**HOW TO WRITE A RESUME THAT TRULY PORTRAYS YOUR BUSINESS STRENGTHS
WHILE SAVING TIME AND DEODORANT DURING AN INTERVIEW**

By Colleen Aylward

1.   **How Many Pages are Appropriate for a Resume?**

The one-page synopsis is a thing of the past. And now that I've said this, all you employers please put your teeth back in, take a Valium and read on.

First of all, length is really irrelevant compared to content. Put yourself in the shoes of a hiring manager for a moment and I'll explain why. The hiring authority must sift through dozens, or even hundreds, of paper resumes to choose a first list of candidates who MIGHT be qualified. Give him a break! And not by giving <u>less words</u>, but <u>more meat.</u> When you synopsize, you run these risks:

- You <u>assume</u> the reader will read between the lines and come up with the correct evaluation of what it is you can do, or will do. As a recruiter, I get very frustrated with this. I can't tell whether you are lazy, modest, or have no idea why anyone would want to hire you.

- You <u>assume</u> the reader knows the size and structure, the product or service and the marketplace of your current employer.

- You <u>assume</u> the reader will be impressed by your title(s) and know where you fit in the hierarchy of responsibility in your corporate structure.

- You <u>assume</u> that using vague business platitudes will "sort of cover every possible job opening" and, therefore, not limit your chances.

- You <u>assume</u> the reader is in the business of using his own time and imagination to try to figure out what your potential could be within his company. In other words, what his company could do for <u>you</u> to help <u>your</u> growth.

When you make these assumptions, you are putting the responsibilities (the "work") on the hiring manager. Your chances of being chosen for an interview are only 50-50, because the reader can only relate to your verbiage from his own experience in the business world, and his own pre-conceived ideas about certain companies, titles and resumes <u>AND</u> his own time table for filling this position. Don't limit your chances by vagueness. TAKE CONTROL. BE SPECIFIC. Don't make more work for a hiring manager than he already has. The only "limiting" this will do is limiting the amount of time wasted by you and the interviewer.

<u>Appropriate Length</u>:

Unless you have only 1 or 2 short jobs to relate, a resume can easily be 2 pages without being overkill. The longest resume I have seen without any fluff is 8 pages. Of course, this included 3 addendum ages

of appropriate publications, languages, and key business relationships, and was a paper customized for a Marketing position that called for detailed technical writing skills.

The point here is that if you write a very full, factual, chronological resume, you should be covered. A skimmer-type of hiring manager should be able to skim and see the important facts jump out. A detail person will be able to glean the answer to all his basic questions and also get a good sense of you as a person.

2. **The Objective Statement**

Forget the Objective Statement. Now, this doesn't mean to forget your objective. You need to have an objective. But we will discuss that later in the Silver Thread section.

> *"To obtain a high-level position in a stable, forward-thinking growth-oriented, well-funded company where my true potential can be fully realized, and my experience and skills can be utilized to attain the long-term goals of your company."*

Blech! This is what all Objective Statements tend to read like. This is fluff. Don't insult the interviewer.

First of all, those companies are rather scarce these days. Secondly, WHAT ARE YOU, NUTS?? Do you think everyone else uses:

> *"To obtain a low-level position in an unstable, backward-thinking, static, financial shaky company where my potential will probably not be realized and my background will have no relevance."*

Let's face it, employers are looking for someone who fits <u>their</u> objective, and it is <u>your</u> responsibility to accept or reject an offer from a company that may or may not have the same values and goals as yours.

Remember to think of your job search as a win-win endeavor. You are not begging for a job and the employer is not desperate to have you. You have specific strengths, financial goals and intangible needs that must be addressed in your next position. Excuse my preaching, but you are truly a unique set of energy, opinions, dislikes, skills, preferences and idiosyncrasies. You are the only one who can justify yourself to a potential employer, no matter how many glowing references you have and how silver tongued a headhunter is representing you.

