If You Remember Only One Thing in Your Job Search: Less is More!

By Elisa Sheftic

This applies to both your resume and your interview. One of the biggest issues we see with candidates is that they try to get across TOO much information. Recruiters are inundated with resumes and, in general, have five-plus interviews a day. So, in order to use time most efficiently, it makes sense to stick to the higher-level points, such as your core competencies and achievements. If more detail is needed, it will be requested. Here is an example:

I interviewed a seasoned finance professional who had many accomplishments throughout his career and had exceptionally strong skills in tax planning. His resume was filled with detail after detail about his varied and extensive experience. However, the greatest value he would bring to an employer was his years of experience doing tax planning for multinational corporations -- and that was nowhere to be found! There were no core competencies summarized at the top of his resume and there were no descriptions of the companies he worked with, and so I had to spend a great deal of time ascertaining the common thread unifying his career path and the size and nature of the companies where he had the most experience.

When I interviewed him, the same issue was prevalent… no universal core-competency theme tying his experience together. During our first phone interview, for each question I asked, he spent what seemed like an hour giving the most minute details of his experience. I felt as though I could go out to lunch, come back, and he would still be talking. (A little recruiter humor there, but you get the point.) I stopped him and asked him to think about what he would say if he could get across only three keys points in two minutes. Again he responded with a lot of extraneous information, without really demonstrating what his return on investment would be to a potential employer. That was unfortunate, because he had the skills necessary to be successful. He simply could not articulate it.

We see this mistake very frequently, and so I think the point is worth reiterating: Ask yourself, what are the three most important things you would like an employer to know about you in one minute from both your resume and interview? Then practice your answer, update your resume and make it permeate your overall job search.

The underlying value of a resume and the interview process is to show the prospective employer that you are the RIGHT person for the job. So make sure this is easy to ascertain very quickly, in both cases. I always tell candidates that if they are answering an interview question and it is taking 2 minutes, you are answering a minute too long and if it takes a recruiter who is reviewing your resume 10 seconds to see what type of job you are seeking and what job you are qualified for, it is taking 5 seconds too long.

So, if you remember only one key point in your job search, my vote is for: LESS is MORE. ∎

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