

Your Resume Isn't About You! Four Tips to Target Your True Audience and Get That Interview

Wait! Say that again? My resume, outlining my experience, my skills, my accomplishments throughout my entire professional life...it's not about me?

It is about you, yes. But stick with me for a minute.

Studies show that, while an average job posting will receive about 250 applicants, [only 5 or 6 people will get called for an interview](#). More than ever, your resume needs to be relevant to its target market: in this case, the hiring manager. Your resume is an advertisement to the hiring manager. She wants to read about how you'll meet her business needs and solve her problems. In sales speak, your skills are "features" and your accomplishments are "benefits," speaking to your consumer the way an ad for baby food speaks about "great flavors" and "nutrition" to new parents.

When your resume is functioning appropriately as your targeted marketing campaign, the hiring manager discovers that your product – that is, you – are just what she needs. She's reading about the solution to her problems. She's reading about her "future state," where she and the rest of her team are less burdened by a backlog of work you can expertly address.

Your resume isn't about you – it's about the hiring manager. And when you write about her in your resume, when you write about your target audience, you get the call for the interview.

How can you use your resume to talk to that hiring manager about how you're going to make her life easier? It's about understanding what she wants for that open position you're trying to fill, focusing on those skills she'll find most valuable, speaking the language of her profession, and letting her know the results you can deliver. This is how you get there:

Issue #1: Understand what the hiring manager wants

Solution: Read that job posting carefully

You might read a job posting and say, "Hey, I can do that job!" But does your resume say it?

The hiring manager has a wish list of qualities she wants to see in the candidate that fills her open position. It's likely that list of skills and abilities are "key words." They're entered into [an applicant tracking system](#), a software application that aids the hiring process by scanning resumes, looking for those key words to narrow a large pool of candidates into a smaller, highly qualified group that's worth a set of human eyes. The more skills you have matching the hiring manager's wish list, the better your targeted ad campaign has worked, and the higher your resume is ranked.

Let's look at an example: If the hiring manager has taken the time to tell readers that her new HR manager should have a good understanding of labor relations and unions, performance management, and rewards and recognition, then your resume should clearly state that. You may think that you've covered those qualities when you wrote, "Led HR function for a 250-person warehouse," but spell it out for her so take note of the skills and leave no room for doubt:

“Led HR function for a warehouse team of 250. Oversaw labor relations and built relationships with union representatives. Designed performance management processes and reward and recognition programs, improving productivity and building engagement.”

When a hiring manager is looking for a set of skills, offer her—and her tracking system—your matching arsenal of talents. Read that job posting thoroughly and address her needs in your resume.

Issue #2: Focus on the skills the hiring manager finds valuable.

Solution: Tell her what she wants to know...and leave out the rest.

It’s easy to forget about what hiring managers are looking for when you’re focused on making yourself look good.

Let’s look at this job posting and hiring process from her point of view for a moment. A hiring manager posting for project manager wants to hear about a candidate managing projects to successful outcomes. She’s reading through resumes to find that candidate that has determined scope and resources needed, managed budgets, and met milestones.

Perhaps you include all those things in your resume, and in addition, you talk about how you have a bartending job at night to make extra cash.

Nope, nope, nope! Take that out. Your bartending job isn’t relevant to your search for a new project management position and including it can distract a hiring manager from seeing what she’s looking for.

You may be thinking, “Well, duh. That’s obvious!” But there are times when it’s not so obvious what you should and shouldn’t include.

For instance, you may currently have a role that features dual responsibilities. Perhaps you currently work in an internal communications role that includes the planning of an annual leadership event, attended by a couple thousand people. You handle venue sourcing, hotel, and travel logistics in addition to the content.

When you decide you’re going to seek out a new internal communications role, that part of event planning that includes negotiating a solid contract with the venue, choosing food and beverage, and striking up group rates with airlines is probably not relevant information. Your hiring manager will want to see your employee engagement statistics, your success rate in handling crisis communication, but not your ability to drive a hard bargain with United Airlines. Give it a casual mention, of course, but don’t dedicate a lot of valuable resume real estate to activities that hiring managers don’t care about.

It’s among [resume writing best practices](#) to keep your resume relevant, factual, and at a length of about two pages. The urge to add *all* your talents – and *all* your experience – to your resume is huge, but try to resist! If you’ve had a twenty-year career and you’ve done more than one kind of job, skip over long descriptions of experiences that aren’t applicable, or highlight only those things about those past roles that show relevant skills. The hiring manager wants to see that you can juggle the demands of her role, not that you can juggle chainsaws and tennis balls.

