



7 RESUME LANDMINES THAT CAN BLOW UP AFTER AN INTERVIEW

by Ronnie Ann ~ November 16th, 2009

I HEARD A DISCUSSION A FEW DAYS AGO WHERE ONE OF THE SPEAKERS MADE A FLAT-OUT STATEMENT ASSERTING 100% IF YOU'RE GETTING A GOOD NUMBER OF JOB INTERVIEWS

– even if you're not getting offers – your resume must be good enough and therefore not an area for you to focus on at all. Almost nothing gets me going like the words “all” or “100%” or “in every case” or “always” or even “never”. I'm sure there are times these statements could be true, but they always get me thinking about exceptions. And unfortunately exceptions that don't get you a job offer – especially if they happen to you – are more often than not 100% annoying.

Of course, if your resume is getting you first interviews and still you never make it to any second interviews or an offer, I wouldn't put ALL your effort into tweaking your resume. Might also be a very good time to face facts and look at ways to improve your interview skills. Even the best of us could probably benefit from a little interview practice as well as articles that talk about good interview skills.

But let's just take a look at why your resume still might matter even after your initial interview.

CAN A SEEMINGLY GOOD RESUME ACTUALLY LOSE ME THE JOB?

I'm glad you asked. And the answer is...it's possible. Just because a resume gets you in the door doesn't mean it's finished with its job. Resumes can have a life well beyond that first interview.

Initially, resumes go through some kind of screening – either by a person or using a system that searches for key words or key phrases. Whatever the method is, this first screening leads to a best guess of whom to interview. And, at least for some employers, there may be candidates brought in for a first interview who have a lot of the skills they're looking for even if their resumes may not be perfect. Jobs have non-quantifiable requirements / qualifications...so there are employers who will take a chance and bring in folks who show at least some match with the job – even if not an absolute bulls-eye. Then it's up to the candidates to sell themselves as the perfect match as best they can.

But your resume isn't done yet. Even if it's not the general rule, there are folks out there who will scrutinize your resume after that first interview. And this is where things can still blow up.

BUT MY FIRST INTERVIEW WENT WELL!

And so there you are in the first interview. You made it. Wuhoo! And the interview goes well. More wuhoo! And so you go home, send your thank you notes and wait. And wait. And wait. And you never get the call.

Here's something you may or may not have thought about. The resume that got you in the door and into that interview you think you aced may still get passed around and seen by others. At times, many others. Maybe the folks who will be doing the next round of interviews. Maybe HR if they weren't involved in the first round of interviews. (I've worked places where this happens.)

Maybe even persons who met and liked you, but who (in cover-your-butt mode) may wimp out if there's a red flag of some kind their boss may have problems with. Oh so many possibilities. And each person adds their own opinion and may be looking for even the slightest thing that signals a potential problem.

So all this goes to say...don't take a chance. You need to pay really close attention up front, before you ever send out those oh-so-important representations of who you are and what you offer. Your resume has to be the best it can be, painting a picture of you as someone who is a terrific match for the job and a potential plus for the organization. If there's even a small mistake, it can cost you the job – yes even after the interview that seemed to go so well.

Is that fair? NO. And please know most times it will be just fine. But you never know how a person makes a decision, so why risk it? Your most important job is to help them make the right decision by giving them a resume that gets them excited about you – and includes nothing that might raise an eyebrow or leave a funny aftertaste.

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SO WHAT ARE THOSE 7 POTENTIAL RESUME LANDMINES?

- 1 Lack of attention to detail (visual presentation, typos, grammatical errors)
- 2 Gaps & other red flags that raise too many questions
- 3 Experience that reads as lightweight compared with your stated role or what you told them in the interview
- 4 Experience that seems too weak for the job for which you're interviewing
- 5 Experience that seems too strong for the job for which you're interviewing
- 6 Too much prior experience unrelated to the job for which you're interviewing
- 7 Personal information of any kind that misdirects their focus &/or raises concerns

And if your resume does raise questions that resonate beyond the first interview, these questions may cause people anywhere along the hiring process to decide to go with candidates whose resumes seem less questionable and more directly in tune with the job.

SO WHAT'S THE SOLUTION FOR AVOIDING POTENTIAL RESUME LANDMINES?

- 1 Read articles about what a great resume is. (Look for samples.)
- 2 Prepare that resume as if your career depends on it. Oh yeah...it does.
- 3 Refocus &/or match your resume as best as possible to the job requirements (from the ad or any research you've done)
- 4 Handle any red flags as best as possible
- 5 Show action, initiative and results – and not just tasks you performed
- 6 Stay away from all but the most essential personal information
- 7 Get professional resume help if you can afford it. Money spent now can mean you get the job you really want.

If you prepare your own resume, ask a few people to review it before sending it out. (Best to ask at least one person in the industry if possible.)

SEEMINGLY GOOD RESUMES CAN GET YOU TO THE WRONG JOB INTERVIEWS

I just want to mention that there might be one other thing going on. Let's say you have a fabulous resume – one that could be on the cover of Resume Weekly. And let's say you have a great personality and give a good interview. And yet you still never get a job offer.

You might want to start thinking about whether or not you're aiming for a job you actually want. Could you be focusing your resume toward jobs you think are easier to get or only because they have a better salary? Is your heart really in it? Believe it or not, that shows in your interviews. (As well as in the rest of your life.)

Yes...I know there comes a time when you just need a job and if it's one that doesn't make your heart dance, the paycheck will. Been there done that. If so...go back to making sure your resume is the best it can be. Cover letter too. But always worth at least remembering the other possibility.

Good luck avoiding those nasty resume landmines – and getting the job you truly want!

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