

Resume Writing - Results Speak Louder Than Actions

Just about every resume editorial ever published stresses the importance of listing accomplishments, not responsibilities. So why do people continue to peddle job descriptions as their resumes? This approach only portrays you as a routine candidate; it does not set you apart from the competition and it diminishes your chances of being called in for an interview. To get yourself in the door, you need to draw attention to the value you contributed.

Consider a very simple example of increasing productivity by improving a process. There are two parts to this statement - action and result - and four ways to present them on your resume.

Action:

- Reengineered widget-making process.

One of the most common mistakes people continue to make is to list only statements of responsibility. This approach portrays you as an ordinary candidate; it tells the reader what you are capable of doing, but says nothing about the results of your efforts. A thousand other candidates transformed a similar process.

Result:

- Increased productivity 20%.

Going 180 degrees in the opposite direction shows the value you contributed, but leaves the reader wondering how you achieved the results. Did you accomplish this through process reengineering, employee training, technological improvement, or by telekinesis? You cannot chance the reader making the connection to the skills required for her job posting.

Action / Result:

- Reengineered widget-making process resulting in 20% increased productivity.

Adding the outcome after the job responsibility begins to make a better impact by aligning the action and the result, but you still risk the reader missing the lagging words at the tail end of the bullet point. Recruiters receive so many applications that most spend only mere seconds skimming resumes, and the natural eye scan is left to right.

Result / Action:

- Increased productivity 20% by reengineering widget-making process.

Leading with the value-added result, followed by how you did it, is your strongest eye-catcher. It tells the reader in the opening words what you achieved, and invites them to read the statement through to discover how you accomplished these results.

But while this simple illustration quantifies results in measurable terms, it still may not be good enough. Think where you went above and beyond, because sometimes subtle variances in results make no difference at all. Does typing 80 WPM really set you apart from the candidate who types 70 WPM? Hiring managers have ballpark expectations for the jobs for which they are recruiting, so you will not distinguish yourself by falling within a range of expected results

Having difficulty coming up with attention-grabbing results? Recruiters know that not everything you do is quantifiable in dollar or percentage terms, so adding other dimensions increases the visibility of your resume. Consider intangible impacts of your actions, such as...

...speed of execution

...customer satisfaction

...industry awards

...winning bids

...employee morale

...corporate image

...brand recognition

...competitive advantage

...and other results germane to your profession.

There are two parts to resume statements – actions and results – and four ways to write them, but only one way distinguishes you in the eyes of a recruiter. Never hand off a job description as your resume; think like a CEO and flaunt your successes.

Parading accomplishments becomes increasingly important when seeking higher positions, so think like a CEO when writing your resume.

- ▶ If you were H. Lee Scott Jr. would you write statements like, “*Ran Wal-Mart Stores?*”
- ▶ Or would you write statements like...”*Posted record sales of \$374.5 billion, up 8.6% over prior year...generated \$5.4 billion free cash flow...produced \$22 billion operating income, up 7.3% from previous year...increased EPS by 8.2%, to a record \$3.16...?*”

Go write your winning resume.

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