject to biases that candidates cannot control (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004; Quillian et al., 2017). What candidates can control is the density and specificity of evidence on the resume. Concrete, quantified outcomes are harder to dismiss than abstract credentials. Locally recognized experience signals increase callbacks for candidates with foreign backgrounds by up to 86% (Oreopoulos,

2011). The strongest defense against any form of screening bias is a resume so rich in specific evidence of impact that it is difficult to overlook.

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