



“Am I My Resume?”

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“Chorus Line,” long-running Broadway show and movie starts with a question posed by the scores of performers hoping to land parts in a Broadway show: “Am I My Resume?” And it’s followed immediately by another song that represents the reality for these candidates – and for many veterans seeking jobs as well: “I really need this job!” It’s a powerful theme that every veteran looking for a job needs to address.

Despite the ever-evolving technology that has revolutionized the job seeking and hiring processes in today’s organizations, the resume has remained a core element for the vast majority of individuals seeking jobs. Whether they are words entered into the technology of an online application process or a more traditional “paper” resume being duplicated at your local print store, the resume remains one of the most important first steps on your job search.

But there’s a reality you need to confront and it’s summarized by “Am I My Resume?” The reality is simple: a very high percentage of resumes are, simply stated, boring. Extremely Boring!

I’ve personally reviewed 1000’s of resumes. Most have appeared to be 100% factually accurate – and 100% boring. An accurate representation of names, dates, companies, addresses, phone numbers, e-mails, and boring job description information just doesn’t answer the question “Am I My Resume?” Alternatively a well-written resume, focused on what you’ve “accomplished,” not what you’ve done makes a big difference. A well written resume that reveals some of your personality – without being outrageous – will generate a desire on the part of the HR representative or hiring manager to learn more about you – that’s gets you to the interview.

Consider this difference – based on my own military experience. The “Job Description” version: “Responsible for “Mail Room” operations serving training company, included supervising two subordinates.” The “Accomplishment” version: “Revised all in-coming

and out-going mail procedures for a Company Mail Room, within thirty days, to re-gain compliance with U.S. Mail procedures.”

An important point: Many of us, as normal human beings, tend to “understate” our accomplishments as “just doing my job.” That’s why seeking assistance in creating your resume is critical – working with someone who really pushes to find out what you actually accomplished. I work with a young man recently who came in presenting a very typical, very boring resume. The resume described one of his jobs accurately – but it didn’t describe what he really accomplished in that job. After what he described as a “grueling” one hour interview with me, asking question after repeated question, about what he really did in this job, I had a clear picture of not only what he did, but what he accomplished, why it mattered to his employer, and how he did it. That’s what ended up on his resume!

Another Reality

There’s another reality you need to face – and another reason why you need to invest (yes, invest, not spend) the time necessary to create a strong resume. Traditionally, many human resource professionals, facing more applicants than openings, used some variation of a relatively simple “sorting” system that more often than not resembles “A-B-C” grading. 100 resumes received for one opening were quickly sorted into “C’s” – candidates clearly not qualified for the position, “B’s” for maybe’s, and “A’s” for the real possibilities. The goal of most professionals (and the admitted result from 100’s of professionals) was to get approximately 10% of the resumes into the “A” pile, maybe 10-15% of the resumes into the “B” pile, and 75-80% into the “C” pile. It’s not too hard to tell that the overwhelming percentage of people hired are going to come from the “A” pile.

While this relatively simple sorting process emphasizes the important to job applicants of making sure they don’t make simple mistakes that land them in the “C” pile – or create a weak resume that doesn’t clearly describe their accomplishments and lands them in the “B” pile, today’s technology and today’s economy create an even more challenging environment for the job seeker.

Technology has had a major impact on this dynamic for many years now. A hundred resumes received in the mail from a Sunday classified ad has become a thousand applicants received electronically through an organization’s website or applicant processing system. The power of internet search has created a different version of the “A-B-C” sort. With searching tools, a recruiter can now “just look for ‘A’s’” And the “A” pile is created electronically, not by scanning each resume personally but by “selecting” resumes with certain keywords or eliminating resumes without certain key words. The “B”

pile is only created if necessary and even then it is also done electronically. With today's applicant tracking systems, it is relatively easy to narrow the one thousand resumes down to 10 or 20 candidates with very sophisticated, but "electronic" screening measures.

Add the current economy into the equation and it's complicated even more – HR professionals are reporting two to four times as many applicants for positions. If an organization takes the "job fair" route, hundreds may show up for a limited number of positions. A recent job fair, offered by a single company, produced over 600 in-person applicants for 20 positions.

I would argue in the best of times that individuals wanting the best jobs in the best organizations need to bring their "A" game to their resumes (and to their e-mails and their applications). But the reality just a few years ago was that people easily got to "suit up" for the game with "C" qualifications on a resume. Today the "C" game isn't even going to get you into the parking structure, the "B" resume will not get you onto the playing field – it takes an "A" game to just to be considered – it's going to take an "A+" resume to get the job you really want.

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