

RESUMES COME UNDER FIRE IN THE HIRING PROCESS *What is the value of a resume, asks MRINetwork*

(Philadelphia) – Before an interview, someone – or several people within a company -- reviews resumes of potential candidates, and impressions are created before candidates even engage. Sometime when the candidate arrives for the interview, there is apparently little connection between the resume and the person. This works both ways, says MRINetwork, one of the world's largest search and recruitment organizations.

"Often the resume does not truly represent the candidate," says Michael Jalbert, president of MRINetwork. "It's disappointing, of course, when candidates are less qualified or suitable than they appear on paper, but it can also mean that viable candidates (maybe even the best candidates) may have been overlooked because their resumes did not stand out."

Historically, resumes have always been vital to the hiring process. Candidates labor over their resumes or purchase professional versions to attract employers. Recruiters gather them to populate their databases. Hiring managers insist upon them and use them as their first method for screening out candidates. "But now that technology allows us to gather resumes off the Internet so easily," says Jalbert, "the value of the resume has decreased. Even so, no one is willing to do without it during the hiring process."

Jalbert says rather than dismiss the resume entirely, it should be recognized for what it is -- a useful tool – and not be assigned inflated power. "Having a conversation with the candidate is the only way to verify that the person matches the resume," he says. He cautions that there are numerous things a resume will not tell you:

1. **If candidates are being truthful.** A Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) study of 2.6 million applicants found that 53 percent of their resumes contained omissions or misrepresentations. Degrees or certifications, length of employment, and titles are areas that are commonly embellished. Since a resume is not signed like an application, many candidates feel they are just stretching the truth and not really doing anything wrong by doing this. "Several states, however, have put through legislation targeting candidates who misrepresent themselves in writing when seeking employment," says Jalbert.
2. **If the candidates are motivated to do this job.** Even if they have the necessary qualifications, their resumes will not reveal whether they are willing to do the work. The only thing you know for sure is that they are seeking a change.
3. **If the candidates seeks to excel.** Many candidates detail every employer, task, and duty they've performed, but they don't show how their efforts benefited their employers. "You need to know what they really accomplished," says Jalbert. "They can deliver the minimum expectations, but will they excel?"
4. **If the candidate has good communication skills.** Did they write their own resumes or buy them? Did someone coach them through producing their resumes? "Many job seekers obviously enlist the help of colleagues or mentors in developing their resumes," says Jalbert, "and the employer should not place undue importance on the form and presentation of the resume."
5. **If candidate will fit the culture.** It's almost impossible to judge from a resume whether a candidate will be a good fit culturally for the company and the department. "And In some cases," says Jalbert, "the cultural fit may be more important than the skill match."

As flawed as resumes can be, though, they do provide a starting point. "Assuming the candidates are truthful, resumes let us know if they have the basic, required qualifications," says Jalbert. "They can also be used to screen *in* candidates instead of *out*. Employers should not risk dismissing good candidates solely on the basis of their resumes."