



RTechX

Understand Tech. Find Talent. Build Careers.

The Resume Playbook

What recruiters actually look at in the first seven seconds, what the ATS really does with your file, and the bullet formulas that turn a list of duties into an interview call.

Written by a working Talent Acquisition lead — with three complete worked examples for recruiter roles, including one for candidates with no recruiting experience yet.

Companion resource to the
RTechX IT Recruitment Masterclass

Edition 1 · hello@rtechx.com

BEFORE YOU START

Why this playbook is different

Most resume advice is written by people who sell resume services. That creates a predictable bias: the scarier the process sounds, the more you need the product. It is why you have heard that robots reject three-quarters of applications, and why so much advice is about outsmarting software rather than convincing a person.

This one is written from the other side of the desk — by someone who screens resumes for a living. Everything in it is either something recruiters demonstrably do, or something the recruiter-side data supports. Where a popular claim does not hold up, this playbook says so and shows you what is true instead.

What is inside

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01	The scan — the six things a recruiter's eye lands on, and how to make sure yours are the right six
02	The ATS — where the 75% myth came from, what actually filters people out, and what changed in 2026
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04	The bullets — the XYZ formula, before-and-after rewrites, and how to quantify when you have no numbers
05	The recruiter resume — the metrics hiring managers expect, plus three complete worked examples
06	Role-wise — what each IT role family must prove, and the tell that it does not
07	Tailoring — the fifteen-minute per-application workflow
08	Before you send — a twenty-point check and six myths worth unlearning

One rule that runs through all of it

Never write a number you cannot explain. Every strong technique in this playbook makes your resume more specific, and specificity invites questions. That is the point — a resume's job is to start a conversation you can win, not to survive a scan you then fail in the interview.

01 • THE SCAN

What actually happens in the first seven seconds

Before anyone reads your resume, somebody skims it. Understanding that skim is worth more than any template you will ever download.

The most cited research here is Ladders' eye-tracking study, which put the average initial screen at 7.4 seconds in 2018, up from six seconds in 2012. Treat that as a useful model rather than a law — the sample was small and screening time varies enormously with role and volume. What has held up across every study since is not the number. It is the pattern.

The six things the eye lands on

In that first pass, attention goes almost entirely to structural information — not to your carefully written bullets.

Order	What they look at	What they are deciding
1	Your name and current job title	Is this roughly the right kind of person?
2	Current company	What environment have they worked in?
3	Previous title and company	Is the trajectory going up, sideways or nowhere?
4	Dates, scanned down the right edge	Are there gaps or very short stints to ask about?
5	Education, usually near the bottom	Any hard eligibility requirement met?
6	Whatever else the layout pulls them toward	Everything else you wrote lives or dies here

The F-pattern, and what it means for your layout

People skim documents in an F shape — across the top, down the left edge, with short rightward glances. This is one of the most replicated findings in reading research and it applies to your resume exactly as it applies to a web page.

- The top third of page one carries most of the decision. If your target role is not obvious there, you are relying on someone reading further than they usually do.
- The first two or three words of every bullet get read. The rest is skimmed. Front-load the outcome, not the context.
- The left edge is prime real estate. Job titles, dates and section headings belong where the eye already is.
- White space is not wasted space. Cluttered layouts performed measurably worse in the eye-tracking work; simple ones with clear headings performed best.

The seven-second test

Give your resume to someone who does not know your work. Let them look for seven seconds, then take it away and ask three questions: what role am I going for, where do I work now, and how many years have I been doing this?

If they cannot answer all three, the problem is your layout — not your experience. Fix that before you touch a single bullet.

02 · THE ATS

The myth that costs people the most time

You have been told that 75% of resumes are auto-rejected by robots before a human sees them. That number is not real, and believing it sends you chasing the wrong fixes.

Where the 75% figure came from

It traces back to a marketing claim by a small resume company around 2012 — a firm that closed shortly afterwards. No published methodology, no academic research, and searches of the scholarly literature turn up nothing supporting it.

A good test for any frightening job-search statistic: ask who benefits from you believing it. This one was created by a company selling the cure.

