



THE DATA COMPANION FOR CAREER SERVICES

Career Services Mythbusters: Every Stat From the Debate

All the data and statistics cited live by Isaac Taylor and Jeremy Schifeling — six myths, six verdicts, one handout.

● 6 Myths Tested

● 20+ Data Points

● 2 Debaters

● Live Audience Verdicts

A PEEK INSIDE

16.4% vs. 10.7%

Callback rates with vs. without a tailored cover letter in ResumeGo's 7,287-application field experiment — the stat that opened the debate over whether cover letters are really dead.

FOR

Career Services Teams

COMPANION TO

Career Services
Mythbusters

FORMAT

6 myths · stats & verdicts



jobscan.co/organizations

"Cover letters are dead"

✓ BUSTED — WITH AN ASTERISK

16.4% vs. 10.7%

Callback rate with a tailored cover letter vs. none — a 53% relative lift. Generic cover letters barely moved the needle (12.5%). *ResumeGo field experiment 2019–20, 7,287 real applications.*

ISAAC'S CASE — NOT DEAD, DO IT RIGHT

- › Only **16% of job seekers** are confident they can find the right-fit role, and **44%** report no interview in their last month of searching. — *as shared on the webinar*
- › **4 in 10 recruiters** say they don't read cover letters very much — the myth doesn't come from nowhere.
- › Recruiters are **much more likely to read cover letters than hiring managers** — they serve different audiences.

JEREMY'S CASE — CHECK YOUR SOURCES

- › Post-AI, tailoring stopped meaning anything: across **5 million cover letters** on Freelancer.com, the tailoring→callback correlation fell **51%** and tailoring→offer fell **79%** after an AI writing tool launched. *Cui, Dias & Ye, "Signaling in the Age of AI" (2025)*
- › Source bias matters: vendors who sell cover-letter help report 83–87% read rates; neutral ATS provider Jobvite found only **26% of recruiters call cover letters important** in screening. *Jobvite via CNBC (2017)*
- › **Smaller companies are more likely to read cover letters** than high-volume enterprise recruiting teams.

THE TAKEAWAY

Tailored letters still earn a meaningful callback lift — but **generic (especially AI-generated) letters do almost nothing**. "Not dead, but do it right."

"The Open to Work badge hurts you"

🔒 DEADLOCKED — THE AUDIENCE COULDN'T DECIDE

2.8x more recruiter messages

LinkedIn's platform data: the private, recruiters-only setting **doubles recruiter messages (2x)**; the public green badge lifts them to **2.8x**. 220M+ members now use Open to Work. *LinkedIn data via CNBC, Jan 2025.*

JEREMY'S CASE — THE BADGE ISN'T SHAME

- › 2021 boom market: badge holders passed technical interviews at **44% vs. the 51% platform average**. *interviewing.io / Massenkoff (2023) — 10K+ engineers, 100K+ real interviews*
- › 2023 layoff market: the signal **flipped** — badge holders passed at **56% vs. 51%**, a highly statistically significant edge. The labor market is the variable, not the badge.
- › Ask actual recruiters and hiring managers and the reaction is **a giant shrug** — the badge doesn't factor.

ISAAC'S CASE — PERCEPTION RISK IS REAL

- › A well-known **2012 academic paper** found unemployment length hurts perceived productivity — and that risk sits with hiring managers, not recruiters.
- › Most of the benefit comes from the **recruiter-only setting**; the public badge may mostly increase inbox spam, not real invites.

FROM THE FLOOR

Both sides agreed on one danger: the badge signals "open for business" to **scammers**. And for small companies getting 10 applicants instead of hundreds, the badge is a genuinely useful sourcing tool (Matt, recruiter at a ~50-FTE company).

"ChatGPT is a satisfactory resume tool"

IT DEPENDS — ON THE PROMPT

A year-plus initiative

Schools that deploy student AI tools **well** typically need a year or more of program development — purpose, ethics, oversight, onboarding — before students use them responsibly at scale.

JEREMY'S CASE — RIGHT TOOL, RIGHT WAY

- › MIT field experiment with **480,948 job seekers**: algorithmic writing help produced **+8% hires, +7.8% job offers, and +8.4% higher wages** — with no drop in employer satisfaction. *van Inwegen, Munyikwa & Horton, NBER w30886 (2023)*
- › Since then, recruiters say AI is fine — **if it makes a targeted case**. Generic, untargeted AI resumes are recognized and penalized.
- › The failure mode is the **"minimum viable prompt"**: students don't know where the bar is, so grammatically-correct output looks done to them.

ISAAC'S CASE — THE DOWNSIDE IS HIGH

- › Employer relations teams report employers **questioning the value of entire programs** because students mass-submit generic AI applications.
- › Best case without guardrails: isolated pockets of good usage. Worst case: junk at scale, sent to your employer partners.

THE TAKEAWAY

AI helps when the **coaching is built into the tool** — teaching match over grammar. Cold ChatGPT with a one-line prompt actively hurts. (Audience member AJ put it best: students copy-paste verbatim before learning what good writing looks like.)

4

MYTH 4 · QUALIFICATIONS

"You must be 100% qualified to apply"

✓ BUSTED

~80% is the sweet spot

Jobscan data: the **optimal resume match rate is around 80%** — and results decline above it, because clearing 80% almost always requires embellishment.

