

Too Much of A Good Thing?

In various other articles, we focus on detailing your accomplishments, as well as responsibilities. Here, we're going to tell you that you also need to self-edit a bit when it comes to tooting your own horn. While some people struggle to come up with even a few decent things to say about themselves, others have trouble whittling down the vast, excellent experience and accomplishments they've garnered over the years. It is worth it to whittle away, however, because there can be too much "good" on your resume.

Remember, employers have short attention spans. Because of this, you need to make sure that they see what's most important about you up front and quickly. You'd rather have the employer take note of five or six of your most significant and noteworthy duties and accomplishments than have him/her barely skim your two-page list of them.

This is when it helps to have a second opinion. Some of the information that you find impressive might not come across very well on paper. For instance, if an accomplishment is fairly employer-specific, potential employers might not understand the true impressiveness of it. However, if it's something that virtually anyone could understand (saved employers \$400,000 by streamlining office procedures), then it should stay. If you do feel this needs further clarification, you could briefly state one way you did the streamlining, like by retraining your employees in more efficient work strategies.

Here's an example to illustrate the importance of staying focused on your goal when describing your duties and accomplishments:

Joan worked in finance management for approximately 10 years prior to going to nursing school. She had quite an accomplished career, but she was having a tough time making the transition from regional finance manager to entry-level registered nurse. After looking at her resume, we could see why. At first glance, it looked like the resume of a senior executive. It was only after we checked out her graduation dates that we realized she was looking for an entry-level position.

We advised Joan to trim her job descriptions from her pre-nursing work and to beef up the descriptions of her clinical work and internships. While many of her accomplishments were noteworthy, they didn't really apply to the job she was seeking. In addition, they probably scared away employers, who were afraid she was at too high a level for what they were seeking, would find it difficult to take direction in a lower-level position, or would not be satisfied by the odd hours or lower pay.

We advised Joan to hold on to those descriptions, however, as they would come in handy down the road. While they weren't appropriate for someone seeking her first nursing job, should she eventually decide to pursue a management position, her list of corporate accomplishments would give her an edge. Remember, the key to reaching employers on their level is by knowing your audience!