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What Not to Put On Your Resume

By Susan Dunn

What Not to Put On Your Resume by Susan Dunn, Personal and Professional Development

Coach

"Should I admit a weakness?" one of my coaching clients asked me. "Something tells me I shouldn't."

"Something" was telling her right. Your best tool in writing a good resume, is your intuition, or common sense aka Emotional Intelligence.

WEAKNESSES

Don't talk about your "weaknesses" unless you're asked. In my years as a Career Counselor for college students, I received fledgling resumes that read "I don't like people" or "I hate talking on the phone." On the one hand, such statements of extremes are rarely true, and on the other hand they are open to gross misinterpretation.

How do I know this? First-hand, of course, the way hard lessons are learned.

When I took my first job, I announced "I'm horrible at math." To MY horror, all work demanding "math" was removed from my desk, grossly limiting my chances for advancement, and also leaving me to puzzle how to address this situation without appearing to "protest too much". [Shakespeare] "Wait, wait, I didn't mean I was BAD at math." And there goes my credibility. Save yourself some grief.

Later I made it through graduate statistics just fine. I had MEANT "in relation to my other skills, my math is lower, and also that I don't wake up in the morning hoping to balance someone's books." However, I've done it.

A resume is in writing and you don't get to "explain," so be conservative.

Focus on what you're good at. Extremes are rarely true. I'm thinking of the young woman who wrote on her resume, "I don't like people."

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Upon query, it turned out she liked ME, and I like to consider myself a person, doncha know. She didn't like a CERTAIN KIND OF PERSON, which could be said of us all, and her gross generalization didn't hold up under scrutiny.

However, scrutiny is not what you'll get from the recruiter who looks at your resume. What you'll get is the roundfile.

Avoid listing things that could possibly elicit a negative reaction from the hirer. If you can put "president of a political organization" instead of "president of the young republicans," this is better. Better yet put "president of an organization with 500 members". (They will ask you about this, but talking allows more latitude.) You can also leave it off. If you put that you volunteer for the young republics, you stand the chance of alienating a percentage of your reviewers, depending upon their political beliefs, and how

"open" they are to people in the opposing camps.

What you want to do is talk to your broadest audience. For hobbies, put "working out" rather than "Chi Gong," and "music" rather than "rap music". People have prejudices even though they may be trying to be professional, and may think "Someone who does X for exercise could never be an accountant."

If you're asked to reveal your weaknesses, use your head. Here are some suggestions:

- When applying for a high-stress unpredictable job, "My love of variety, though in a job like this that might come in handy."
- When applying for an accounting job, "My need for things to be exact and attention to detail. I want everything to be right."
- When applying as a paralegal, "Creativity. I like things structured, to know what I'm supposed to be doing and to do it."
- When applying for a position where there's been lots of turnover, "One weakness I have is that I like to stay in one position and not job hop. I tend to take a position and stay there."
- When applying to work at a children's shelter, "My weakness is kids."

IN PROCESS

Present a weakness as "in process," i.e., "In moving into management, I've realized becoming an excellent manager is a lifelong proposition, and I'm always eager to strengthen my skills."

Other suggestions (in an organization large enough to offer training):

- Cold calls. Do you have training in this?
- Computer skills. Seems like there's always something new I want to learn.
- Excel. Haven't had the opportunity to use it much.
- Trade shows. Will I get a chance to learn this?

There's no reason to serve up your weakness without a little whipped cream on top!

AVOID SAYING:

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- I've been told that I'm weak at managing people
- I'm hopeless on the telephone
- My last boss said I wasn't good at

You can also use phrases such as

- Like most people who work for nonprofits, I'm sometimes too soft-hearted.
- Because of my military career, I'll need to learn some new vocabulary.

PUT SOME THINGS EASILY REMEDIABLE

- PowerPoint. Never had access to it.
- Public speaking. Have only given about 10 speeches.
- Grant management, financial. The last place I worked, the bookkeeper did that.
- Keyboard speed.
- Training others. Would love to learn more.

- Making sales calls. My partner did that.

SELF AWARENESS

When you're asked about your strengths and weaknesses, it's also to find out how much you know about yourself.

If you're applying for a position you've never held before, and they ask why they should hire you without that experience, you can say, "This job would put me on my growing edge. That's why I want it."

Saying it's on your growing edge shows many things, including the fact that you have one, and that's something of great value to most employers - someone who's willing and eager to learn new things, welcomes challenges and is resilient.

AUTHENTICITY

If you don't want a job requiring that you make cold calls, stick with it. If you refuse to learn yet another computer program, say so. If you don't want to be a manager, say so and eliminate the possibility they'll be grooming you for a management position.

But if you don't intend to work for a woman/man/star-bellied sneech again, look at it this way. If you put this on your resume, first of all it throws up a flag - "And what else will he refuse to do? He's too picky, too opinionated."

And secondly, why eliminate yourself out the starting gate? You could be offered a job meeting your requirements. Remember, you're always free to refuse a job that's offered, but you're never free to accept one that isn't.

What Not to Put On Your Resume

Of course be truthful. Don't misrepresent yourself - your degrees, your former jobs, or anything else. It's not the right thing to do, and it can have repercussions later on.

Emotional Intelligence is about Intentionality, Personal Power, thinking ahead, putting yourself in the other person's place, and not shooting yourself in the foot.

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Resume Writing and Preparation is Free Online

By Donna Monday

Creating a strong resume is a very important part of applying for a job, either online or off line. There are many resume writing services that will help you build an impressive resume for job interviews.

You can also learn how to write a resume for free by surfing the Internet for resume writing help. Many sites will show you tips and advice on choosing a resume style that works best for you.

You can also find samples of resumes, resume templates, resume software, and examples of resume cover sheets or letters.

Whether you're looking to create a business resume, marketing resume, military resume, electronic resume, accounting resume, nursing resume, acting resume, sales resume, teacher resume, executive resume, student resume or a customer service resume, you can find great advice online with a little research.

When preparing your resume, keep in mind that employers use resumes for several purposes:

Screen Applicants - Most employers will only look at a resume for about 30 seconds to determine whether or not an applicant is a good fit for their organization.

Develop Interview Questions - Statements on your resume can be used to formulate questions they may ask during an interview.

Communication Skills - Employers want to see how well you express yourself.

Qualifications - Employers will reference your resume when making hiring decisions based on how closely your qualifications match their needs.

Writing a resume isn't easy, but by studying various tips and advice, you can learn to create a type of resume that will get you one step closer to your ultimate goal of finding a great job.

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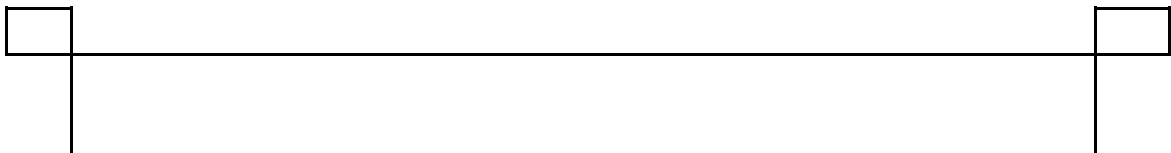
Donna Monday writes employment related articles for

Resume Writing and Preparation is Free Online
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The Resume: What It Is And How To Use It
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