What the recruiter-side data actually shows

Finding	Source
92% of recruiters say their ATS does not auto-reject resumes on formatting, design or content. Only about 8% configure content-based auto-rejection at all.	Enhancv study of 25 US recruiters across 10+ ATS platforms
44% of platforms show an AI or fit score, but only 8% of recruiters treat it as a definitive filter; 36% explicitly treat it as guidance they verify by hand.	Recruiter-side survey data, 2026
Two-thirds of job seekers believe an algorithm rejected them. Roughly one in twelve recruiters runs a process where that could literally be true.	Huntr survey of 593 job seekers, 2026

So what actually happens to your application

An ATS is, at its core, a database. It parses your resume into fields, ranks it against the requirement, and surfaces it for a human. It organises; it rarely bins. So the real failure mode is not rejection — it is being out-ranked. A popular role in India draws hundreds of applications within days. The recruiter reads the top of a ranked list and stops. Ranked 150th of 300, you are functionally a no, even though nothing ever rejected you.

What genuinely filters people out

- Knockout questions. “Do you have at least three years of experience?” “Are you authorised to work in this country?” These are hard eligibility rules set by the employer, and they are the actual gate.
- A resume that will not parse. Text inside images, tables or headers that a parser cannot read, or a file that opens badly.
- A genuine content mismatch. Roughly half of first-submission resumes cover less than half the job description's language. That is a content problem, not a formatting one.

What has changed in 2026

Modern systems increasingly run a semantic layer over traditional parsing. They reason about meaning, so “led”, “managed” and “oversaw” register as similar. Two consequences follow.

- Keyword stuffing now actively hurts you. It inflates density without context, gets flagged, and fails the instant a human opens the file. White hidden text stopped working years ago and can flag your application.

- Exact wording still matters for technical and certified terms. “AWS Certified Solutions Architect” is not the same string as “AWS experience”. Write certifications and tool names exactly as they appear.

What to do instead

Stop optimising for a robot that mostly is not the gatekeeper. Write a resume that parses cleanly and genuinely matches the role. That satisfies the machine and the human at the same time, and it is far more learnable than the myth makes it sound.

Where to spend the effort instead

Stop doing this	Do this instead
Hunting for secret formatting tricks	Confirming your file parses — copy the text out and check it comes back in the right order
Stuffing keywords at the bottom of the page	Weaving the job description's language into real sentences about work you actually did
Chasing a 100% keyword match score	Covering the four to six requirements that are genuinely mandatory, and covering them with evidence
Sending one resume to forty companies	Adapting the headline and top bullets per application — fifteen minutes, section 07
Blaming an algorithm for the silence	Assuming you were out-ranked, and asking what would have moved you up the list

03 · THE PAGE

The anatomy of a resume that survives the skim

Nothing here is decoration. Every rule below exists because of how the page gets read in the first pass and parsed in the first upload.

Section order that works

Section	What goes in it	Length
Header	Name, target job title, city, phone, email, LinkedIn URL. No full postal address, no photo, no date of birth, no marital status.	3 lines
Headline	One line naming the role you want and your strongest qualifier. This is the single highest-value line on the page.	1 line
Summary	Two or three sentences: what you do, at what scale, with what proof. Cut every adjective that could describe anyone.	2–3 lines
Skills	Grouped by type, not one long comma soup. Tools, platforms, methods. Only things you could be questioned on.	3–5 lines
Experience	Reverse chronological. Company, title, dates, location, then 3–5 achievement bullets.	Most of the page
Projects	For freshers and career changers, this section carries the weight that experience normally would.	As needed
Education	Degree, institution, year. Move it above experience only if you graduated within the last year.	1–2 lines
Certifications	Exact official names, with the issuing body and year.	1–3 lines

Formatting rules, and the reason behind each

Rule	Why
One page under 10 years' experience. Two pages above that.	Extra length dilutes rather than adds. Nobody reads page three.
Send a PDF unless the posting asks for Word.	It preserves your layout. Modern parsers read PDFs fine.
Name the file Firstname-Lastname-Role.pdf	It sits in a folder of 300 files called resume.pdf. Yours is findable.
Keep text out of headers, footers and images.	Some parsers skip those regions entirely, taking your contact details with them.
One clean font, 10-12pt body, consistent sizes.	The eye-tracking work found cluttered layouts performed measurably worse.
Standard section names: Experience, Skills, Education.	"My Journey" is charming and unparseable.
Dates in one consistent format, right-aligned.	The right edge is exactly where the eye scans for them.
Columns are fine if built properly, risky if faked with tab stops.	Test by copying the text out. If it comes out scrambled, so does the parse.