3. **What about a Summary Statement?**

There is nothing wrong with a <u>good</u> summary statement at the beginning of a resume. But, how often do you see a "summary" like this:

- Excellent communicator
- Goal oriented
- Revenue producer

- Problem solver
- Attention to detail

or this:

> *"A seasoned professional with 20 years experience in Sales and*
> *Marketing in high tech industries."*

First, they are both boring, unimaginative and over-used. Out of the 20 or 30 resumes I receive every day, I must see these at least a dozen times.

Secondly, a summary must be exactly that – a summary. In other words, the reader should expect to see specific validations of these statements in the text of the resume.

If your resume does not LATER say:

> *"Chosen out of 6 others to present new product lines to Board Room*
> *audiences and the media"*

Chances are I won't have any way of knowing whether your mother thinks you communicate well or a professional resume writer gave you a form on which you checked off nice-sounding skills.

The second statement says nothing to me other than the candidate has been around awhile. It would help to put in a word like "successful" before "experience" but it would still be trite. Besides, in a Sales resume, the reader usually jumps immediately to the text as the success barometer. Therefore, an appropriate summary section on a sales resume might be 4 bullets of performance awards, and consistent quota percentages.

A good place for a summary statement is at the beginning of a technical resume:

- Six years lead design on ISDN team
- Co-author of "Client Server Technique" – a paper presented at NETLAND '91
- Hands-on design and development in MF, mini, and micro environments: DB2, COBOL, UNIX, C

4.   **The Four Basic Questions:**

Today, employers want to know four things about you, no matter what your level: Market Research Assistant, CEO, VP Sales, COO, Salesperson, Product Manager, Customer Service Rep, Programmer, CFO, Accountant, or head of your own consulting firm:

- How have you increased revenues/profitability?
- How have you decreased costs?
- What problems have you solved and how?
- How creative are you?

The first two questions are centuries old, but the third and fourth are particularly relevant today. Many more companies today are facing uncertainties in the form of recent or impending mergers, IPO's, reorganizations, new legislation and regulations, stiffer competition and smaller windows of opportunity within which to market a niche product.

Your resume needs to reflect your savvy in these arenas. Employers no longer have the luxury to hire someone with a toothy smile and firm handshake to "train on the job". You must bring problem-solving skills and creativity to a job. And, you must reflect those skills on your resume.

Be sure to address each and every one of those questions in your resume. For a salesman, it is fairly simple to answer #1 by simply stating quota achievements. For a CEO hired to turn around a company's performance, it is obvious that #1 and #2 will be addressed in his resume (but you would be surprised at the number of high level executives who don't quantify their resume). For example, these bullets attribute no kudos at all to the author:

- "Oversaw sales and support for information management systems in the Northwest"
- "Consolidated sales activities into one organization"

SO WHAT? What good did these tasks do? What benefit did your actions provide for your employer in bottom line dollars? The writer is assuming that the reader will do the work of translating these features into the correct benefit statement. On the flip side, the following leaves nothing to figure out:

> *"Reduced expenses by $680,000 through consolidation of separate facilities and the elimination of 7 functions in a restructuring of the organization."*

For a Product Manager, it is slightly harder to relate day-to-day activities to bottom line but here are some excellent examples:

> *"Rolled out one product a month early by employing concurrent engineering."* (Problem solving and creativity)

> *"Raised seed capital to jump start sales effort in consumer channels by finding an investor and building a relationship."* (Creativity and revenue increase)

> *"Implemented a demo program which was widely acknowledged by the field sales reps as making the difference between winning and losing sales. Sales volume increase was $1MM the first year of its use."* (Problem solving/creativity/increase in revenue)

> *"Raised gross margins from 35% to 55% on new product version by reducing costs of goods and assembly. Industry average for gross margins is 42.5% for companies of similar size."* (Cost reducing/Profit increasing)

Notice the use of the operative word "by". She, the candidate, clearly understands cause and effect and is tuned in to bottom line. She also is sensitive to the fact that the reader may not have a frame of reference for gross margins in her particular industry.

