

FOR THE JOB SEEKER - PROVE VALUE.

Be the needle in the haystack

By Robert Meier

How do you land the perfect job? First, write a resume that makes an employer want to pay your salary and bet their professional reputation on making you their hiring decision. Of all of the weapons needed to fight the job search battle, such as interviewing techniques, salary negotiation skills, body language, comportment, networking, etc., the least understood item in the career search arsenal is the lowly resume. Not knowing how to compose a compelling resume leads to career tragedy. Since 98% of all job candidates are eliminated at the resume screening, if your credentials on paper aren't strong enough to justify an interview you will be overlooked, eliminated and pushed aside.

Of course it is during an interview that you actually land an offer, but the resume leads to the interview. It is important to note that the key to winning interviews is to write a resume that *proves beyond a shadow of a doubt* that you are the obvious choice out of the candidate pool. In other words your resume needs to pre-sell you before you get to the interview. In order to be pre-sold, you must prove your potential value by demonstrating how you are worth more than the salary you're requesting. If you want to earn \$80,000 a year, you must prove that your value-added contribution is worth much, much more than \$80,000 (my rule of thumb is a 5 times multiplier).

If your resume does not prove your value it can derail your career and deflate your salary. A boring, bland or two-dimensional resume is not only un-compelling to the reader, it does not accomplish the cardinal goal of the résumé's purpose in the first place - motivating recruiters to make you the golden boy or girl. Overall, the end effect is a prolonged job search, lowered earnings and frustration. I truly believe that a boring resume has limited more careers than poor education or weak experience. In fact it is much easier to overcome limited education or experience than prove that poorly communicated abilities on paper are irrelevant.

People write boring resumes because they are easy to write. Since it is widely agreed that an initial resume scan takes 30 seconds or less, the writer assumes that simple is effective. What you fail to realize is that the initial scanning is only the first hurdle. Once a recruiter likes your background, reviewing time expands to 3-5 minutes. Remember, the executive or manager who is responsible for identifying new talent puts their reputation on the line based on who they recommend. You must substantiate their recommendation - in print. While an easy-to-read resume is the goal, one that is so simple that key results are not explained or quantified can leave the reader confused, and once the reader is confused, *hasta la vista baby*.

So what can be done to help your chances? Write the holy grail of resumes; one that is easy to scan yet has enough information to prove, not imply, your value. The fix is not adding white-space by leaving out details, but picking those jewels of your career storyline that will illuminate professional luster and bait a recruiter's attention.

A powerful resume proves how you impacted a company's bottom line (i.e. increased profits and revenues or reduced costs). It shows the employer the value of hiring you. The key to avoiding a bland, two-dimensional resume is to avoid focusing on job functions. Most job seekers highlight functional duties, for example: "Manage staff of ten and a \$1.5 million budget." This is nice overview information, but it leaves out what sells you, and what sells you is tied to what you did in your division, group, unit, office or enterprise that made money or prevented the company from spending money inefficiently (this is the bottom line). It's more important to show the value of specific contributions you made than to tell someone your functional duties.

For example

Let's say you introduced a new system to share past project quotes that is now accessible to all company employees. You might write:

Project

4/00-6/00 - Created the *Knowledge Manager*, a searchable database that supplies all past project quotes to simplify the RFQ (request for quote) process.

Result

Increased closure rate on pitch-to-assignments from 10% to 22%, which grew revenues by \$450,000 - the largest year-to-date sales increase in company history.

Obviously adding nearly half a million to a company's revenue stream is much more compelling than noting your staff management duties. To jazz up a resume you must pinpoint the projects and results that

prove you add value. Remember, employers hire staff who make a difference to the revenue, profit and cost management goals of the company.

Robert Meier is president of Wm. Meier & Associates, and a career coach focusing on transitioning professionals into full and satisfying employment. He can be reached at 312-222-9966 or by e-mail at wmmeier@aol.com