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Career Advice

From Marc Cenedella

FEBRUARY 21, 2011



It's a national holiday, so I thought today would be a good day to celebrate the successes of your fellow subscribers in landing jobs so far in February.

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[Career Advice Home](#) > [Resume](#) > Lose the Eyebrow-Raising Accomplishments From Your Resume

Resume

Lose the Eyebrow-Raising Accomplishments From Your Resume

Some career results are so over-the-top or irrelevant, they can skew your job chances.

FEBRUARY 25, 2011

By Lisa Vaas

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She moved through several rounds of interviews at a large financial institution, but the process eventually broke down.

Was she unqualified? No. Lacking quantifiable achievements? Quite the contrary.

In fact, she had insisted on listing on her [resume](#) her involvement with electing a controversial political figure with extreme religious views. Sure, it was an achievement — just not one that the financial institution [interviewing](#) her wanted to touch with a 10-foot pole.

"She was told — off the record — that if her political involvement had been handled more discreetly, the job would have been hers," said the woman's career counselor, Roy Cohen, author of "The Wall Street Professional's Survival Guide."

There are some career achievements that we're so proud of we feel we have to put them on every resume, even if they're not directly relevant to a given position. Then there are achievements that are so overblown they sound made-up — a sales rep sells \$10 million worth of product from a \$2 million company? Um, OK. Sure. These are just two examples of accomplishments you want to handle with kid gloves, if not omit from your resume entirely.

Omit the Irrelevant

Laura Rose, a [career coach](#) and certified efficiency coach, had a client with a chronological resume that wasn't getting her any hits in her quest to get a job at a company that creates training materials. Her two most recent jobs were in retail, though her education and work experience were as a teacher's assistant for eight years.

"The first thing you saw on her resume was her last two jobs as retail clerk," Rose said.

Yes, those jobs were accomplishments, but they were irrelevant to the position the woman was really after. So Rose switched things around, going for a hybrid resume format that started with a professional skills summary up front. In that section, Rose included only things that supported the woman's having developed training materials, lesson plans, presentations, etc.

Next came the teaching assistant jobs. At the end, Rose included only one



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retail job but stressed client satisfaction, customer interaction, attention to client needs and other attributes that supported the people skills required in the training position.

By the next week, the woman had received three hits on her new resume. Two weeks later she was working at a graphics shop, creating training materials.

"I encourage future-focused resumes, versus a resume that just maps where the client has been," Rose said. "Hiring managers don't have time to be distracted by accomplishments that do not have anything to do with the position they are hiring for. Oftentimes, HR or others will pre-scan the resume. If their eyes scan something irrelevant, you've increased your chances of being tossed aside.

"In these tough times, your recent job(s) may not be in the field that you really desire," she said. "If you write a chronological resume, the hiring manager is first hit with a job history that doesn't match what he is looking for. If you lead off with your professional skills section first — and list all the attributes and skills that are directly in line with what the hiring manager has in mind — you have his attention."

Omit the Ancient

Cohen recommends omitting accomplishments that are old, suggest you're old and offer no insight into what you can contribute now. One example of an old accomplishment that still might bear relevance would be if you played varsity sports in college and continue to compete on a nonprofessional basis, Cohen said. In such a case, "you convey a dynamic energy regardless as to the graduation date."

Lisa Vaas covers resume writing techniques and the technology behind the job search for TheLadders.

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