



## Superman or Wonder Woman?

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Online Community  
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### ***Superman or Wonder Woman Does Not Belong on Your Resume***

I recently evaluated the resume of an individual who is making a military career transition. He sent me the current version of his resume and upon careful reading it is filled with significant accomplishments. However, the first impression I had of viewing the resume was “Is this guy Superman?” (If the resume had been from a woman, I would have asked “Wonder Woman?”) The second part of the resume, after a “Professional Summary” that was a few sentences too long, contained a list of almost 20 “Skills.”

First impressions, in this case the quick scan of a resume, are critical. The resume I’m evaluating has other problems, a font that is too small and almost no margins. But this “Look, I can do everything” top section could easily land the resume in the “B” or “C” pile. The core problem, from a hiring manager’s viewpoint, is that, because I am looking for someone to perform in a specific position, this resume does not speak to what I’m looking for. Also the list of skills is extremely broad, covering almost every business function from marketing to management, from purchasing to project management, from “speeding bullets to tall buildings.”

I usually don’t hesitate to evaluate a resume and provide tough criticism. However, I hesitated on this one just in case I was flashing back to Saturday morning television. I contacted a respected colleague with whom I’ve worked on multiple projects developing materials and teaching improved hiring techniques. Her e-mail nailed the concerns that I had:

*The resume is designed to GET YOU THE INTERVIEW, NOT describe everything plus the kitchen sink. It’s like throwing darts in the dark and*

*hoping you will hit someone. Also, with the time that people probably look at resumes now, it's time for a regroup.*

## **Solutions**

The most important solution for this does require some effort. “Skills” are what you have, not what you’ve done. It is important to understand this reality. “Having” a skill does not mean you are good (or exceptional) at using it and it does not mean it is something that represents one of your strengths. So, your skills should be included in the accomplishments you list for each position you describe on the resume. Think about the top 2-3 accomplishments for each position and write them in a fashion that describes the “Challenge” you faced, the “Action” you took, and the “Results” achieved. The “Action” you took is where the “Skills” should be clearly stated.

The next part of the solution is that, in today’s world of easily changed resumes with multiple versions, your resume should be tightly customized for each position you apply for. I said “tightly customized” for a reason. Based on your research about the position and the company you are applying to, your resume should highlight the accomplishments and skills best related to that position. There’s no excuse today for a “one size fits all” resume.

Finally, if you insist on including a list of “Skills” on your resume, place them after your accomplishments. “Skills” by definition are going to be general. So in addition to the “Having versus Doing” mentioned above, they almost always fail to describe what having that skill really means. Unfortunately, having “Microsoft Office Skills” has become the classic example of a skill that tells a hiring manager absolutely nothing about what having that skill means. Does it mean you are a “Certified” Microsoft Office Specialist or does it mean you’ve got the basics of opening and saving a document? The same can be said of almost any skill listed. To repeat, it is in your “Accomplishments” that you describe what you’ve done with those skills.

## **One More Thing**

It is clear that what I’ve described above is, in today’s language, TMI, too much information. There is a very important consideration here and because I started by going back to Superman, I’ll go even further back with “*omne trium perfectum*,” a Latin phrase

that most will easily see states that “everything that comes in threes is perfect.” The “Rule of Three” suggests that information that comes in sets of three is more effective and **easier to remember**. It is considered a fundamental element for storytelling, writing, and presentations. I’ve repeatedly stated in my resume advice that you should include 2-3 accomplishments for each of your positions. In each of those accomplishment statements, identify the 2-3 skills used to achieve the result stated.

## **Your Resume Is a Marketing Piece**

Your resume is not your work/life history. It should be written to entice the hiring manager, to make him or her want to interview you. If it appears to me that I know everything about you from your resume, I will wait until after I talk to some other possible candidates before calling you. You want the hiring manager to be very curious to know more about your accomplishments. Your resume is much better if it’s a strong accomplished Clark Kent or Diana Prince, not Superman or Wonder Woman.

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