Delete these today

- Objective statements. "Seeking a challenging role in a reputed organisation" tells the reader nothing and costs you the most valuable line on the page.
- Photo, date of birth, marital status, father's name, full address. Standard on older Indian CV templates, unnecessary everywhere, and a compliance problem in several markets you may apply to.
- Skill rating bars. Nobody knows what four stars out of five in Excel means, including you.
- "References available on request." Assumed. It wastes a line.
- Declaration paragraphs and signature blocks. A convention from paper forms, still on thousands of Indian CVs, read by nobody.
- Every adjective that describes no evidence — hardworking, dynamic, result-oriented, go-getter, passionate. If everyone can claim it, it carries no information.

04 · THE BULLETS

Formulas that turn duties into interview calls

Most resumes describe a job. The ones that get calls describe impact. That single difference decides more outcomes than font, template or length.

The XYZ formula

Popularised by Laszlo Bock, formerly head of People Operations at Google, and still the most reliable bullet structure available:

THE STRUCTURE

Accomplished [X] as measured by [Y] by doing [Z]

Element	What it is	Why it matters
X — accomplishment	The outcome or improvement you created	Leads with the thing the reader cares about
Y — measurement	The number, scale, frequency or before-and-after	Turns a claim into evidence
Z — method	The specific action, tool or decision	Shows you could repeat it somewhere else

Do not write every bullet in that exact word order — the repetition becomes obvious. What matters is that all three elements are present.

Before and after

Weak — describes a duty	Strong — shows impact
Responsible for sourcing candidates for IT roles.	Sourced and screened 40+ candidates a month for Java and DevOps roles, lifting submission-to-interview conversion from 30% to 52% by rebuilding the Boolean strings around role families.
Handled end-to-end recruitment.	Closed 18 technical roles in 9 months across backend, QA and cloud, cutting average time-to-fill from 46 to 31 days by running structured intake calls before sourcing.
Worked on LinkedIn and Naukri.	Built a 200-profile talent pipeline for a niche cybersecurity requirement using LinkedIn Recruiter projects and saved searches, producing 3 hires from a role open 4 months.
Coordinated interviews with hiring managers.	Cut interview no-shows from 22% to 7% by introducing a 24-hour confirmation call and a written brief for every candidate.

When you have no numbers

“I don’t have metrics” is the most common objection and almost always wrong. Some measurement is nearly always available.

Instead of a percentage, use...	Example
Volume	“Screened 60+ resumes a week”
Frequency	“Ran 12 screening calls weekly”
Scale	“Supported 8 open requisitions across 3 hiring managers”
Time	“Reduced scheduling turnaround from 3 days to same day”
Before and after	“Took a role from 4 months open to filled in 6 weeks”
Ranking	“Top performer of 6 on the team for two quarters”
Range, honestly stated	“15–20 submissions per month”

Never invent a number

You will be asked how you measured it — especially by a recruiter, who does this for a living and asks that question every day.

An honest range you can explain beats an impressive figure you cannot. Getting caught inflating a number in a recruitment interview does not just cost you that role; it is exactly the behaviour the interviewer is screening for.

Verbs that carry ownership

The first two words of a bullet get read. Make them count. Avoid “responsible for”, “assisted with”, “involved in” and “worked on” — all four describe proximity to work rather than ownership of it.

Built	Sourced	Negotiated
Launched	Screened	Closed
Reduced	Mapped	Partnered
Increased	Shortlisted	Coordinated
Redesigned	Calibrated	Escalated
Automated	Benchmarked	Advised
Recovered	Diagnosed	Trained
Owned	Piloted	Standardised

05 · THE RECRUITER RESUME

Writing for an audience that reads resumes for a living

Every other job seeker sends a resume to someone who screens them occasionally. You are sending one to a professional screener. They will notice the padding, the vague verbs and the missing numbers, because spotting exactly that is the job you are applying for.