On the other hand, in a marketing position, you are often floating in a sea of intangibles or think that there are no direct cause-and-effect relationships between your work and "dollars in". Look at these as good examples:

> *"Eliminated channel conflict by pioneering a lead- and revenue-sharing scheme for all channels of distribution."*

> *"Revitalized company name by refocusing corporate image on innovative technology."*

> *"Redesigned trade show booth to match all corporate literature, presenting a consistent message and delivering the statement that my company is certainly alive and well."*

> *"Created a vehicle to collect end-user information in order to cross-sell product lines and overcame the problem of limited access to customers when selling through distributors. End-user registrations poured in and a database of hundreds of customers grew in 4 months' time."*

A Business Development Manager has no quotas per se but must be able to relate his activities directly to the Bottom Line:

> *"Secured development contracts and OEM relationships worth $5MM over 3 years by pursuing independent software developer projects with Microsoft, Apple, IBM."*

> *"Led the project to port the product over to DOS platform in order to take advantage of the magnitude of difference in the installed base of 800,000 Atari to 18 million DOS users. Placed the products in the mainstream, which boosted sales 130% in the first year."*

Now question #3, the problem solving one, and question #4, the creativity one, are important ones in today's economy. Employers are not necessarily looking for people who have been "good boys and girls" and stayed with one large company for 15 years. More often, the hi-tech companies who are looking for employees are the objects of an extremely fast-paced development cycle; extremely hot competitive environment, the pressure of a short roll-out-to-pay-back timeframe, high risk factors, low budgets, and flighty investors. These companies need employees who have a track record of success, yes, but "success under duress" is a more commonly sought after quality.

For instance, a CFO who has been through a merger or an IPO; a salesman who has successfully switched from direct to channel sales or vice versa; a product manager who has saved the day by partnering up with outside technology for a customized (lucrative) application; a salesman who has

sought out and captured a new vertical market for his product; a plant manager who has championed the latest automation technology; a secretary who has jumped in and solved customer service problems; a manager who has solved a sticky personnel issue.

Get the picture?

Now, the next section will help to start putting this all together.

5.   **Format**

a)   First of all, I urge you <u>not</u> to go to a "resume house" or "resume writer". This defeats the whole purpose of a resume as a "unique view of a candidate" and "the first impression of a candidate's own ability to sell or market himself".

Remember, you Sales and Marketing types, employers are not dumb. They are thinking "If you can't sell yourself, you can't sell my product and if you can't market yourself, you can't market my company".

Admittedly, writing your <u>own</u> resume is NOT FUN and NOT EASY. You should see mine – it's lousy. But I can write yours, of course. As a help, I have included a list of questions at the end of this article that will help you get rolling in your own "greatness". Also, sit down with your spouse, your old boss, your protégé, your best friend, and ask them (I know this sounds hokey but it works). "What makes me so special? What am I good at?"

Chances are, at one time or another, you've bragged (okay, just stated the facts!) to one of these people about a problem you solved or a particularly brilliant idea you put into play at the office. Work from these.

In other words, I urge you to grow your own resume. It is a lot of hard work up front, but it will be with you the rest of your days as your unique flag to wave whenever needed. It will be the best and truest description of YOU that has ever been written (yes, you can will it to your children or to science). It is an exercise on paper but more importantly, a mental positioning of your self-confidence. When you have it completed, you will know. You will feel in your gut that this truly represents your best self. And, lastly, the work upfront saves a lot of sweat-time in the interview (which you will undoubtedly obtain from such a well written resume!) It will help both you and the interviewer over that awful first 20 minutes of: "What exactly did that company do? What was your reporting structure? Who was your market? Why did you leave? How did you get this job? How many people did you manage? What was your quota?" etc., etc.

This is the first 20 minutes where the interviewer is trying to find a reason to hire you, not to believe your resume, and get on to the next interview.

It is also the time when the candidate cannot get comfortable in the chair, hasn't figured out the agenda of the interviewer, wonders when he'll get his chance to make his pitch (which, by the way, may never come) and wishes he hadn't wasted his time coming to this interview at all, because obviously the interviewer can't see how special he is from the beginning so forget <u>her</u> and this job!!

b)   The "start from the beginning and tell me all about yourself" approach is out. LIFO (Last-In-First-Out) is in.

