



Are resumes redundant?

by Adele Williams
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How many different resumes have you read? Some start with education, others with experience. Some include a personal summary and/or personal interests and hobbies. There is no 'standard' length and amount of detail for each employment history.

The question is, as a predictor of success, how relevant are resumes in the recruitment process?

Evidence suggests that it is not an effective tool. In fact, using a resume alone is one of the worst recruitment tools you can use. And now with professional profiling sites such as LinkedIn, individual resumes may become even less valuable.

Many believe that there will never be a clear answer because recruitment is not a science. People writing the resumes and those reviewing the resumes all have biases, both conscious and subconscious, that can alter the perception of what you are reviewing. And with the rise of the cover letter linking to your online professional profile, will this be the death of resumes?

Not yet! Here are 3 tips to keep in mind when reviewing resumes – while we still use them.

Resumes are still being used today. So how should you use a resume to your best advantage?

1. Understand what a resume will tell you...

A resume will (or should) tell you how much experience an applicant has.

The trouble is, experience in terms of length of service alone only predicts success with a correlation coefficient of just 0.18.¹

So next time you define your ideal applicant and you start with 'a minimum of xx years of experience in a similar role', **STOP** and think about it. You probably mean that someone with xx amount of experience probably exhibits particular traits and behaviours that you are trying to attract. Define **this** and you'll open up your talent pool without disregarding suitable applicants.

A resume **may** tell you whether an applicant has certain skills and will certainly give you a bit of a road map for your discussion; but only when you speak with that applicant will you have the opportunity to understand what motivated the applicant to apply for and accept a role in the past, what they did in the role, what they enjoyed or didn't enjoy and what motivated them to leave.

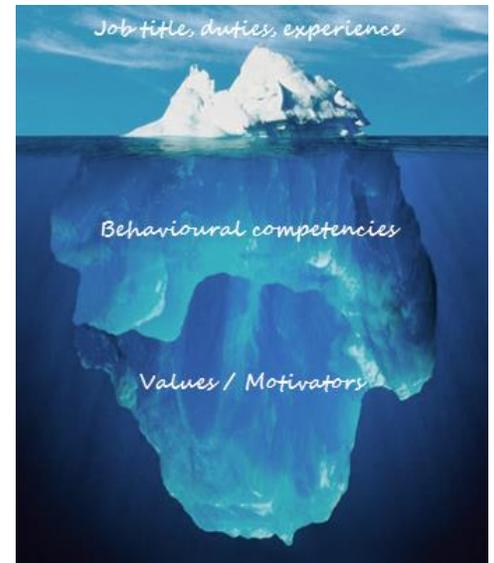
¹ I. Robinson and M. Smith, *Personnel Selection* (2001) British Psychological Society

2. Understand what a resume *will not* tell you...

A resume rarely provides you with information regarding the applicant's **behaviour or motivations**. There may be clues, but in order to find the clues and correctly infer the behavioural implications, you usually need to scratch beneath the surface of a resume.

Think of an applicant's resume as the tip of the iceberg; it's only the part that is most easily visible, not necessarily indicative of what is underneath. For a long term successful placement, **why and how** an employee does what they do is far more important than having some of the technical skills that are listed on their resume.

The challenge is that there is no such thing as 'the perfect applicant'. However, a suitable applicant can become an exceptional applicant with some technical training; so long as they already possess the behaviours and values that are core to the role and your organisation. These are not so easy to change or train.



3. Be prepared to phone screen every applicant for key strategic roles...

For some positions, especially key strategic roles, an applicant's behaviour, motivation and soft skills such as influencing or negotiating skills, will be far more important than their technical skills. There is no way to assess these effectively from a resume and applicants who omit stating these skills in their resume may actually possess them to a high degree. The best way to find out is to speak with them.

Use resumes wisely...

Even with Big Data and Human Analytics adding scientific weight to the recruitment process, at this stage humans still need to be able to read and interpret a resume effectively or you risk a bad hire or missing out on the best talent. So until the science catches up, these three things should go a long way to strengthen your recruitment strategy.



The best people for the best people

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