

Monday, April 5, 2004

## The right resume: Don't be afraid to go beyond one page

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SPECIAL TO THE POST-INTELLIGENCER

The executive looks like the type of prosperous, self-confident professional one would expect: Well-dressed in a dark blue pin-stripe suit, impeccably coiffed and appropriately exuding a sense of purpose and resolve. He proffers his resume and tells me with great pride that he had to pay some purported "expert" only \$500 for the advice necessary to assemble it. I look down and realize that \$500 went down the tube. It's one page long. More than two decades of solid achievement molded, crammed, shoved and extruded onto a single page. I know now that it will be necessary to once again unearth "the speech."

The speech goes something like this: Somehow, sometime, no doubt shortly after World War II, somebody floated the idea that in order to compose an effective resume, job seekers had to limit themselves to a one-page document or nobody would read it. This is total insanity, but it somehow took root in the American psyche and has become so ingrained that even today, some 60 years later, executives still labor under the misconception that a scanty resume is what every hiring manager wants.

The real truth is that nobody, save perhaps the recent college graduate, can or should effectively represent his or her skills and accomplishments on the front of an 8 1/2- by 11-inch piece of paper. In 25 years of reviewing resumes, I've never declined to interview someone because I had to read two, three or more pages on a resume. I've decided not to interview someone whose resume was on glitter paper, included a picture of his dog, implied that they were related to Bill Gates, or claimed they were charter members of Mensa -- but never have I refused to consider a candidate because I had to take an extra 10 seconds to read a few pages of text.

The cold, hard truth is, writing a resume is just like advertising. Effective advertising means capturing the audience's attention quickly, concisely describing why someone should want to buy the product (you), and then closing the sale by suggesting a means of rapidly making the purchase. This has nothing to do with length, but a lot to do with format, language, tone and style.

A one-page, poorly written, incomplete, incomprehensible resume may not take long to read, but it also isn't going to be an effective advertisement for that really important product you want to sell -- and make no mistake, that's what you're doing. If you have more than five years of solid work experience, you are going to have accomplished a number of significant things in those five or more years, and if you want an employer to really take notice, you better feature those accomplishments in a complete and formidable way.

So how does someone do it right? Start with essentials: name, address, phone, cell, e-mail. It is astounding how many otherwise bright candidates with superior experience make it unnecessarily difficult to contact them by leaving out this most basic information. Think about it -- is there anything more maddening than being primed to purchase an attractive product that has been advertised effectively but not being told where or how to find it? The more ways a job seeker gives me to get in touch with him or her, the easier he or she makes it for a meeting to be established and a potential sale consummated.

Start with your most recent experience and work backward in time. Cite the name of the company, your title and, at all costs, indicate the dates of your employment. More potential interviews are lost when job seekers play games with dates of employment, mostly by leaving them off because of a fear that short duration positions will suggest instability. That may happen, although with the changes in the economy this is less a stigma than it once was, but nothing creates bright red flags of suspicion like omitting dates all together. You can almost hear the recipient thinking, "What the heck is this person trying to hide?"

Devote a sentence to a brief description of the company, its size and purpose. Something like, "A privately owned residential construction company with revenue in excess of \$100M and employing 200 employees in operations throughout six Western states." On the next line, devote a sentence to your responsibilities, much like "managed a staff of seven in directing the accounting, finance, and MIS departments, and was responsible for directing the company's strategic planning process."

After that comes the real heart of an effective, incisive resume -- your specific vocational accomplishments. This is what makes the difference between getting an interview and a possible position, and getting your document shuffled summarily into that inbox -- never to surface again.

Put your accomplishments in a bulleted, list-oriented format and use action verbs rather than passive verbs. For example, there is a huge difference between the person who:

"Administered the process of corporate planning and realignment" (boring, passive and bureaucratic), and the person who:

"Drove the first-ever corporate-wide strategic planning initiative and assumed responsibility for facilitating a management realignment process which streamlined the organization's culture. (Oh, all right then, this person sounds action-oriented, directive, assured.)

There is the same basic information in each of these cases, but a huge difference in style and the impression made on the reader. One suggests a sleepy, passive person just going through the motions, while the other conveys a sense of passion and intensity.

Include four or five vocational accomplishments under each job. Make sure to list your jobs in sequential order so as to demonstrate continuous employment, and if there are gaps in that history, be sure to explain them in a manner that suggests purpose and intentionality. For example:

1989-1990: Took one year sabbatical to travel to Italy, Greece and Spain and study the language and culture of the Mediterranean countries.

Put your educational credentials at the end, along with any special civic involvement you may have had. Hiring managers increasingly are looking for employees who demonstrate a work/life balance and commitment to community participation.

And remember, if it takes you three pages to do all this in way that makes the audience think they just read a commercial for a really fine wine -- so much the better.