

Executives, Treat Your Resume as a Business Case

By the time you've earned the moniker of executive you've likely written or influenced a good number of business cases. Scripting perceptions to influence business decisions becomes second nature. Compiling the contents of an outstanding resume is similar to constructing a business case. And such an approach will, without question, improve the resume's ability to influence decision makers in the writer's favour.

As in a typical business case, use historical data to prove your ability to direct, problem solve, influence, and otherwise display leadership; provide distinguishing details in supporting materials; anticipate and pre-empt objections; and motivate an unequivocal call to action. Strategize your choice of information to relate to the position's needs, the corporate culture, and general economic climate. Build your case for hire: reinterpret your workplace history through the eyes of the employer by addressing profits through your performance and productivity.

Use Historical Data

Greek historian Plutarch is credited with the words "Character is long-standing habit." Relate your character by adding context to what you did—the why, the how, with whom, and, of course, most crucial—the results. In choosing your data carefully, you can prove you have the qualities the company is seeking: leadership through wise choices, careful management, creative problem solving, astute people management, and more. Assert your character (strengths and talents) by highlighting long-standing habit (historical data).

Provide Distinguishing Details

You must share the situations you inherited, the disasters you averted, key players you influenced, and resources you pulled in. As Aldous Huxley said "Experience is not what happens to a man; it is what a man does with what happens to him." Differentiate yourself from your competitors: build mini-case histories with a SAR (Situation Action Result), or CAR (Challenge Action Result) formula. This approach will provide relevant and distinguishing details.

Anticipate and Pre-empt Objections

Influence demands a predilection for strategy. Anticipating push-back, you must create memorable, credible retorts. Denzel Washington is attributed with this bit of wisdom: "I say luck is when an opportunity comes along and you're prepared for it." Prepare for, and mitigate objections.

Strategies will vary according to circumstance. Perhaps you are changing industries, taking a quick step up the corporate ladder, competing against others with more educational credentials, or you have the credentials but are light on experience? Perceived obstacles undoubtedly must be addressed: repackage your perceived shortcomings as added benefits. Never allow perceived shortcomings to hold you back—the world is full of people who found a way to surmount the impossible. The key is this: present yourself as an indispensable resource and objections fall away.

Motivate an Unequivocal Call to Action

Action is the aim of every business case, and should be the aim of every resume. Choose your data carefully by considering the needs and interests of your target audience, harness the power of the written word, and influence the reader to assert "This candidate must be called in for an interview."