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What is on your résumé?

By Paperitalo Staff

Like many other matters in life, résumés (c.v.'s) and résumé reviews have become more sophisticated in recent times. Because I see many résumés as I try to help you in the industry who suddenly find yourselves out of work, I can tell you if you have not updated your résumé in a few years, you are largely clueless.

First, of course, and this sounds almost quaint at this point in time, your résumé must reflect accomplishments, not merely attendance. Although this has been the norm for thirty years, candidates still have a propensity to list the period of time they worked for a company, not their accomplishments while there. The second worse statement is one that says you had xx number of people reporting to you and, again, no accomplishments. The obvious conclusion a résumé reader takes away from this is you were probably fired because you could not manage people.

You need actionable results--"responsible for implementing project saving 20% of lubricant cost per year" or "our team reduced downtime 2% by doing ____." No one cares if you were there or ran an empire--it is all about how you spin the invoice printer or slow the check writer while behaving in a legal, moral and ethical manner.

The above, however, are elementary issues compared to the sophisticated scrutiny job hunters face today. Based on instructions I have received from companies I know who have been hiring in the last few years, many other things on your résumé can disqualify you before you ever start.

For instance, some will disqualify you for working for certain employers. Small, entrepreneurial paper companies will likely not hire you if you worked for one of the behemoths in our industry. Why? You are used to a slower pace and a more tortuous decision making process. Small companies decide to do things and do them now. They expect you to do your homework, make a decision, and stand behind it. So, these elements are important if you have worked for one of the big companies. In the small companies, it will be a badge of honor for you if you got fired from a behemoth for doing successful projects or managing departments successfully by shortcutting the system and getting things done. It will take some finesse to write this professionally on your résumé, but if this has been your track record, you should at least give it a try. And, in such a case, you may want to prepare different versions of your résumé to send to the entrepreneurial companies than the one you might send to other large companies.

I have recently seen another situation which might be considered counter-intuitive. This is the case of being highly active in a professional organization. Most assume without thinking that such accomplishments will be valued by a prospective employer. Not necessarily so--I have had more than one employer, when viewing a résumé, reflect that such a person would probably not be very valuable to them for it looks like they spend all their time doing self-aggrandizement tasks elsewhere. "Why do I want to pay for them to spend their time at conferences and board meetings?" is the question I have been asked. So, you might just want to say you have been a member of such organizations and avoid all the details of the honors lauded upon you. (Note: such accomplishments are valued on an independent consultant's résumé --your prospective client will not be paying for your time and expenses while attending such functions and your credentials may be burnished in their eyes for being recognized by your peers)

Yet another relatively new approach to hiring is testing. Often these are personality or aptitude tests. Employers are careful to only use standardized tests which will keep them out of trouble with labor regulators, but they still use them. Many a candidate with otherwise excellent credentials have been eliminated in this process.

Speaking of tests, we have a couple we offer here. If you have not taken them already, you may wish to do so.

For safety this week, safety records are certainly important, too, when considering a new hire. If you have been responsible for improving a safety record and can prove it, I would suggest you put it on your résumé.

Be safe and we will talk next week. ##