The single biggest differentiator

Metrics. A recruiter resume without numbers reads as a recruiter without results — and the person reading it knows precisely which numbers exist, because they report on them every week.

The metrics a hiring manager expects to see

Metric	What it says about you	Example phrasing
Time-to-fill	You can move a requisition, not just work it	"Average 31-day time-to-fill across 24 technical roles"
Offer acceptance rate	You set expectations properly and close well	"88% offer acceptance across 2025"
Submission-to-interview ratio	Your screening is accurate — the agency world's core quality measure	"1 in 2 submissions converted to interview"
Placements or hires	Raw output at a glance	"32 hires closed in 12 months"
Requisition load	The scale you can carry	"Managed 10–12 live requisitions concurrently"
Source mix	You are not dependent on one portal	"40% of hires from direct sourcing rather than applications"
Pipeline conversion	You understand where the funnel leaks	"Improved screen-to-submit from 35% to 58%"
Revenue, agency roles only	Commercial contribution	"₹42 lakh in placement revenue, FY25"

Name the stack. It is a hard filter.

Recruiting is a tooled profession and hiring managers filter on tools. List the exact products, not the category.

- ATS: Greenhouse, Lever, Workday Recruiting, Jobvite, iCIMS, Zoho Recruit, Naukri RMS — whichever you have genuinely used.
- Sourcing: LinkedIn Recruiter or Recruiter Lite, Naukri Resdex, Dice, Monster, Boolean search, X-ray search.
- Coordination: Google Workspace, Outlook, Calendly, Zoom, Teams.
- Markets: India, US, UK, EU, APAC — name them, because shift and market experience is often the actual filter.
- Models, for staffing roles: full-cycle recruiting, W2, C2C, 1099, contract-to-hire, MSP and VMS environments.

Worked example — entering recruitment with no recruiting experience

This is the hardest version to write and the one most of you need. The rule is simple: label training work as training work, and let the specificity carry it. An interviewer will respect a well-documented simulation. They will not forgive a simulation dressed up as a placement.

Headline and summary

Aspiring IT Recruiter · Boolean Sourcing · Technical Screening · Gurugram

Commerce graduate trained in end-to-end IT recruitment, with practical coursework covering technical JD analysis, Boolean sourcing across 5 role families, evidence-based resume screening and candidate submission. Comfortable reading requirements for Java, DevOps, data and QA roles. Seeking an entry-level IT recruiter or sourcing associate position.

Training projects — the section that replaces experience

- Completed an end-to-end IT recruitment simulation covering requirement intake, JD decomposition, Boolean sourcing, resume scoring and candidate submission for a Java backend requirement (training project, RTechX IT Recruitment Masterclass).
- Built 10 Boolean search strings across backend, DevOps, data, QA and cybersecurity role families, and documented why each narrow search needed a broader counterpart.
- Screened and scored 5 sample resumes against a 100-point evidence scorecard, recording a written proceed, clarify or reject reason for each.
- Ran 2 mock recruiter screening calls using a structured call form, capturing must-have evidence, notice period and work-authorisation responses.
- Wrote 1 candidate submission summarising three evidence-backed matches and one honest capability gap.

Why this works

It is specific, it is verifiable, and it is honestly labelled. A hiring manager reading it learns that you know what an intake sheet is, what a scorecard does and why a submission names a gap — which is more than most candidates with six months of unstructured agency experience can demonstrate.

Worked example — IT recruiter, one to three years

Headline and summary

IT Recruiter · Product & Services Hiring · Bengaluru

IT recruiter with 2 years closing backend, QA and cloud roles for product and services clients. Averaged 34-day time-to-fill across 21 hires in 2025 with an 84% offer acceptance rate. Strong on Boolean sourcing, structured screening and hiring-manager calibration.

