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## How Not to Write a Resume

By Kevin Donlin

You can learn a lot about how to do something right by first learning what NOT to do. Take resumes, for example. I review about 200-300 a month, and most have at least 2-3 mistakes. Yet, all those hundreds of mistakes can be grouped into just a handful of categories, which you would do well to avoid. Read on and learn how to write a better resume by avoiding the mistakes of others, some of them unintentionally hilarious...

### **Mistake #1: “Golden Retriever Syndrome”**

- Never talk about yourself in terms that could also describe a hunting dog, like the following language, which appears in far too many resumes I see: “Hard-working, self-motivated and dependable individual.”
- Tired phrases like that mean nothing to employers, because they could apply to almost anyone ... or almost anyone’s dog.
- Instead, dump the empty assertions and back up the claims in your resume with facts, like this: “Proven sales skills. Ranked in top 3 among 78 reps for 5 straight years, exceeding sales quotas for 18 of 20 quarters.” See the difference?

### **Mistake #2: A Verbal Jungle**

- To improve your resume (or anything you write), read it out loud. Since writing is just words on paper, reading it aloud will help you write as you would speak.
- Here’s an example of language so dense, you’ll need a machete to find any meaning: “Directed assembly of elements from business units in engineering, development, program management, distribution, and legal to effect market research, proposal responses, and contract management into comprehensive, virtual, successful teams ...”
- After reading that three times, I’m still baffled.
- Worse, do you think employers have time to read a resume three times to figure it out? No. As a result, that job seeker is still looking for work, I’ll wager.
- Solution: read your resume out loud before sending it out.
- If you find yourself gasping for breath halfway through a sentence, stick a period or dash in there and break it in two.
- And if anything you write sounds less than 100% clear when you read it aloud, revise until it would make sense to your mother. Doing so will ensure that your resume resonates with readers at all levels, from HR managers to your future boss.

### **Mistake #3: Negative Nuance**

Just one stray word can derail a whole sentence. You know that. But in a resume, the wrong choice of words can brand you as unprofessional or careless in the eyes of employers.

Here's an example of resume wording that gives off the wrong nuance, even though the facts are clear enough:

“Spearheaded use of resources in Vietnam in spite of resistance from senior management ...”

I don't know about you, but “Spearheaded,” “Vietnam” and “resistance” in the same sentence make me think of a John Wayne movie. This detracts from what the job seeker is trying to say.

Before sending your resume to employers, send it to at least 2-3 friends whose judgment you trust. Ask them to read it for grammar and punctuation, but also for unintended meanings. Revise as needed.

### **Mistake #4: Jumbles of Jargon**

Some resumes pile on the buzzwords in a vain effort to impress. Like this:

“New-media pioneer working with technical and business professionals to create new ways of presenting content and impact tools for producing content and organizing workflow.”

We'll pass on “impact” for now -- what does a “new-media pioneer” do, exactly? I've got a picture in my head of covered wagons and HD-TV, but I don't think that's right ....

Again, you can nip most crud in the bud by reading your resume out loud and then sending it to a friend for honest input. Because friends don't let friends embarrass themselves.

Here's hoping that exposing these 4 common resume gaffes will help you avoid making them!