

# Proving Your Value: Be the Needle in the Haystack

By Robert Meier

## How do you land the perfect job?

First and foremost, you must write a resume that makes an employer want to pay your salary and bet their professional reputation on making the decision to hire you. Of all the weapons needed to fight the job-search battle—interviewing techniques, salary negotiation skills, and networking—the least understood tool in your career search arsenal is the resume. Since 98% of all job candidates are eliminated during the resume screening stage, your credentials must be strong enough to justify an interview. Although it is during the interview that you actually land an offer, the resume is the key to securing that interview. In order to do that, your resume must prove that you are the obvious choice among the candidate pool. In order to pre-sell your potential value, you must demonstrate how you are worth more than the salary you are requesting. A good rule of thumb is a five-times multiplier. For example, if you want to earn a \$50,000 salary, you should demonstrate that you can generate \$250,000 worth of value to the organization. This rule may vary depending on the type of organization, its budget, mission and program goals.

It is my contention that a boring or two-dimensional resume has limited more careers than lack of education or experience. These obstacles can be overcome by creating a well-communicated resume that highlights abilities and accomplishments.

An initial resume scan takes 30 seconds or less. Once a potential employer likes your background, reviewing time expands to 3-5 minutes. While you should focus on an easy-to-read resume, beware of oversimplifying it and omitting key results. An ideal resume will be easy to scan yet contain enough information to prove your value. By choosing the highlights of your career storyline, you will successfully bait a recruiter or employer's attention. Be sure to demonstrate how you impacted an organization's bottom line—by increasing program or service offerings and reducing costs.

Most job seekers highlight functional duties, like “managed staff of ten and a \$1.5 million budget.” This information may serve as a nice overview, but it fails to prove your personal and specific contribution—what you did in your department, program or office that made money or furthered the goals of the organization. For example, let's say that you introduced a new system that provided donor information to all employees within the organization. Here's what you could write:

**Project:** Created the *Knowledge Manager*, a database that generates reports of all donor activity for the organization.

**Result:** Increased donor base and level of contributions by 22%, which led to largest budget increase in organization's history.

Obviously, adding significantly to the organization's budget capabilities and expanding the donor base is much more compelling than noting your staff management duties. Pinpoint each of the projects and results that prove you add value to an organization.