        After your summary or "overview" statement, if you felt you needed one, start your resume out right away with job history, beginning with current position first and going back in time from here. The most relevant experience you will have to the job you want is your most current. Or that's the way we generally think as employers and recruiters.

c)   List each job in the same format, with the same typeface, indentations, etc. Be sure to state the full company name, the division you worked for, the exact dates of employment, and your specific title. Also add in parenthesis the name of the parent or holding company or the name of the largest stockholder, if known.

        A word about dates. In general, the people in this country read left to right. Place your dates of employment in the left margin next to the company name – for skimmers to skim. If you had more than one position in the same company, place "position dates" after the position title (on the same line to the right) or in some indented fashion so it is clearly a subset of your tenure at the one company. You don't want to run the risk of a "skimmer" discarding your resume due to perceived job-hopping.

        Regarding company name, always enter a one or two line description of the company. Even if you think it is an insult to the intelligence of the reader, do it. In this day and age, the hi-tech industry has too many small spin-offs, start-ups, and unrelated divisions to make the assumption that the reader will know exactly what you were involved in. Don't leave things out, thinking they will be good conversation pieces for the interview. Sure enough, the interviewer will either skip over it, leaving you no place to make your pitch, or will make a statement or an assumption about your job history that is incorrect. This only puts both of you in a no-win situation since the interviewer may be embarrassed or annoyed, and this is no time for you to "one-up" the interviewer by your hidden knowledge.

        Even if it is IBM, put in a few lines of description about the company as it relates to the job you are interviewing for. For example: *The division which markets mid-range manufacturing systems in the price range of $10K - $100K to Fortune 1000 companies*. Employers are looking for the common ground that you each share – not your potential to do a job you've never done.

        A word about titles. Many companies have their own unique internal hierarchies with attendant title. A hiring manager at one company may not know what a "Level 3" position means at another company. Likewise, a Sales Engineer could be more of a technical position at one company and a heavily commissioned sales position at another. A CFO title could simply mean the company bookkeeper (I once had a CFO who called himself the OFO – "only financial officer") or, on the other hand, the VP Finance title could actually have COO and CIO responsibilities as well.

        So never assume that a hiring manager knows where your title puts you. Either make it very clear in your ensuing "Responsibilities and Accomplishments" section or put a short layman's description following the title.

This will save everyone a lot of time and possible miscommunication. And never make yourself out to be something you are/were not. This industry is too small for you to get away with it. On the other hand, you may want to play down some facts. A high level candidate I was speaking to couldn't seem to get an interview. Looking at his resume, I noticed he listed himself as a "Corporate Officer and VP of..." on nearly every position in the last 10 years. This was scaring people off for two reasons. Employers perceive him as too far down the food chain to have many productive years left. In addition, he was limiting himself on paper. Employers perceive he will only be interested in a Corporate Officer position in the future.

6.   **Accomplishments versus Responsibilities**

a)   Always separate job description or "responsibilities" from your particular accomplishments in that job.

For example, these are responsibilities (always list in order of importance):

- Responsible for $1.2MM quota
- Manage 15 sales reps
- Manage product from inception rollout
- Analyze new investment opportunities
- Support national distribution network
- Coordinate promotional activities
- Speak at industry conferences
- Draft mechanical connection details
- Detail electrical schematics
- Responsible for order entry and billing
- Install telecommunications equipment
- Design LAN/WAN/PC environment
- Provide coordination between Sales, CNE's, Purchasers, Customers, Cablers and third party vendors
- Develop training standards

They are simply descriptions of the job title duties…responsibilities that anyone with the title should take on. On the other hand, accomplishments are those things that you, as a unique contributor, have done with the job title in answer to the four Basic Questions laid out above (increase revenues, decrease costs, solve problems, show creativity).

