Resume Revamp: How to Turn Your Duties Into Accomplishments

So why do the majority of resumes out there still look like job descriptions? Well, because turning job duties into accomplishments is a tough concept to grasp. But once you get it—I promise, you'll have smooth sailing in your resume-writing future.

So grab your resume, and sit down with our step-by-step guide to ditching the duties and making those bullet points sing your praises.

1. Know the Difference

Plain and simple, a duty describes what you did and an accomplishment describes how well you did it. For example, "planned events" would be considered a job duty, whereas "raised $100,000 by selling out tickets to a 200-person charity event" is an accomplishment.

Why is this so important? You want to tell the person reading your resume something she doesn't already know. For the most part, hiring managers will understand what duties are associated with your job titles. It's common knowledge that, for example, an Executive Assistant will answer phones, manage files, and provide customer service. So, putting those statements as bullets on your resume only uses up valuable space. On the other hand, by including accomplishments, you paint a picture of your abilities—one that will sell yourself.

So now that you understand the difference, how do you make the change?

2. Make a List

Get started by compiling a list of all the things that set you apart. For each of the positions on your resume, ask yourself the following:

What did I do that was above and beyond my normal job duties?

How did I stand out among other employees?

Was I ever recognized by a supervisor for a job well done? When and why?

Did I win any awards or accolades?

What new processes did I implement to improve things?

What problems did I solve?

Did I ever consistently meet or exceed goals or quotas?

Did I save the company money?

What made me really great at my job?

3. Paint the Picture With Numbers

Then, take your list, and add in as many facts, figures, and numbers as you can. How many people were impacted by your work? By what percentage did you exceed your goals? Instead of saying you effectively managed a budget, list how much money you managed, and how much money you saved.

By quantifying your accomplishments, you not only make them easier to understand, you really allow the hiring manager to picture the level of work or responsibility you needed to achieve this accomplishment.

4. Add the Benefit

Then, take each statement one step further and add in what the benefit was to your boss or your company. By doing this, you clearly communicate not only what you're capable of, but also the direct benefit the employer will receive by hiring you. And let's face it, everyone wants to know what's in it for them!

So, say you have "created 20 client reports each month" on your list. Instead, write something like "created and prepared 20 weekly and monthly status reports to ensure clients consistently received timely and complete information."

Reading that, a hiring manager will automatically see that, if she hires you, you'll be able to develop ways to provide great service to their clients. When you include the benefit, you more effectively sell the tangible things you can bring to the company.

A resume full of accomplishments is the best way to show off what you can do and set you up for your next success: landing a great new job.