CSC290 Communication Skills for Computer Scientists

Lisa Zhang

Lecture 11; Mar 25, 2019

Announcements

- Presentation Slides due Wednesday 9pm

Contribution Issues

I think it would be good if there were peer evaluations to reward people that did work vs. people that did minimal work. Is it possible to incorporate this?

Please email me if you have issues with your team. Team members who have not contributed significantly will receive a grade deduction, or a grade of zero.

Agenda

Today:

- ▶ Resume and Cover Letter
- ▶ We'll spend the majority of the time reviewing:
    - ▶ 5 student resumes
    - ▶ 1 student cover letter

Next class: Technical Interviews

- ▶ Email me if you want to be "interviewed" during lecture, either by me or by someone else

Resume

Getting a Job

- **Best**: introduction by a friend (maybe even before a position is announced)
- **Good**: friend-of-friend connection or introductions
- **Okay**: message from recruiter to invite you to apply to a position
- **Reasonable**: application through a centralized process (like PEY)
- **Worst**: "cold" application to a job

We will focus mostly on the last two scenarios

First Impression

- Resume and cover letter will be the first impression you make
- They should both be:
    - clean, with clear structure and formatting
    - free of spelling, grammar, and writing errors
    - easy to skim
- A hiring manager will take 10-20 seconds at most to decide whether your resume is worth reading in detail

Keep the audience in mind

What is the hiring manager looking for?

- ▶ Does this candidate have the required skills & knowledge?
- ▶ Will this candidate work well in a team?
- ▶ Will this candidate care about the work?

What is wrong with this sentence?

I am looking for a position that will help me develop and grow as an individual

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I am looking for a position that will help me develop and grow as an individual

Problem:

- Written from the point of view of what the company can do for you
- The hiring manager cares about what you can do for the company

What does the hiring manager look for?

- ▶ Contact Information
- ▶ Skills
- ▶ Education
- ▶ Previous employment
- ▶ Other activities that demonstrate that you have the required skills
- ▶ A sense of whether this candidate will work well in the company
  - ▶ based on the work that the candidate chose
  - ▶ based on the way the candidate describes their work

Information to avoid (in North America)

- Headshot (photograph)
- Date of birth
- Family situation

Resume Length

- One page is ideal, but not absolutely necessary
- **But,** put the most important material in the first page
- In general, important items should be further up
- Reverse chronological per category

Resume Design and Formatting

- Compact is good, but use white space effectively
- Good design can help you stand out from the crowd
- However, over-complicated design can hurt you if the company uses an automated resume filtering system

Describing Experience

Your description of your experience should answer the questions:

- What did you do? (verbs)
- What effect did it have on the company? (results)
- What transferable skills did you gain from the experience?

Balance between conciseness and informativeness

Parallel structures helps keep wording concise

Let's look at some resumes!

Cover Letter

Why cover letter?

Your cover letter should **not** simply repeat your resume!

Cover letters add a "humanizing" touch –

- what do you want to highlight for the company that does not fit in your resume?
- why are you excited about *this particular position*?
- what kind of a person are you?

Keep the audience in mind

Why are you excited about *this particular position*?

- ▶ focus on what you can do for the company
- ▶ **not** what the company will do for you

Good:

I'm excited about contributing to a system used by millions of people.

Bad:

I heard great things about your work environment and free beer Fridays.

Let's look at a cover letter!