These are accomplishments (again, be sure to list in order of greatest importance):

- Developed and implemented marketing plan, generating an unprecedented $14MM of new business within an 18 month time frame
- Obtained financing for a new and unique $3MM piece of medical equipment, providing a return on investment of over 20%
- Youngest salesman in the 20 year history of the company to be promoted to Regional Manager
- Managed and designed a WAN/LAN/PC environment (from 0 PCs to 230+ PCs and 6 LANs over 5 years)
- Successfully downsized a corporation's accounting and tax processing from a large minicomputer environment to a PC/LAN environment – on time and under budget

- Obtained approval on 48 of 50 major transactions presented to Senior Investment Committee, after researching and analyzing over 300 investment opportunities
- Improved customer service with 7 consecutive years of 99%+ order fill
- Initiated and designed pricing structure increasing order volume and profits while decreasing distribution costs
- Instituted a Customer Truckload Allowance Incentive Program resulting in distribution cost savings of $1MM in one year
- Organized an elite corps of technical support personnel for customer liaison and incorporated highly technical equipment which resulted in 40% improvement in efficiency rate.
- Identified and penetrated new markets with existing products by initiating and implementing product packaging changes, generating over $3.5MM in sales the first year.
- Maintained an average closing rate of 56%.
- Became the #1 producer within 6 months on a sales team of 10, and maintained that position for all 5 years.
- Simplified profiling process for Sales force by redesigning forms and having final documents completed in-house. This resulted in more sales calls and increased accuracy of waste samples.
- Completely overhauled division in all areas of production reducing order processing time from 13 hours to 1 hour, cutting error rate from 50% to under 2%, doubling orders processed – all with 20% less staff.

Contrary to what we learned in college composition classes, it is highly appropriate to use actual numerical and monetary abbreviations instead of the spelled-out versions. For example, "$14MM" and "33%" stand out in a resume much more (especially for those skimmers) than "fourteen million", or even $14 million, or 33 percent or thirty-three percent.

b)   Accomplishments should be listed as bullets and obviously should be stated as clearly and strongly as possible. Beginning each accomplishment with an action word serves two purposes. One, action verbs cut right to the point. They are precise, strong, and set up a consistent, self-confident style for listing positive actions. Two, these verbs act as common bridge words in matching your experience with those needed as background for future positions. For instance, a start-up employAccomplishments should be listed as bullets and obviously should be stated as clearly and strongly as possible. Beginning each accomplishment with an action word serves two purposes. One, action verbs cut right to the point. They are precise, strong, and set up a consistent, self-confident style for listing positive actions. Two, these verbs act as common bridge words in matching your experience with those needed as background for future positions. For instance, a start-up employer looking for a Marketing Manager of a very technical telecommunications product may be looking for experience words like:

-supervised	-led
-managed	-performed
-designed	-analyzed
-implemented	-evaluated
-hired	-conducted
-presented	-prepared
-built the business plan for	-compiled
-engineered	-installed
-wrote	-established

-created

Whereas, a hiring manager searching for an excellent sales rep would want to see:

-increased	-reduced
-overcame	-achieved
-sold	-implemented
-uncovered	-conducted
-won	-coordinated
-was awarded	-marketed
-saved	-set up
-trained	

A small company in financial trouble may be looking for key words in a potential CEO's resume such as:

-promoted	-expanded
-overhauled	-interfaced
-reduced	-implemented
-acquired	-recruited
-dissolved	-built
-cut	-taught
-doubled	-arranged
-turned around	-re-built
-guided	-planned
-led	-hired
-merged	-developed
-started	-programmed
-reorganized	-divested

These action words should be followed by the actual accomplishment description, its importance and how it was done. In other words, it is not sufficient to say:

> "*Analyzed market share of competition and identified shifts in the marketplace.*"

So what? WHAT RESULTS DID IT BRING ABOUT? At the same time, it is also not enough to just say:

> *"Boosted sales by 132%"* (How??)

Employers want to know 1) what you did that was so great, 2) how you did it (cause and effect), and 3) whether the method and results could be directly transferable to their company. They also want to know, and this is KEY, if you know what you did, know its impact, can effectively communicate it and recreate the same results for them.

If you can do this successfully on paper, your chances of obtaining an interview increase dramatically.

c) Employers like to see numbers. (And, again, don't spell them out. Use the real figures.) How big was your budget? What was your quota? What were your performance numbers? How many levels down were you from the top? How many people did you manage? How much time between your promotions? What were the revenues of your company/division?

