

Fine Tuning Your Resume

By Becky Cole

To be successful in finding a job in the current economy, take a second look at your resume, and learn to re-think what you are saying in it. Use your resume to market your skills and abilities, rather than just a listing of where you have worked over the past few years.

- **Read the job description and use their language**

An increasing number of employers are using software to scan resumes to help them determine who to consider for an interview. The software looks for specific words and phrases that are important to the employer, and then ranks the resume according to the set criteria. However, even if there is a human who will do the initial screening, using their language will show them you are serious about wanting the job.

Make sure you are talking about the same thing. Even if you are applying within the same industry, it is a mistake to assume that all employers use the same word to mean the same thing. For example, take the job title, "administrative assistant." To one employer it may mean someone who schedules appointments and types correspondents. To another, it means the person runs the office.

Recently, I came across a resume of a person who was applying for a sales position with a small non-profit organization. The "sales" part involved selling services, not things or equipment. According to the resume, this person had several years of experience in sales, but it wasn't in selling services and it wasn't in the particular industry of this organization. Not having experience in that particular industry wasn't so much of an issue for me, as was the assumption that selling equipment is the same as selling services. This person never took the time to explain to me how the skills listed transferred to the new industry or the different side of selling.

- **List your accomplishments, instead of the job functions. Following are some examples of how to re-word your resume:**

If it states this: *Consider this:*

Answered phones
Answered an average of 15 calls per hour

Cashier
Rang up sales of 20 or more customers per hour

Project Management
Coordinated workflow for three projects simultaneously

Sales
Acquired three new customers per month for 12 months in a row

Learn quickly
Successfully learned proprietary software system in two months

Make sure what you put is truthful information, but think about it from the employers perspective. Which person would you rather consider hiring - the one who just worked in sales or the one who brought in three new customers every month?

- **Speak to the needs of the employer**

Get rid of the idea that there is a "one size fits all" resume. Each resume you send out should be addressing the needs of the employer to whom you are sending it. If you are interested in that job, it is up to you to market yourself to them. This means including only those things that are relevant to the job for which you are applying. Don't include that you can run a three-minute mile, unless you are applying for a position as a track coach.

To help you sort this out, take a look at the job description they have provided. Make a column for each of the functions they have listed. Then in each column, list where and how you have accomplished that with a previous employer. The things you have listed in these columns are what should be on your resume for that particular job. If you have a gap under one of the headings, decide how you are able and/or willing to address this. In your cover letter, let the employer know your plan for addressing the gap. This lets them know you have read the job description and understand what they are asking for, and are willing to take responsibility for learning the new skill.

Are you comfortable with learning a new skill? If not, then this might not be the right job for you.

Be honest about it, too. Don't just make up something because you think it is what they want to hear. If you shine in all the other areas, they may be willing to call you in for an interview anyway.

Do you have a success story about how you landed a job or a resources that would be useful for others to know about? Drop me a line and let me know.

*Becky Cole can be reached at:
outreachne@yahoo.com*

**Employment
news
MINNESOTA**

