

*This is the fourth in a series of six articles focusing on hiring salespeople. The first article established the importance of the hiring process, the second defined the job description, the third recommended several sources of candidates. This article outlines the basic principles of resume reading to determine which applicants to interview.*

**N**o matter how mountainous the pile of resumes is on your desk, evaluating them is one job you do not want to delegate. With resume writing services and "how-to" books readily available to job-seekers, it is often difficult to determine whether the resume you receive is an accurate picture of the candidate in question. There may be little correlation between the quality of the resume and the likelihood of the applicant's subsequent success on your sales team. As it is no longer enough to merely read the resume, this article will outline how to read between the lines.

A word about covering letters; The resumes you receive should be accompanied by a cover letter, but skip to the meat of the resume first. Once you have determined that the resume reveals the skills and experience you are looking for, then you can assess the cover letter as an indicator of communication skills possessed, and the sincerity of the application. This streamlines the process and focuses you on what you are really looking for.

— Refer back to the job description you prepared for the position you are looking to fill. Use your hiring criteria as a guideline to divide the stack of resumes into three groups;

Those you definitely want to see, those who might work out but don't really impress you on paper, and those who are clearly, unqualified. You may want to interview one or two of the "maybes" as well, since sometimes a strong candidate may turn up whose resume didn't reveal their true strengths.

To fine tune your selection of interviewees, be sensitive to the hidden signs that point to success or failure in a potential employee.

What to Look For:

● **TIMING:** resumes sent long after your advertisement has run implies a lack of the sense of urgency required for the job.

● **SPECIFICS IN JOB DESCRIPTIONS:** the less specific candidates are in describing what they did, the more likely they are to inflate accomplishments.

● **EVIDENCE OF ACHIEVEMENT/ ACCOMPLISHMENT:** the best indicator of future performance is past performance. In description of specific functions or responsibilities, how often did the candidate contribute to earnings and improved efficiency.

● **STABILITY AND CAREER DIRECTION:** job changes that result from a high level of competence, bettering with each change.

● **WILLINGNESS TO WORK HARD:** tasks and responsibilities that go beyond the normal parameters of the job, leisure activities that show volunteer work, having worked one's way, at least partially, through school.

● **INITIATIVE:** leadership in extracurricular activities, school, team sports.

● **VISUAL PRESENTATION:** is it attractive - the layout, quality of paper, typeface, spelling etc. How a person represents themselves on paper is a good indicator of how they will represent your company. Like a good newspaper story, the resume should grab your attention by having the most important things first - key experience should be on the first page to arouse the reader's interest.

Beware of:

● **LACK OF EXACT EMPLOYMENT DATES:** suggests gaps in job history, job-hopping, often hidden by preparing a resume

in functional form eliminating chronological details.

● **A NUMBER OF LATERAL MOVES:** those that show no increase in responsibility or earnings.

● **LENGTHY DESCRIPTIONS OF EDUCATION:** outside of degrees or certificates, as evidence of accomplishment rather than proof of intelligence, little else should occupy your attention. Those who lack the required educational background usually overemphasize.

● **PERSONAL TRIVIA:** long lists of interests and hobbies may tell you one of two things - weakness in experience and skills, or such a busy personal life, there remains no time for the job!

● **OVERABUNDANCE OF QUALIFIERS:** phrases such as "knowledge of", "assisted with", "had exposure to", usually indicates lack of hands-on experience in the areas you might be looking for.

● **GIMMICKY RESUMES:** use your own judgment with respect to odd colour, pretentious typeface, graphics, etc. but in general, candidates with gimmicky resumes are rarely as interesting as their resumes.

Once you have determined who you wish to interview, use the resume as a source of questions to ask. Make note of the questions as they occur to you, but remember, the resume is a legal document - do not write on it, use a separate piece of paper to make your notes or record your questions for the interview. Subsequent articles will focus on effective interviewing and making the decision. ■

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