For Example:

> *"In addition to managing 5 direct reports, personally sold $5.4MM in new software (averaging $500K per system) in 21 months."*

> *"Achieved 123% of 1990 budgeted new software sales of $20MM and exceeded total 1990 targeted revenue of $30MM for the Financial Software Division by approximately $7MM."*

d) A word about TLAs (Three Letter Acronyms). KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE! Use acronyms only when appropriate. Who will be reading your resume? When using TLAs, be sensitive to a hiring manager's scope. Don't use acronyms that are only used in a small niche market unless you explain them. It won't impress a hiring manager that is looking for a good communicator to get the impression that you are so narrowly focused. For example, how clear is this description?

> *"Worked for XCS in the DRP and MRP solutions division."*

It's rather like telling an inside joke. On the other hand, you need to list all programming languages, protocols and standards with which you are thoroughly familiar. DO NOT get caught up trying to list everything you've ever heard or read about. This will backfire on you in an interview and even if you are wonderfully qualified in some other area, that hiring manager may not trust the balance of your resume. I've had candidates try to pass themselves off as WAN experts when all they have really done is link a few PC's to a LAN. This kind of sleight of hand wastes recruiters' time, and damages our credibility if we present you as more than you are.

Again, employers don't hire on potential. They hire on PROOF that you can do the job.

7. **Overcoming Objectives Before They Come Up**

There's no reason to feel you have to be perfect to get a job, or to even get an interview. But you do have to be believable. Don't make yourself out to be a water walker or you'll surely drown in the interview or the job itself.

Here are some red flags for my client companies and ways to overcome the inevitable objections before they ever come up:

a) The Golden Child

Nobody's perfect. Employers tend to do one of two things when they see a "perfect" person on paper. They will either bring the candidate in out of curiosity to poke holes in the perfection, or they will pass by out of fear that he is "too good to be true" (i.e., there must be some hidden horror.)

Failure is okay. In fact, many employers prefer a candidate who has hit the wall at 70 mph, picked himself up, dusted himself off and gone on with life having a new perception of speed. Bring up your failures, but be prepared to articulate what you have learned from them that you can bring to a new employer.

If you failed to make your quota in the year of your divorce, that's a valid failure. If you failed to motivate your sales reps to produce because you didn't believe in the product anymore, then say so. If your project was over budget and behind schedule, then explain the reasons in a positive 20/20 hindsight fashion..

Don't whine. Don't complain. And don't blame! These are the kiss of death on an interview and on a resume. No matter what sort of bad luck has befallen you in the past, if you can present yourself as a better, stronger, clearer person because of it, you will be refreshing to an employer. One of the more clever ways I've seen a position "fraught with difficulties" described was this:

> *"As Product Marketing Manager, I met head-on the challenges of declining sales,*
> *an industry in disarray from the divestiture of AT&T and in economic recession*
> *(competitors at 60% of targeted income for first half of the year), a corporate identity*
> *so low profile that competitors and colleagues thought the company went under*
> *several years earlier, and an aging product line."*

Remember that an employer's current situation probably involves at least a dozen of the problems you've already survived. Make yourself useful to him.

b)   Job Hopping

It used to be that you were a job hopper if you changed employers more than twice in your career. Nowadays, 4 years' tenure means stability. Times change. In today's hi-tech environment, it is considered industrious to spend 3 years each at several companies learning leading-edge secrets.

It makes you "marketable". Salesmen are lauded for jumping from base to higher base and from trend to trend. It makes them "marketable". A CEO that jumps from start-up to start-up as an IPO expert or a Business Development Specialist is in high demand.

So don't apologize for short tenures but be able to put down on paper and verbalize your progression and your reasons.

A rather arrogant Sales candidate we'll call "Bob", handed me his one page job history that boldly listed 7 jobs in 12 years. It was no wonder he wasn't getting any bites on his resume. But after 20 minutes of pointed questions to him (the dreaded first 20 minutes) I had a very cohesive "fast-riser" profile sketched out:

- He hadn't really "job hopped". He had met the VP Marketing of AT&T at a luncheon, who was so impressed with him that he recruited him away from his first Sales job to penetrate 28 vertical market segments at AT&T. (Job change #2)

- When a major client began a lawsuit against the company, Bob was nominated to go in and solve the client problems. (Job change #3)

- He did such a great job solving the conflict in 6 months that he was given a promotion at AT&T. (Job change #4)

- Soon after, the problem client recruited Bob to be their General Manager, since they had been so impressed with his problem-solving skills. (Job change #5)

- The parent company of Bob's new employer began experiencing "financial difficulties" and dissolved his division. Bob was immediately picked up by a major financial software vendor (Job change #6), where he became the #1 rep.

