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Are You Content With Your Job?

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- Depends on the day of the week.

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Fluffy, Vague Phrases Cloud Many Resumes

By Dawn Sagario, The Des Moines Register
Hiring managers are deluged daily with resumes. They seek those that quickly and succinctly tell them a candidate's specific skills, experience and accomplishments. Resumes swiftly let them know if you make the cut or get tossed into the reject pile.

Time-pressed recruiters can get up to 400 resumes a day, said Mike Worthington, co-founder of ResumeDoctor.com. They'll spend less than 10 seconds considering each one. Worthington said applicants need to use those seconds wisely.

Job seekers, he said, must grab a reader's attention in the top one-third of their resumes. List concrete examples of their skills, level of expertise and how those specifically match the requirements of the position.

"Fluff" phrases still abound in resumes, according to a recent survey by ResumeDoctor.com. The company examined the skills cited by job seekers on more than 160,000 resumes. The study found that half of them used one or more vague phrases to describe their work skills and experience.

The top five fluff phrases were: "communication skills," "team player," "organizational skills," interpersonal skills" and "driven."

A more effective resume shows -- rather than tells -- what you've accomplished.

For example: Swap "communication skills" with "facilitated 12 leadership development workshops" or "presented monthly financial reports for the board of directors."

Change "driven" to "top outside accounts sales representative in 2001, 2002 and 2003."

Some job hunters make the mistake of using previous resumes as a blueprint for updated versions, said Mary Dunleavy, president of Advantage Resume & Career Services in Adel, Iowa. The style in which the dated resume is written might not be the most productive now.

In the past, resumes included an "objective" statement, which stated what employees wanted to accomplish for themselves, Dunleavy said.

Today, she said, scrap the "objective," and replace it with a qualifications summary. Dunleavy suggests bulleting four to six key strengths or accomplishments.

Work accomplishments, educational background and work experience are three main areas recruiter John Blanchard scans resumes for.

Blanchard, an owner of Midwest Search Group in Clive, Iowa, reads 35 to 40 resumes a day, spending an average of two minutes on each.

He looks for resumes that are well-written and easy to read, using bullets. He doesn't like big blocks of text or narratives.

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Blanchard, a recruiter for 10 years specializing in banking and finance, also likes to see:

- Resumes no longer than two pages. A one and one-half page resume for someone with five or more years of experience is acceptable; a page for those less experienced.

- System skills listed. Very few people emphasize skills in using programs like [Microsoft](#) Excel or Word.

His resume turnoffs are:

- Employment dates given in years, not in months. That's usually a mask to cover a gap.

- Excessive use of "I," "my" or "me." "It can show that they're not a team player," he said.

- Listing interests. Stay away from mentioning hobbies like jogging, biking and golfing. "That, to me, is what I consider true fluff," Blanchard said.

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