98%+ match = auto-filtered

Companies now run **anti-keyword-stuffing protocols in their ATS**: resumes matching 98%+ of the job description get filtered out, because no legitimate candidate scores that high.

JEREMY'S CASE — THE LADDERS DATA

- › Pre-AI data from Ladders: candidates **50–70% qualified** had roughly peak interview odds — comparable to fully-qualified applicants. Recruiters prefer hungry over overqualified.
- › Open question: **no post-AI data exists yet** on where that bar sits now that everyone inflates resumes with AI.

FROM THE FLOOR

"100% match looks suspicious" — attendees echoed that a perfect match reads as embellishment to human reviewers, not just the ATS.

THE TAKEAWAY

Separate **being qualified from what's on the resume**. Keyword stuffing to a perfect score backfires with both algorithms and people; ~80% authentic match wins.

"Resumes must be one page"

✓ BUSTED

7.4 sec skim vs. 4:05 review

The famous "7-second resume" stat ([Ladders eye-tracking, 2018](#), ~30 recruiters) measures the initial **triage skim**. In ResumeGo's timed simulations, reviewers actually spent **2:24 on one-page resumes** and **4:05 on two-pagers** — the extra page earned attention, not the trash bin.

JEREMY'S CASE — TWO PAGES WIN, EVEN ENTRY-LEVEL

- › Across 482 recruiters and 7,712 selections, recruiters were **2.3x more likely to pick the two-page resume** — 1.4x even for entry-level candidates, rising to 2.9x for managerial roles. [ResumeGo \(2018\)](#)
- › At the University of Michigan a decade ago, one sentence over a page got you cut from the resume book. A live poll of attending coaches: **nearly every institution now allows two pages**.

ISAAC'S CASE — DENSITY BEATS PAGE COUNT

- › **ATS systems don't care about page count** — one, two, or three pages. They score density of matching content.
- › The entry-level two-page effect (1.4x — the weakest of any level) may partly reflect a confound: **students with more experience have more to say** — and get picked more for that reason.
- › Two pages of fluff serve nobody; the old "10+ years = 2 pages" rule is obsolete, but content must be real.

FROM THE FLOOR

"Your first page has to earn the second-page read" (Kenrick, former recruiter). Format matters as much as length — one crammed page gets trashed for readability alone.

"You can't measure career services impact"

✓ BUSTED

+24% more job offers

Students who used even one career service averaged **1.24 job offers at graduation vs. 1.00 for non-users** — controlled for demographics, with each additional service adding more. *NACE, "The Value of Career Services" (2022), 15,860 students.*

ISAAC'S CASE — SPEAK LEADERSHIP'S LANGUAGE

- › Activity metrics (appointments, workshops, reach) miss what leadership cares about: **readiness, retention, enrollment.**
- › Fastest budget-earning move: **tie retention to service usage** on a one-pager — retention has the clearest monetary value of any metric.
- › Low first-destination survey response? **Backfill via LinkedIn** — teams do it manually, and AI can now scrape and reconcile a roster automatically.

JEREMY'S CASE — YOU HAVE THE DATA AND THE STAKES

- › The money question: **"What is the correlation between coaching sessions attended and job offers earned?"** AI is your data scientist — upload the file and ask.
- › Grads who rated career services "very helpful" were **5.8x more likely to say college prepared them for life, 3x more likely to say the degree was worth the cost, and 3.4x more likely to recommend their alma mater.** *Gallup-Purdue Index (2016), 11,483 alumni*
- › The reach gap is real: the highest-impact services touch only **~1 in 5 graduating seniors** (internship help 25.6%, mock interviews 20.8%). *NACE (2022)*

THE TAKEAWAY

Build the chain: **service usage** → **career readiness (NACE competencies)** → **outcomes**. One-page report for leadership; detailed dashboard for you. They are two different documents.

The final scorecard

Six myths went in. Here's how the data — and the live audience — ruled.

BUSTED*

Cover letters are dead — tailored letters still lift callbacks 16.4% vs. 10.7%

DEADLOCKED

Open to Work hurts you — public badge earns 2.8x recruiter messages; perception risk persists

DEPENDS

ChatGPT is a satisfactory resume tool — only with real coaching built around it

BUSTED

You must be 100% qualified — ~80% match is optimal; 98%+ gets auto-filtered

BUSTED

Resumes must be one page — recruiters picked two-pagers 2.3x more often, even entry-level

BUSTED

You can't measure career services impact — users average 24% more job offers

How aligned are you with what employers actually expect?

Take the 5-minute Employer Alignment Assessment from the webinar — and see where your career services program stands.

Take the assessment →

From the Career Services Mythbusters webinar (July 2026), Isaac Taylor (Jobscan) vs. Jeremy Schifeling (The Job Insiders). Sources: ResumeGo field experiments (2018, 2019–20); Cui, Dias & Ye, "Signaling in the Age of AI" (2025); Jobvite via CNBC (2017); interviewing.io/Massenkoff (2023); LinkedIn data via CNBC (Jan 2025); van Inwegen, Munyikwa & Horton, NBER w30886; Ladders eye-tracking (2018); NACE, "The Value of Career Services" (2022); Gallup-Purdue Index (2016); Jobscan platform data. Full citation links: thejobinsiders.com/cheatsheet