Experience bullets

- Closed 21 technical roles in 12 months across Java, QA automation and AWS infrastructure, reducing average time-to-fill from 46 to 34 days by running a structured intake call on every requisition before sourcing.
- Lifted submission-to-interview conversion from 31% to 55% by replacing keyword screening with a 100-point evidence scorecard applied consistently across candidates.
- Managed 10–12 live requisitions concurrently in Greenhouse while maintaining full disposition accuracy across 600+ candidate records.
- Sourced 45% of hires directly through LinkedIn Recruiter and Naukri Resdex rather than inbound applications, cutting dependence on job postings for niche cloud roles.
- Reduced interview no-shows from 19% to 6% by introducing a written candidate brief and a 24-hour confirmation call.
- Ran calibration sessions with 4 hiring managers after early rejections, converting vague 8-skill requirements into 4 to 5 assessable must-haves.

Worked example — US staffing recruiter

Headline and summary

US IT Recruiter · W2 & C2C · EST/PST Shift · Hyderabad

US IT recruiter with 3 years supporting direct clients and implementation partners across W2, C2C and contract-to-hire engagements. 1 in 2 submissions converted to client interview across 2025, with 28 placements closed. Experienced on Dice, LinkedIn Recruiter and Ceipal, working EST hours.

Experience bullets

- Closed 28 contract and contract-to-hire placements across .NET, data engineering and cloud infrastructure for US clients, maintaining a 52% submission-to-interview ratio.
- Sourced across Dice, Monster and LinkedIn Recruiter for EST-hour requirements, building a 300-profile bench pipeline for recurring cloud and data roles.
- Negotiated rates across W2 and C2C engagements within approved margin bands, coordinating with vendor and compliance teams on documentation.
- Cut duplicate-submission disputes to zero across 12 months by recording Right to Represent consent and submission ownership in Ceipal before every client submittal.
- Ran the recruiter-side work-authorisation question consistently across all candidates and routed every eligibility decision to the compliance team.

Notice the last bullet. On a US staffing resume, showing that you know where the recruiter's authority ends is a genuine differentiator — most candidates never think to demonstrate it.

06 · ROLE-WISE

What each role family must prove

Two reasons to know this table. It tells you how to write your own resume if you are moving between functions — and it tells you what to look for when you start screening other people's, which is the job itself.

Role family	The resume must prove	The tell that it does not
Backend engineering	Services owned, API scale, database work, production support	A skills list with no project describing what was built
Frontend	Screens shipped, component work, performance and accessibility	"HTML, CSS, JavaScript" and no product named
Full stack	Genuine depth on one side, working knowledge of the other	Twelve technologies, none of them explained
DevOps / SRE	Pipelines built, infrastructure as code, incidents handled	Tool names only, with no environment or scale
Data engineering	Pipeline ownership, data volume, orchestration, quality	Reads like a BI resume with Spark added
Data science / ML	Problem framing, model metrics, deployment and monitoring	Coursework models with no production mention
QA / SDET	Whether they built a framework or wrote scripts in someone else's	"Selenium" with no framework or coverage detail
Cybersecurity	Incidents handled, tooling, tier of work, remediation	Certifications listed, no operational example
Enterprise apps	Module, implementation phase, configuration versus integration	"SAP" without a module named
Business analysis	Stakeholders, requirements, outcomes, domain	Process nouns with no decision or result attached
Recruitment	Time-to-fill, acceptance, conversion, req load, tools	Duties described, no metric anywhere

Use this on yourself first

Read the row for the job you want. Then read your own resume and ask whether a stranger could find that evidence in seven seconds. Most people discover their resume proves they were present for the work rather than responsible for it.

07 · TAILORING

Fifteen minutes per application

One resume sent to forty companies performs worse than one resume adapted forty times — and adapting it does not mean rewriting it.

