

Next Time You Receive An Enquiry For A Résumé ...

How often in your role as a Virtual Assistant do you receive a phone call or a query via your web site asking if you write résumés?

Many people associate Virtual Assistants with 'typing services', not realising the full scope that can be covered by a Virtual Assistant. However, in many respects they are not far from wrong. Most VAs have excellent typing and formatting skills, but how many have strong résumé writing skills (skills which many job seekers don't realise are vital) when this is a market that can work in beautiful harmony with a VAs existing business structure.

I have heard from a number of VAs who turn away résumé clients as they don't feel confident enough in their skills, though they have told me they would love to offer this service. The main reason for their rectitude seems to be they have no knowledge or understanding of modern day formats or how to go about drawing out the relevant information. Like anything else, this can be learnt adding another stream of income to their service portfolio.

Perhaps you even offer this service already but have never felt really comfortable that you are doing the correct thing. Take a look through these following tips to boost your skills and confidence.

Like Everything Else In Business, Résumé Writing Has A System

Yes, résumé writing does take an eye for concise sentence construction, a strong focus on detail and excellent formatting skills. Many VAs already have these skills so it then becomes a matter of learning the systems to boost your résumé expertise.

Résumé writing can be divided up into a series of logical steps:

Establish The Client's Focus:

To write a truly effective résumé and cover letter you must have a focus to work with. If a client comes to you simply wanting 'a job' the spectrum is far too broad to be able to do your best for him or her.

For some the decision will be easy or is already made. He or she has trained for a specialised area and their focus is predetermined and narrow. For others whose training and experience is multifaceted or more generalised this is the time to decide which way they want to go. It is much easier to hit a target you can see than to just shoot blindly hoping for the best.

Draw Out The Relevant Information:

Often the client won't know what is relevant to the position they are targeting, and to begin with neither will you. So draw together everything about them – the study they have done, levels achieved, special projects etc; places they have worked, what their basic duties were but most importantly what difference did they make, what were their achievements, how did their being there enhance the company, what did their peers say about them; what organisations do they belong to and why and how have they contributed; what are their interests and why.

You may not use all you gather, but you won't know until you have it all before you just which pieces of the puzzle are relevant and which the most important.

Know Who The Résumé Is Being Written For:

Next step is to know who the résumé is going to – what kind of company, what attributes, skills and qualifications will they be looking for, what is the job description supplied if it is a specific role.

If your client will be sending out general applications to a number of companies or recruitment agencies you will still need to have an overview of the industry and the industry specific needs.

Then Bring It All Together:

Look at which of your client's skills, qualifications and achievements marry up with the company's requirements and in what way they match. How can these skills improve and contribute to the company or industry you are targeting. These are the skills you are going to want to bring to the fore and highlight at every opportunity.

These are what your introduction – or Summary or Profile or whatever you wish to call it (frankly I don't give it a name) - will be written around. They will also guide you in choosing the most relevant information to use and which pieces of information to highlight before the others.

But How Long Should A Résumé Be?

This question often borders on the how long is a piece of string question – there are so many variations and contributing factors and individual opinions. I know of recruitment consultants who only want one page and others who think four is too short.

A one-page document will be suitable for a new graduate (though don't stop at one page if they have relevant information to share) and three or four will be more suitable to an executive. Also, there are fads with lengths. Not long ago it was absolutely taboo to go over two pages no matter who the job seeker was, but now things are more flexible.

My simple answer is: as long as it takes to sell your client effectively, providing – and this is crucial – providing the résumé is written in clear, concise, error-free text, not wasting one word, not adding one piece of irrelevant information, not leaving out one piece of vital information and laid out in a professional, balanced format. SIMPLE!!

Basically you are there to sell your client. If you like, think of a résumé as a marketing brochure. Say you are selling a car – will the buyer really care that nuts and washers were used and what size they were. Certain things are taken for granted. You would not waste space and words highlighting that a secretary or PA typed correspondence. Of course they did, that's their job.

What you do highlight is if they did it faster or more accurately or they were trusted to write the letters themselves or that they had signing authority. This information gives a far clearer picture of the person's ability and/or level or standing within the company than to simply state the obvious.

So next time you receive a query to write a résumé, use these tools to confidently create a stronger marketing tool for your client and another stream of income for yourself.

About the Author:

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