

Résumé Writing In A Low Unemployment Market

By Beverley Neil CRW, CERW

With the local Australian economy experiencing relatively low unemployment figures, and with the papers sprouting that jobs are there for the plucking, it has flittered across my mind that perhaps my services as a professional résumé writer, assisting clients to stand out from the other applicants, are not needed as much here in Australia as they once were.

After all, if jobs are that easy to come by, and if employers are that desperate, having a résumé that is well formatted, that contains all the critical information and key words and that highlights the job seeker's skills and achievements, isn't going to mean that much. The employer or recruitment consultant will be grateful for the few résumés he or she receives and will eagerly grab any candidate.

WRONG!

I recently received this comment in an email from a consultant at a major national recruitment firm:

"Lately I have been finding more and more that either I am being asked for résumé advice or feel I need to give it. I am receiving consistently poor résumés, which I generally put down to:

- Laziness of applicants,

- Not knowing any better or
- A perceived lack of importance seen by candidates at this stage of the recruitment process.

It may simply be a Generation Y thing where candidates feel the jobs will or should come to them with little or no effort made on their behalf? Some of the most common issues I find with résumés are:

- They don't sell the person well (e.g. are just a description of employment history, etc);
- They are far too wordy: generally I feel they should be shorter, sharper, punchier, and attract interest (sell someone) more quickly.
- They are not specific in content towards the role/industry people are applying for (are obviously generic résumés being sent for any job)."

This recruiter's complaint was that he simply could not see any value in these applicants. He finds himself constantly having to tell candidates they are less likely to be selected for an interview, or will be totally rejected by either himself or the client, by presenting with documents full of mistakes, irrelevant and too wordy.

Unattractive formatting was another area he found to be a complete turnoff when choosing his short list.

So rather than grabbing any candidate that came along, the high standards expected remain the same but there are fewer people meeting them.

After this email I contacted another recruitment consultant in an upmarket company I deal with and asked if she found a difference in standards since the unemployment level had come down.

Her response confirmed what I had just 'heard'.

"...people flick off CVs here there and everywhere without much thought. Often we don't even get a cover letter...the formatting is poor, spelling mistakes, too much jargon and buzz words which don't have much depth..."

Instead of taking advantage of the market, many job seekers have become complacent and are shooting themselves in the foot.

The outcome of the lower rate is not a market where job seekers are confidently honing in on a number of roles that suit their expertise and confidently formatting a document – or documents – that will assist them in advancing their career and even gaining a higher income or more valuable package.

The outcome is that too many job seekers have become lazy and complacent and are ruling themselves out of jobs that they may easily have secured.

In communication with another recruitment consultant I received this response:

"Whilst the media continues to ramp up the candidate short market there is the perception from candidates to up-sell themselves and have above-market expectations of their worth (both financially and technically). There is the misconception that there are fewer applicants for the jobs. When it comes to the Top Jobs there is no change, there was and will continue to be strong competition amongst candidates."

So if you think it is easy for an applicant to walk into an interview today without taking too much trouble, then think again. Unless he or she presents him or herself in the best possible light, they still won't capture

the interview they have their heart set on – and writing your own career documents with that critical third party insight and detachment has always been one of the most difficult jobs in the world.

Don't Just Think Interview – Think Promotion

Gaining a job interview is not the only way in which a professional writer can assist. Highlighting achievements in the most effective way can actually result in a higher salary or more senior position for the job candidate.

Not long ago I experienced a perfect example of this. A gentleman had come to me to have his résumé made up, as he “didn't have time to do it himself”, a task he had always undertaken in the past. He had received a promotion within the company he had been working with for just over a year and the company had requested he submit his résumé for their files. He wasn't going to interview for the position – he had the job already – he simply had to submit his résumé as a matter of form for their files.

After completing the questionnaire process and having his résumé made up highlighting all he had achieved over the years with his current employer and at the other companies he handed in a résumé that surprised everyone. They had no idea of the true expertise and experience he had built up over time as he had always compiled his own résumés and had left off so much relevant and critical information from his past roles.

The result saw him flying to Sydney to be interviewed for a much more senior position with a greatly increased salary.

No matter the current job market – or even the status of the candidate – résumé writing remains a job best left to the assistance of a professional.

Beverley Neil is an internationally accredited, multi-award winning résumé writer and author of *Launching Your Professional Résumé Writing Career*. For further advice or information Beverley can be contacted via www.onlineresumewriterscourse.com.