



INDICATING RACE/RELIGION/ POLITICAL AFFILIATIONS/ SEXUAL ORIENTATION OR OTHER PERSONAL INFORMATION ON YOUR RESUME

This is one of the touchiest subjects with regard to resumes. By “indicating” we are not referring to outwardly stating these things by writing something like “Republican, Heterosexual, White, Catholic Male” on your resume. Rather, we are talking about inadvertently revealing personal characteristics about yourself through the activities you include on your resume, such as membership in certain organizations, volunteer work, activism, church affiliations, etc.

While we’d like to think that the person evaluating your resume is basing his/her opinion solely on your qualifications, we all know that external factors often come into play. For

that reason, if you have information on your resume that gives away personal attributes, it may be in your best interest to exclude it. Maybe you participated in the Christian Law Students’ Association or the Muslim Students’ Association in law school, the Federalist Society, the Young Democrats’ Organization, or the Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual Student Association. Or maybe you volunteered with a particular church group or lobbying group.

If these affiliations will not play a role in your professional life, it’s best not to include them on your resume. Not because they’re bad or wrong, but because they do not have any bearing on who you are as a professional.

There are certain situations in which this advice does not apply. If you spent the last 10 years working for a political organization or a religious nonprofit, obviously you will not exclude this from your resume. Another exception would be if you know that a particular law firm or organization shares your political or other beliefs. For instance, if you are applying to a public interest law firm, then your work as an activist might work in your favor.

One thing to consider is that even if the person reading your resume shares your personal attributes, he/she may view your disclosure of them as an indication that you cannot separate your personal life from your professional life. In addition to evaluating what you’ve done, employers will also be analyzing your resume to see what kind of choices you make. A well-thought-out resume shows intelligence, self-awareness, and insight. For this reason, you should know that you will be judged on the choices you’ve made with regard to your resume as well as by your experience itself.

When employers read a resume that does not mention religion, they do not assume that the job seeker is not religious. They just assume that the job seeker did not feel the need to mention religious affiliation on his/her resume. Conversely, if an employer sees a resume that mentions religion several times, he/she may assume that the job seeker is deeply religious and wanted that fact to be clear to the person reading his/her resume.

Either of these assumptions could be false. That’s the nature of an assumption. But you should be aware of how the inclusion/exclusion of certain personal information can be construed by the person reading your resume.