- 01 Read the JD twice. First for the role. Second with a highlighter for the four to six things that are genuinely mandatory.
- 02 Separate must-have from nice-to-have. If the posting lists twelve skills, four of them are real. Work out which four.
- 03 Check your coverage. Which of those four appear on your resume in a sentence describing work you actually did? That gap is your edit list.
- 04 Rewrite the headline to name the posted title. One line, thirty seconds, highest return of anything on this page.
- 05 Reorder your bullets so the two most relevant sit first under each role. The first bullets get read; the last ones often do not.
- 06 Match technical and certified terms exactly as the posting writes them. Everywhere else, natural language is fine — modern systems understand synonyms.
- 07 Cut anything irrelevant to this posting. Removing is tailoring too, and it buys back the space that makes the page skimmable.
- 08 Rename the file and read the top third out loud. If it does not sound like a person who wants this specific job, it is not tailored yet.

Where to spend the effort

Roughly half the language gap in a typical resume sits in the experience and skills sections. That is where job-description vocabulary belongs — inside real sentences about real work, not stacked in a keyword block at the bottom.

08 · BEFORE YOU SEND

The twenty-point check

Ten minutes. Every time. This list catches more rejections than any rewrite will.

- ☐ Target job title appears in the top third of page one
- ☐ Name, city, phone, email and LinkedIn all present and correct
- ☐ LinkedIn URL is customised, not the default string of numbers
- ☐ Email address is professional
- ☐ No photo, date of birth, marital status or full postal address
- ☐ No objective statement and no declaration block
- ☐ Every bullet starts with an action verb, not “responsible for”
- ☐ At least half of the bullets carry a number, scale or before-after
- ☐ Every number is one you can explain if challenged
- ☐ Three to five bullets per role, most relevant first
- ☐ Dates consistent, right-aligned, with gaps explainable
- ☐ Skills grouped by type, and every item defensible in interview
- ☐ Certifications written with their exact official names
- ☐ One page if under 10 years of experience
- ☐ Standard section headings a parser will recognise
- ☐ No text trapped in images, headers or footers
- ☐ Copy-pasted the text out to confirm it comes out in order
- ☐ File saved as Firstname-Lastname-Role.pdf
- ☐ Read aloud once for typos and inflated language
- ☐ Resume and LinkedIn tell the same story with the same dates

Six myths worth unlearning

The myth	The reality
75% of resumes are auto-rejected by the ATS.	Traced to a defunct company's marketing. 92% of recruiters say their ATS does not auto-reject at all.
More keywords means a better score.	Past coverage, extra keywords add noise for both the system and the human, and push you onto a second page.
White hidden keywords beat the system.	Detectable, and getting caught flags your application rather than helping it.
A paid template guarantees you pass.	No template guarantees anything. Clean structure and genuine relevance do the work.
Two columns break every ATS.	Properly built columns parse fine. Columns faked with tab stops and text boxes do not.
A longer resume shows more experience.	It shows less judgement. Nobody reads past page two.



A good resume gets you the call. Then you need the answers.

The bullets in section 05 are only writable if you have done the work behind them. The RTechX IT Recruitment Masterclass is where you do it — live, with a working Talent Acquisition lead, over three evenings.

3-DAY MASTERCLASS · ₹499

- Tech stack literacy and 15 IT role families
- Requirement intake and JD decomposition
- Boolean, LinkedIn and portal sourcing
- Evidence-based resume screening
- Recruiter calls, submissions, onboarding
- 63-page handbook, templates and recordings

5-DAY MASTERCLASS · ₹999

- Everything in the 3-day programme, plus:
- Day 4 — India hiring, live on screen
- Live sourcing on Naukri and LinkedIn
- CTC, notice period, buyout and BGV in practice
- Day 5 — US staffing, live on screen
- W2, C2C, 1099, rates and work-authorisation basics

Every student finishes with the artifacts that make section 05 writable: completed intake sheets, Boolean strings, scored resumes, a candidate submission and a recorded practice screening call. Those are the lines on your resume.

Ask a question or book a seat

hello@rtechx.com

Understand Tech. Find Talent. Build Careers.

Research cited in this playbook: Ladders eye-tracking study (2018) · Enhancv recruiter ATS study (2025-26) · Huntr job-seeker survey (2026) · XYZ bullet formula, Laszlo Bock. Hiring practice and platform behaviour change — verify anything time-sensitive before you rely on it. This is career guidance, not a guarantee of any hiring outcome.