- A year later, this vendor company was acquired by its competitor, who did away with the line of software products Bob was selling. Bob was recruited into another software company where he is currently at 143% of quota in mid-year. (Job change #7)

This description is rather different than Bob's one-page list of short-tenured job titles. But even a cover letter from a recruiter will rarely be able to turn around the employer's first impression of this candidate as a job-hopper. Even if he eventually realizes Bob's true worth, he will wonder why Bob couldn't sell himself more effectively on his resume.

The simple use of the words "recruited by" and "recruited to" may overcome some of Bob's perceived sins. But this kind of job history may lend itself more to a functional resume than to a chronological one.

A functional resume is written as specific categories of qualifications or skills, rather than a historical view by job title. For instance, "Bob" could list his specific Responsibilities and Accomplishments under section headings of "Software Sales", "Management", and "Problem Solving". He has so many positive experiences and provable skills in these areas that the potential objection to short tenures can be overcome by this first-page impression.

The most common shortcoming of a functional resume is lack of specifics. Vagueness such as:

- *"Broad Range of Management Skills"*
- *"Comfortable Dealing at all Organizational Levals"*
- *"Introduced Innovative Sales Strategies"*
- *"Motivated coworkers to accomplish goals"*
- *"Monitored performance to ensure achievement"*

simply uses up space, annoys the reader who is looking for results-oriented information, and won't get you an interview. BE SPECIFIC. Not coy.

c)   Reason for Leaving

This is one of the most stressful topics for an interview. So why not overcome it prior to the interview?

We just covered one method: the use of the words "Recruited to" and "Recruited by". For example:

> *"Recruited as Vice President of Marketing to provide product and market vision and to transition a technology-driven, development company to a market-driven growth company."*

> *"Recruited as Director of North American Sales to provide sales leadership and manage a team of 14 sales and support people in re-invigorating a stagnant sales situation."*

Another simple yet often-overlooked word is "promoted". Use it where it is true. As we discussed before, a hiring manager may not be able to tell from a job title whether a move was a lateral one, a promotion, or even a demotion.

This job description leaves no questions in the reader's mind about the move:

> *"Promoted after 10 months to Managing Director of European subsidiary in London, England, to effect a major turnaround of a poorly performing operation and to consolidate a newly acquired company."*

Now the sticky ones are:

- Quit
- Laid off
- Fired

First of all, I'd recommend NOT using these words on a resume. If you were fired, leave your explanations for the in-person interview. Don't bring it up on the resume. BUT, I would suggest that you attach a list of references that includes past managers. (And, by the way, when alerting your references that they may be receiving calls, encourage them to not only stress your strengths, but to mention a few weaknesses also. Nobody's perfect, and it raises an employer's comfort level to get a REAL human profile.)

Then, on an interview, DO NOT BADMOUTH the company or person who fired you. Keep in mind that it is not unusual for human beings to be in conflict over matters of power, control, integrity, and MONEY. So maybe you were caught in one of those situations. The key is to let the wisdom gained from that experience shine through in the interview instead of bitterness or blame.

Being "laid off" or "RIF'd" (Reduction-in-Force) is also pretty common these days, and is seen as a valid, not necessarily negative, reason for leaving a job. This is especially true if you were one of many:

"Was 1 of 19 salespeople laid off in a 70% reduction in force."

It is fine to mention this on a resume, but may be more appropriate in a cover letter, especially if you have lost your most recent position due to a RIF.

Quitting can be justified. In double income households, one spouse may need to quit for a relocation of the other. A marriage to a co-worker sometimes necessitates a change. Quitting over a difference in business ethics can sometimes be valid.

