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More Than Just a Resume

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MORE THAN JUST A RÉSUMÉ

BY ELISABETH ANDERSEN
“But it’ll look great on your résumé,” is one of the most common phrases heard on a college campus and is one that justifies engaging in just about any extracurricular activity. College students across the nation are motivated to participate in clubs, hold internships, and be involved in whatever activity they can find on campus in order to place another bullet point on their résumé. Simply put, a résumé is a document that an individual will spend hours revising and editing so that a recruiter can spend an average of six seconds scanning it to look for past experiences that determine whether or not the applicant is qualified for the job. However, some applicants’ résumés won’t ever be seen. Instead, their résumés will go through an ATS (applicant tracking system) and be filtered out by preset criteria and required keywords.

For the past decade, men and women in the business world have been debating the effectiveness of résumés and whether or not they will become obsolete within the next few years. As of now, résumés are still widely used to find candidates for job positions and are an essential part of any application process. Nevertheless, résumés are limiting when they focus on experiences over skills and lack reliability.

**LIMITATIONS**

In short, the difference between being employed and unemployed is dependent upon approximately 500 words. Nevertheless, your future does not have to rely upon one sheet of paper if you choose to market yourself. Although résumés are not going to disappear completely, understanding their limitations and learning to market yourself is crucial when on the job hunt.

**EXPERIENCE OVER SKILLS**

When given 500 words, it is nearly impossible to properly describe your accomplishments, strengths, unique skillset, progress, or future career aspirations. Sam Welch from LinkedIn wrote, “Résumés don’t tell a story, or paint a picture of who a person really is. They’re dead documents. They give you facts, and force you, the reader, to create a story, which may or may not be accurate.”

For students who plan to pursue a skills-based career in the high-tech industry, they can struggle to properly explain how much they are capable of doing in a given situation. As you determine how you want to spend
your time, activities that cannot be described in a single bullet point can fall by the wayside, even if the activity interests you.

**LACK OF RELIABILITY**

Jason Fried, co-founder of Basecamp and 37signals, said when discussing the pitfalls of résumés, “In my experience, they’re full of exaggerations, half-truths, embellishments – and even outright lies. They’re made of action verbs that don’t really mean anything… Résumés reduce people to bullet points, and most people look pretty good as bullet points.” Any individual seeking future employment will struggle to find a balance between elaborating on past achievements and exaggerating about prior job experience to appear more successful or influential than they actually are. Within six seconds, a recruiter will not always be able to decipher between qualified, potential employees and articulate writers who can use strong verbs and construct powerful bullet point statements.

**NECESSITY**

Nevertheless, whether résumés are a good indicator of future performance or not, companies will continue to require them in conjunction with an ATS to filter out upwards of 75% of all applicants. Efficiency is key when beginning the hiring process, especially when the company receives thousands of applications for just a couple of job positions. As long as you are truthful when writing your résumé, the recruiter can infer whether or not you, the applicant, are fit for the position, based off of the assumption that past performance is an indicator of future performance.

**MARKETING YOURSELF**

Although a résumé is not the most effective way to convey your potential and talents, job hunting does not have to start or end with a résumé. Students and business professionals alike should not base their self-worth or goals off of having an excellently worded résumé. The good news is that having a résumé is not the only key to landing the “dream job.” Two important keys are networking and creating a personal brand.

**NETWORKING**

Networking is considered to be an essential skill for anyone under the age of 65, yet many students or young professionals do not understand how to properly establish or utilize a network of people. According to a survey done by LinkedIn, “85% of all jobs are filled via networking.” Establishing business connections with friends, family members, coworkers, and their contacts is essential because the large majority, 70-80%, of all jobs never even reach a job board or website. Before posting a job opening, a company will search within its database of current employees, past employees, and employee referrals.

One Marriott School student found her summer internship through an informational interview with a family friend who works as an HR executive. Although the student went into the conversation with the sole intention to learn more about the various fields within HR, she walked out with an offer that she could not pass up. Not only did the HR executive create an internship for the student, but she also tailored the internship to the various aspects of HR that the student is most interested in. The HR executive did not request the student’s résumé until after she had verbally agreed to accept the internship and had visited the job site to meet the employees with whom she will work. Due to networking with the right people, the student did not need a piece of paper to prove her potential or ability to succeed.

Although thousands of articles have been written about the different keys to success when networking, what will matter most in the end is the quality of relationships, rather than the quantity. According to a study done by HBR, over 60% of jobseekers found new employment with the help of past coworkers or colleagues because they were able to “talk knowledgeably and convincingly about what the applicant was like as a worker and colleague.” Therefore,
when considering how to utilize a network, go to the people who can vouch for your work ethic and potential to succeed.

**CREATING A PERSONAL BRAND**

Part of creating a personal brand is recognizing what your strengths are, developing them, and publicizing those strengths and talents on a platform. Do not conform nor define yourself by a set of job titles and descriptions. Rather, you need to start creating your personal brand with a brand statement, “Your brand statement is 1-2 sentences answering what you are the best at (value), who you serve (audience) and how you do it uniquely (USP). It sums up your unique promise of value.”

Once you can pin down what your innate talents are and how to utilize them in the workplace or in your extracurricular activities and passion projects, make your success and progress known. Personal branding can be done via a website that you create, or an active Facebook, Instagram, or LinkedIn account. As more students establish their personal brand, recruiters and managers will be able to determine how the students or young professionals stand out from the other applicants and their potential to succeed.

*Although résumés are not going away anytime soon,* and are still deemed to be a basic necessity, the fact of the matter is that you do not need to be constrained by whatever can fit on an 8.5 x 11 sheet of paper. Life is about more than just participating in activities or volunteer efforts to pad a résumé. Instead of just focusing on what will look good on paper, live a fuller life and learn to better market yourself through networking and creating your own brand.

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