

Work Daze: Resumes - first do no harm, then do no good

by *Bob_Goldman*

You wouldn't think that my readers would be especially picky, but I recently received a rather snarky e-mail pointing out my inability to correctly spell the word, resume.

Bob Goldman has been an advertising executive at a Fortune 500 company in the San Francisco Bay area.

Apparently, the evil grammarians who lurk among us insist on putting a little eyebrow on each of the two e's in the word, thus differentiating the French inspired re'sume', a summary of our professional accomplishments and credits which we use to attain employment, from the good old American verb, resume, as in "I will resume my work shortly after I wake up from my after-breakfast nap."

While I may not be able to spell one, I certainly know how to write one, or so I thought until I received yet another e-mail, this one from Julie Smith, the current General Education Department chairwoman and former director of Career Services at Brown Mackie College in Kansas City.

According to Smith - who also doesn't respect the Gallic-inspired punctuation of the word, surprising for a person who lives in the Paris of the Midwest - improving your chances for career success is directly tied to improving your you-know-what.

Is your resume up to date and up to snuff? Here are a few tips that are sure to help, no matter how you spell it.

- Use action verbs

"Any job descriptions included in a resume should contain action verbs that draw attention to accomplishments and problem-solving abilities," says Smith. "Your resume will pack a great punch if you

employ powerful verbs that demonstrate an action."

Absolutely true! Consider this snoozer: "March 2005 - March 2006. Increased profits of business unit 300 percent." Would you hire anyone with this kind of yawn for an accomplishment? Now consider this action-verb-packed citation, "March 2005 - March 2006. Blasted the barricades by fearlessly destroying corporate treasury until I mangled the balance sheet and hurtled the company into bankruptcy."

Now that's the kind of action hero everyone wants to hire.

- Avoid usage of "I" or "my" in statements

When it comes to resume syntax, Smith favors ignoring the first-person singular for the no-person anonymous, as in "Designed a new logo for the company" instead of "I designed a new logo for the company." I'm not sure I agree (or as Ms. Smith might put it, "not sure agree.") Why shouldn't you take credit for your accomplishments? That's especially important when the accomplishments have been stolen from someone else in the first place. Save modesty for the people who deserve it. Let your ego-flag fly by expressing your possessive pride in bogus accomplishments, such as "In 2006, I won the Nobel Peace Prize which was awarded to me, myself and I."

Like anyone who is going to hire you is going to be smart enough to check.

- Do not list high school information

Once again, I must disagree. Smith's comments are directed to recent college graduates, most of whom have spent the last four years partying. If you take away their high school accomplishments, what do they have left -

winning first prize for the cleanest cubby in third grade? Besides, recruiters who have been in the work force for many years appreciate the opportunity to remember the carefree days of high school. If you were BMOB for funneling a keg of Pabst Blue Ribbon, disclose it proudly. An ability to drink until you puke is a skill that is vital in business, especially if you plan to be in management.

- Put references on a separate sheet

Apparently it is not appropriate to list your references on your resume. To me, there's a larger problem. Who in the world are you going to get to give a loser like you a reference? How about me? I'm not only famous and affordable, but also quite good at providing pithy, totally believable references, like "this person won't work very hard, and will rob you blind, but you must admire her for almost completely beating her addiction to sniffing Liquid Paper, and with proper medication, shows every promise of making real progress with her tendency for snack machine abuse."

- Don't lie

This is a tough pill to swallow, resume-wise. Lying like crazy is essential when you're bright enough to know that being honest about your history of indolence and failure will never get you hired. But think positive! Many bosses are looking for losers who make their own pathetic careers look better. And if your own resume is too full of accomplishments and triumphs, don't worry. You can always borrow mine.

Â© Copley News Service