Issue #3: Speak the Hiring Manager's Language

Solution: Translate your industry language into hers

A recruiter spends [about 7 seconds scanning a resume](#), and a hiring manager will spend a little longer on it once it passes muster with her recruiting team. That said, when you describe what you do, it should be in terms that make sense to the hiring manager, and in terms that can be understood quickly

If you're a job hunter looking to change industries, make every effort to "translate" your own industry lingo into verbiage that makes sense to the hiring manager and her industry.

Wait! What if you're a learning and development professional? Isn't "training" just "training," no matter how you look at it?

Not necessarily.

Some of the country's best trainers come right from the military, a set of organizations that educates their soldiers all day, every day, in preparation for a variety of events that most private sector businesses can't even begin to fathom. They're thwarting terrorists, fighting the war on drugs, and...well...just fighting wars.

A former military professional might include a phrase on his resume like this one:

"Researched current terrorist tactics and procedures to create realistic mock insurgent cells, preparing soldiers to execute appropriate responses in a hostile environment."

What's a hiring manager going to do with that kind of information?

Going back to that wish list of skills and "key words" that a hiring manager uses, let's see how that sentence might translate into her corporate language. She's definitely not looking for someone who researches terrorist tactics, but she *is* looking for someone who "creates informed and well-researched training curricula." She's not familiar with mock insurgent cells, but she really wants to find a person who can "deliver classroom training."

See where we're going with this? That same sentence, in a language that the hiring manager understands, might read:

"Collaborated with subject matter experts and researched best practices to create training curricula. Delivered engaging face-to-face content simulating real life situations to ensure safe and productive field operations."

In both cases, the trainer is telling hiring managers that he researches and puts together training programs, using information that's current and supplied by people who know what they're doing. He's also communicated that he can deliver that training face-to-face, another of her requirements. She may not have understood that in the first version, but this new version "speaks her language."

Every industry has its lingo, and when you're crafting your resume, drop that slang in favor of clear language and key words that make sense for the position to which you're applying. Your hiring manager will respond favorably if she understands how your skills fit her needs.

Issue #4: Let the Hiring Manager Know What She Can Expect

Solution: Talk about your accomplishments and results

Nothing is more powerful than a list of ways you your former employers have benefitted from your service, and so many job seekers don't leverage this element the way they should. Your ability to produce remarkable, measurable results is what sets you apart – what differentiates you – in this targeted marketing campaign.

If a hiring manager is looking at your resume and two others, and all three candidates have the same set of skills, adding in results and accomplishments will give you an edge. The hiring manager wants to know, "What are you going to do for our company?" and the more a candidate can tell her about what he's capable of producing, the more interested she will be.

For example, an operations manager candidate might add these skills to his resume:

"Develop and implement operational strategies for the production of widgets."

A second candidate, one with the same set of skills and accomplishments, might instead write:

"Develop and implement operational strategies for the production of widgets, maximizing efficiency with optimized processes."

A third candidate, whose accomplishments were also the same, may choose to describe his achievement like this:

"Develop and implement operational strategies for the manufacture and production of widgets, maximizing efficiency with optimized processes."

- *Realized a labor savings of \$100K annually and an increase in parts-per-hour production of 105% through the design of new cell and reduction of setup times."*

Which of those candidates do you think the hiring manager will call first? Of course, candidate #3 will be the first to get a call from our hiring manager. He took the time to describe his skills and also to show how he leveraged them to produce favorable results for his organization. "Show and tell" is so much better than a plain, old "tell."

It's important to note that, while the hiring manager may have included adjectives like "excellent" and "fantastic" in her job posting, a resume writer should not be so liberal with the self-praise. It's not necessarily productive or even tasteful to describe yourself as a "fantastic leader who motivates teams to provide excellent customer experiences." Instead, use your achievements to communicate your fantastic-ness:

Led a team of 20 customer service representatives to achieve a 99% customer satisfaction rating, the highest among all seven of the organization's call centers.

That's a bullet point that shows the hiring manager that you [understand what "excellent" and "fantastic"](#) look like, how they're measured, and how those qualities impact her organization!

When writing your resume to highlight your achievements, make them easier for hiring managers to see. Group a description of your day-to-day skills in paragraph form, and then group your accomplishments below in with bullet points, ensuring that all the ways you saved the company money, improved margin, and increased productivity will pop off the page.

So...in conclusion...my resume, the document that outlines all my skills, experiences, and accomplishments, is all about that hiring manager and what she wants for the position. If I talk to her about her needs and how I fill them, speak a language she understands, keep my story relevant, and share my achievements, I'm more likely to score the interview?

Yes! Your resume is [an important step](#) in having the career you want. It's is your targeted marketing campaign, and when you're using language and facts that are specific to your target audience, you'll be much more successful in your results. This doesn't mean that every hiring manager is going to call you. It does mean that you're giving yourself every chance, as a candidate, to land a position with a company that's really a good fit.

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