

Not Getting Interviews? It's Your Resume, Stupid!

Dear Stephen:

My girlfriend and I have been fighting day and night about something, and I was hoping you could help settle the argument for us.

She is a regional sales manager at a large furniture company and has the title of RVP. She started as a very successful salesperson, has an MBA from a prestigious university, and has progressed naturally into her role as a manager. She has been in this regional management position for six years and is ready to take the next step in her career by moving into the role of a national executive. While I know for a fact she is smart, passionate and qualified enough for these positions, she has not even managed to land a single interview for the jobs at this higher level. This is the kernel of our argument. I swear, I think it is her resume holding her back.

Rather than a send around a shorter and more direct resume, my girlfriend has chosen to concoct a long and elaborate "executive summary" resume for herself. As I have said, her credentials are exceptional, but in reading this resume you would think that she is looking to become CEO of Microsoft or lead the UN. I am concerned this resume is scaring away potential employers who may believe she is out of touch or too elite to be an effective leader. I know in my heart she is a great manager who is down-to-earth and approachable to both her employees and customers, but any time I raise concerns about the way she

portrays herself on paper, she becomes insulted and the whole situation blows up.

What do you think? Are employers looking for an executive summary resume style like hers, or do they simply want to see your past experience listed on paper? Maybe an expert third party like yourself can help give us both some perspective.

Thanks

A Concerned Lover



You can send your workplace questions to Stephen at: StephenSays@bellow.press.

Questions selected to be answered, will appear in this column. Please use the Subject: Stephen Says for all emails. Stephen Viscusi is a bestselling author, television personality, and CEO of The Viscusi Group, global executive recruiters located in New York. Follow Stephen on Twitter @WorkplaceGuru, Like Stephen on Facebook; and follow him on LinkedIn.

Dear Concerned Lover:

Wow, to be honest, I am impressed with your business acumen and understanding of this realm. If I'm not careful, you might just usurp me as America's Workplace Guru.

I am always very clear with candidates that including any sort of executive summary on a resume is the death knell of any job search. Employers, without exception, want to see a simple objective communicated at the top of your resume. That objective, of course, should change depending on the job you are applying for, which is why I always tell candidates whom I coach to tweak their resumes to specifically reflect the official written description for the prospective new job they are hoping to interview for.

You should think of your resume as a template for how you see yourself in the new position for which you are applying. Your resume should reflect what you have done, what you have learned and how these lessons will be applied toward your future goals, both in this new position and beyond. You want to show prospective employers exactly what they want to see. Luckily for you, however, employers will almost always tell you exactly what they want to see through their posted job description. Sometimes you will need to dumb your resume down, sometimes you will need to smarten it up. The key to writing resumes that lead to inter-

views is knowing how to present yourself as the platonic ideal of what the employer wants in a candidate. Employers in our industry — and in most large businesses — want to know you have not lost sight of what matters most: revenue and customers. Be specific. What were your revenue goals and how did you accomplish them? How many direct reports are you in charge of?

Of course, one must always be honest during every step of the interview process, including the time before the actual interview. It is one thing to show an employer how your past experience directly relates to a new job, it is another to lie or exaggerate your experience. If you lie, chances are you'll get caught; if you get caught, you will certainly not get the job. My point is that beyond the ethical implications of lying to get a job, it's just not a strategy that often pays off. I have seen enough candidates get caught in lies like this to know how rarely it works out. Even the small details like your home address cannot be overlooked. I can't even begin to count how many candidates have simply listed a general region in which they reside instead of their actual street address. It should be common sense that an employer would want to know exactly where you live. If you are hiding your home address, what else is there to discover about you?

Here are some other things to consider: First, resumes written in the third person are odd to read and are always frowned

upon. Second, there should be no discrepancy between your resume and your LinkedIn profile; employers will look at both for comparison, so don't think you can pull one over by submitting totally different resumes in different spots. And third, make your name as simple as possible; unless you're Sarah Jessica Parker, nobody cares about your middle name.

The bottom line here is you want to honestly state how having you on the team will specifically benefit your prospective employer. You need to know exactly what they want and tell them exactly how you will make it happen. They want to know you are somebody with whom they can get along and rely on for the long haul.

All of which is to say I'm on your side in this argument. For your girlfriend to get these coveted interviews, she needs to understand what her prospective employers want. She needs to read job descriptions, research the companies and understand the objectives of each position to craft a resume that specifically fits each job. Often times it is as simple as using the company's own job description to entice them into an interview. I have no doubt your girlfriend will find tremendous success, she just needs to follow my precise directions on how to improve her resume, and she will land the interview. I guarantee it.

Stephen