Never use the word "quit" as a reason for leaving. Here are some actual quotes from resumes where the authors specifically mentioned a reason for leaving:

> *"Reason for Change: Needed to return to U.S. to maintain resident alien status."*

> *"Reason for Change: Father terminally ill in Canada. Moved to be closer to him."*

> *"Reason for Change: Was offered a position with new career challenges in a major client company."*

> *"Reason for Change: Western Regional manager requested that I head up new pilot program for Technical and Marketing support staff."*

8.   **The Silver Thread**

I suggested in the beginning that you avoid an Objective Statement on your resume. However, we all have an objective. We want a particular type of job within a particular type of environment working with a particular type of people or product, making a particular amount of money. The type of candidate who comes to me and says "I'm open" or "I don't want to limit myself" could be:

- desperate
- still wondering what he wants to be when he grows up
- looking for a mentor, not a job
- going through mid-life crisis
- not a planner
- an opportunist
- fairly comfortable where he is

The candidate usually thinks he is coming across as:

- being a risk taker
- being multi-talented
- being easy to work with
- not being demanding
- being marketable

You need to remember that you are the one marketing yourself. You are trying to promote yourself into the position you feel you should have. The hiring manager and/or the recruiter are merely facilitators in your quest.

So what is the objective of your quest? What is the size of company or division that best suits you? Are you more of an idea person or an implementer? Do you like to lead projects or follow a good lead? Do you want lots of customer contact or not? Do you do well in high-stress, fast-paced environments or are you looking to slow down and add balance to your life?

When you get a picture of what you need and want in your next move, you need to thread this objective throughout your resume. I call this the Silver Thread. It will be the thread that subtly tells the reader what you want next, and links all your past experience together to logically prove you are ready and able for this next step.

For instance, I suggested that you provide a short description of each company on your resume.

As an example, if you are looking for a small, innovative, fast-growth start-up situation, but your resume lists large bureaucracies such as Dun & Bradstreet and Boeing, there is no thread. However, a short description of the small innovative divisions within Dun & Bradstreet and Boeing Computer Services where you actually worked will link you to your potential in a small company. As an example:

> *"XYZ Company. A high-visibility $10MM VC-backed start-up software*
> *development division of ABC."*

Again, in a job title description, you can weave your objective to become a Business Development or Turnaround Specialist:

> *"Recruited as VP Marketing to face the challenges of undercapitalization,*
> *a bootstrap operation, limited human resources, an embryonic marketplace,*
> *zero visibility, an out-of-the-mainstream platform, and lack of acceptance as*
> *a real application."*

If your strengths lie in problem solving, list those accomplishments first. If your objective is to obtain the most lucrative commission plan in the industry, pepper your accomplishments with performance numbers.

A reason for leaving can also contain part of the silver thread of your objective (pretend, like Lee Iacocca, that you took every step with a plan for the future). For example:

> *"Reason for Change: Saw the writing on the wall early on in the*
> *mainframe industry, and made a decision to immerse myself in the*
> *emerging technology of the personal computer."*

And, if your thrill is setting up strategic partnerships, then name drop.

9. <u>Name Dropping</u>

One resume that always gets positive reactions is from a woman who assembled an addendum page entitled "Strategic Relationships Explored". This lists 25 major marquis-value high-tech companies within which she has business contacts. This name-dropping has definite value in the highly competitive, low marketing budget world of software development.

For a Project Manager, a list of Customer Relationships and OEM agreements is appropriate.

For a Salesman bent on major account management, a list of "Titles of Daily Contacts" might include several mahogany-row positions. Especially in Sales, It is important to list key accounts, marketplace, and the level of person you deal with in your strategic selling.

Publications is another area in which to sew the silver thread. If quality is a buzz word, for instance, that is important in your next position, be sure to list those articles on "Assuring Quality Products" to which you contributed.

10.   **Life is a Series of PITs**

Life is just a series of Points in Time (PITs). At any point in time, your resume could land in the hands of the person who ha been searching desperately for you. OR NOT.

Don't miss that PIT. I have seen it happen more than once that an outstanding resume will get an interview where there are no openings. And an outstanding candidate will have a position "made" for him where there was no headcount previously.

But you must be ready for luck, coincidence, and magic. Get that resume done!