

8 KILLER RESUME WRITING TIPS TO LAND THAT 3D JOB

Pierre-Luc Labbé understands that applying for jobs can be a painful process, filled with stress, anxiety, and uncertainty. That's why he founded Rhum, an intermediary human and resources company that acts as a broker between talented individuals and the creative companies that want to hire them.

Pierre-Luc has connections with the VFX, games, advertising, and design industries, and has first-hand knowledge of what these companies are looking for, and how to catch their attention. So, naturally, we asked him for his best tips to impress recruiters in order to land that dream 3D job.

1. Do your research

Unsurprisingly, the first thing you need to do before putting together a cover letter or updating your CV, is research. You should know something about all of the companies you are applying for: what they specialize in, what they're looking for in an applicant, whether they're large or small, young or old. And be honest with yourself: are you a good fit for their workload and corporate culture?

2. Weigh the options

And what about what you want? Pierre-Luc points out an important distinction between large and small companies: larger companies tend to want to hire specialists. "Smaller shops have this tendency to have their artists do a little bit of everything, whereas when you talk with bigger studios, they tend to want people to become extremely specialized – prop development, character modeling, skin texturing, hair specialists. With the bigger studios, it can get extremely specific."

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As Labbé puts it, in smaller studios, recruits can "explore and experience a little bit of every piece of the pipeline, and then decide what they want to do. In VFX for example, as an entry-level job in a big studio, you might end up as a runner or an assistant, doing jobs to support the facility team (inventory, answering calls, assisting artists) while being mentored in a specific discipline. These jobs are amazing for anyone wanting to explore options and be mentored while doing it. I know Oscar-winning VFX Supervisors who started their career this way."

Maybe you're already very passionate about skin texturing or perfecting a 3D character's hair, but if not, you might want to give the boutique firms a second glance. After all, not everyone knows exactly what they want to do before they've even had a chance to try everything. "They might not be as popular as the big VFX powerhouses, or the massive gaming studios pushing out new AAA titles each year, but there are some really cool start-ups out there doing amazing things," Pierre-Luc tells us, "and I feel like the artists sometimes have this reflex towards the big, flashy studios, while there's still a lot of opportunity in the smaller shops."

On the other hand, Labbé points out, the bigger studios often have a more streamlined recruitment process, as well as defined internship seasons and application dates, making applying to them very intuitive. The smaller companies? Not so much. You might have to go out of your way to find someone's email or introduce yourself at a conference or event. But if it's harder for you to apply, it's harder for everyone else as well, and that means less competition.

3. Craft a personal cover letter

In today's digital world, you might be sending a cover email rather than a cover letter, but the same principles apply. First, be brief. Labbé cites a statistic that says recruiters spend an average of seven seconds scanning a cover letter, so don't waste time getting to the point. "Keep it short and sweet and personalized," Labbé says. "Of course, a company will look for a specific set of skills and software knowledge, but culture is also extremely important. There's a person behind each portfolio, and the cover letter should allow us to see who that person is."

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4. Ditch the templates

That also means ditching any canned templates that your company's hiring staff have seen a thousand times, and using your own words. "If someone is using some copy-and-paste template from Google, then it's useless," Labbé tells us. "But if someone really described what they want to do, why they're applying for a certain position, and why they'd be good at it, then I find it extremely useful."

5. Go clean over creative

When it comes to the resume, Labbé has very simple advice: "Keep it clean, neat, and defined." Remember that you're being hired not just on the basis of your knowledge or skill set, but also on the more mundane qualities every good employee needs to have. Are you punctual and organized? Can you convey your ideas well?

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There's a tendency among creative applicants, to create extremely creative resumes, and that isn't necessarily helping your chances, notes Labbé. Instead, he advises that you leave your creative work to your portfolio, and use your resume to convey your qualities as an employee and as a person. You might not think your six-month stint at Starbucks qualifies as relevant, but Labbé disagrees. "I think it's relevant because it shows me that you can show up to work, hold down a job, work with a team, give excellent customer service. It shows me that you can handle responsibility."

6. List your interests

There's another section on resumes that is commonly undervalued: the "Interests" list. Don't bother listing all of the generic things you enjoy, like good food or traveling. "Everybody likes that stuff!" Labbée says. Instead, use the Interests section to convey a side of your personality that bears some relevance to your work, or to how you'd fit in on a team. Have you done a lot of volunteer work? That says something positive about you – mention it! Do you play video games and are part of an online gaming community? You'll probably meet people with similar interests on the job – mention it! "A lot of hiring managers actually look to see if a 3D artist has done painting, sculpture or photography – any kind of artistic pursuit. That definitely helps you get a job," says Labbée.

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7. Make multiple versions

Labbée also suggests having multiple versions of your resume, tailor-made to the different companies you're interested in. "Everyone should adapt their resume to the career they want, or the job they're applying to. You want to adapt your resume to the competencies that are required for the specific position you're applying for." If you're applying to a VFX studio that specializes in movies, play up your love of science fiction films. If you're applying in game development, mention your passion for gaming.

8. "Practical" makes perfect

As for the practical stuff, Labbée suggests you limit your resume to two pages, maximum, and that you find a good resume-building software to make yours look as professional and clean as possible. He recommends both Enhancv and ResumUP. Remember, any little advantage you can give yourself will help you stand out from the competition and put you in a good position to land the ideal starting job for you.