

How your resume can optimise interview time

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The primary function of a resume is to secure an invitation to an interview. But that's not all it can do. It can also provide you with a competitive edge at the interview.

Because your worst enemy in an interview is time, optimising that limited time is critical. Many interviews devote 50% or more of the precious, never to be repeated time to clarifying your experience and achievements rather than being a discussion about your ability to contribute to the organisation.

Succinctly summarising your duties in your resume is not enough. Employers and recruitment consultants want to understand the difference you made and the value you added at previous employers. They want to know how your skills, qualifications, abilities and know-how have been applied. And they want to know how your efforts have made an impact to the organisations for which you have worked.



If your resume provides this information, the interviewer won't need to allocate valuable interview time in discovery. The interview can therefore start at a much higher level because the basics have been thoroughly covered in your resume. The interviewer can probe more deeply and you can engage them in a more advanced conversation about how you do things and why you do them in that way. This enables the interviewer to connect you with the position. The interviewer gets more from the experience and they remember you as the person with whom they had an interesting in-depth discussion. They perceive you as knowledgeable, insightful and competent as you really are. They understand you at a deeper level: your motivations and drivers, your approach to tasks, how you would fit their culture and how effective you are likely to be.

Some clients have asked whether this is dangerous: the more they know you, the more likely they are to decide against you. We suggest looking at it from the perspective of the more they know, the better the decision. If you aren't right for the job or the organisation, or if the job or organisation is not right for you, isn't it better to know that before you start the job? There is nothing worse for a career than finding out three months after starting that there is not really a good fit after all. That is, unless you find out three weeks after starting!

Revising your resume can also make more time available to explore the career opportunity and the organisation.

Many people take for granted what they do in their day to day work. However, because employers and recruitment consultants do not have the same depth of understanding about what you have done as you, they need things spelled out for them. They can't read between the lines. Your resume should therefore explain everything they want to know: what you did, how you did it and the impact or benefit of what you did (what, how and so what).

Many clients ask whether including information in this way will result in excessively long resumes. The reader will read what they find interesting and useful. There are ways to format and design a resume that make best use of the page and there are ways of expressing yourself economically without diminishing the value of the information. Knowing what to exclude is also important. Knowing where to position information is often as important as what to say.



In many resumes, we find the following way of expressing an achievement: "Developed and implemented a new

data searching methodology." This actually says very little of value.

However, if we say instead: "Reduced the time required to search the database by developing and implementing meta data structures", what you did, how you did it and the benefit are clear.

The achievement is not the development and implementation of the methodology, but the time saved by so doing. Anyone can see the benefit of saving time. But not everyone can see the benefit of a new methodology unless it is articulated.

Another typical way of presenting an achievement is: "Successful tour of nine cities delivering key marketing messages to business partners."

The question is: "So what?" What did the tour achieve? In what way was it successful?"

These are the questions that an interviewer would be duty bound to ask. Such a question consumes time and the answer pilfers even more. And having to explain the benefits of each achievement at an interview is frustrating. You want to get on with it, but they won't let you because you have not satisfied their curiosity.

The fact that the person toured nine cities is irrelevant. Saying that they delivered key marketing messages is not very useful. Why would you deliver an unimportant marketing message?

The interviewer's curiosity could be satisfied if we said: "Increased product sales and market penetration by 5 per cent after elevating our business partners' sales and marketing capabilities through a series of education programs and by providing more timely product information."

The achievement here was the increase in sales and market penetration. The method was to improve the abilities of the company's partners. The process was education and better product information. Does this take up more words? Yes. Does it deliver a more effective message? You judge. Could we have said even more than we have about how they went about doing what they did? Yes, but there has to be something left for the interview! It's a matter of judging how much information to provide.

The conversation at the interview can then start at a higher level by focusing on the content and process of educating the business partners, how they won the hearts and minds of the business partners and how they overcame any barriers in achieving this result.

If you do this for one achievement you will have one meaningful conversation. If you do it for all of them, the entire interview will have more depth. You will probably be so interesting that they will give you more time than your competitors!



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Tom Hannemann is one of Australia's foremost Executive Resume Writers & Interview Coaches. He has been helping senior executives, managers and professionals across all industries advance their careers since 1993. Resumes Australia is delighted to partner and work with Tom, who leads our Executive Resume Writing Service in Australia and across the globe. He focuses on helping our senior executive candidates develop cutting edge Executive Profiles, CV's and Director Profiles. Tom has over 20 years experience in Human Resources, senior management, business development and senior management consulting roles. He is SEEK's resume writing expert and has worked with one of the world's largest recruitment firms. Tom Hannemann is a specialist in providing career advancement services, with strong business acumen supported by an MBA from Australia's top two business schools. Having reviewed thousands of resumes & interviewed hundreds of candidates, Tom brings his unique experience to the resume writing process and works closely with our clients to develop a resume that secures interviews!