

Your Resumé: A Snapshot of You

By Michael F. Doody

The meeting was beginning at 2 p.m. My colleague and I were there; the materials were sent and arrived ahead of time. We were all set with our agenda which was an orderly approach to describe the search process and how the market responded to the search. We planned to talk about each of the CNO candidates, whom we had personally interviewed, and discuss the client's questions about the candidates.

Then the client would select those he wanted to interview, and we would discuss the on-site process, dates and steps following that first round of interviews. Right on time, the CEO and his Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO) came into the meeting room where we had been escorted upon our arrival. After the usual hellos and "How was your trip?" we opened the folders, intent on following our agenda. The CEO immediately started: "I reviewed the resumes you sent us, and I really like Candidate B — but I am not so sure about the others." He went on to talk about the lack of experience, as he saw it in the resume, of Candidate C. And then he said that "Although Candidate A has been a CNO, the resume was weak, didn't really address what she had done and accomplished, and as a result I was left without a good feeling about her."

The meeting proceeded with a lot of discussion as to why Candidates A and C were included, and the CEO ultimately agreed to see Candidate B and A, but not

C. The end result was not a big surprise. But it required a lot of explanation about what we had learned about Candidate A from our interview, and her references including where she had worked previously, what she had accomplished and why she was a viable candidate.

It's a short story, though not an unusual one, that points out the importance of your resume. The resume should be a snapshot of you, your background and experience, your major roles and accomplishments — a quick look at who you are and what you might bring to your next position. The resume should get you to the next step — the all-important interview. But the all-important interview might never happen if you don't pay attention to the all-important resume.

Talk with four different people about what the resume should and should not include, how many pages is too many, whether to include a "snail mail" address, etc. You'll get five different answers to your questions. Nevertheless, here are some suggestions:

- Include contact information so it's easy for the person to whom you sent the resume to be in touch with you. Make sure your answering machine/voice mail message is professional.
- Include dates for each of your jobs and degrees.
- Don't have any gaps in dates. If there's a gap, you never know what the reader might assume about what you were doing during that period of time.
- Keep the length of the resume within reason, but that's less important than including factual and relevant information about your work experience.
- Briefly describe the organization and your role. Make the primary focus what you did, how you managed and led, what you accomplished and the outcomes.

- Make the resume easy to read. List accomplishments using bullet points. White space is OK. Don't crowd the page.
- Be specific. If you improved patient satisfaction, for example, state that it rose from the 56th percentile to the 78th percentile as measured by ABC Company.
- Unless you were a one person band, talk about the team. But don't be bashful about taking credit for your role. The resume and interview are the appropriate opportunities to focus on you!
- Always be factual, truthful. Don't embellish, exaggerate or mislead. If I find that you were not truthful about a title, when you left the organization or any other point on your resume, I will quickly lose interest. Don't put your picture on the resume.
- Be sure to include your professional activities and organizations. Also include information about your community involvement.
- Don't include names and contact information of references. Those should be available to share with search consultants or prospective employers at their request.
- List your current position first, and then move in reverse chronological order to your first position. It's not necessary to include part time jobs while in school, unless they were positions in your given career field.
- Be sure the resume is clear and error free — no misspellings, no grammatical errors. Proofread it carefully. Have your spouse or someone you trust proofread it. Then have three other people proofread it.
- Don't be "cute" in the resume. It is a professional document and should reflect you at your best.
- Update your resume from time to time to be sure it is fresh.

Remember, the purpose of the resume is to get you in the front door and get you that face-to-face meeting with the search consultant or prospective employer. Make sure it represents you well. Finally, make sure you don't have to depend on someone else to explain to a prospective employer why he or she should see you. Instead, let your resume tell the compelling story about you!

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