

CareerSmart Advisor™

Strategies & Solutions for Your Career Success

A Note From Dave

The July 30th edition of the *Wall Street Journal* particularly caught my eye, as the front page of the technology section screamed, “Ten Things Your IT Department Won’t Tell You.” We have a top-notch IT department at ExecuNet, and anything that goes wrong with my computer is most likely my fault — (Has anyone else but me received an error message in Microsoft Word that they have caused “catastrophic failure?”) — so I thought the article would help me when I worked off-site.



Among the tips: send giant files that are over company size limits through online services such as YouSendIt Inc., SendThisFile Inc. and DropSend; search for work documents from home using software from Google, Microsoft, Yahoo or Ask; and access personal email on your BlackBerry by setting up a new account. [If you have online access to the WSJ, the article is here: http://online.wsj.com/article/SB118539543272477927.html?mod=todays_us_the_journal_report]

The last tip included instructions on how to look like you’re working when you’re doing something else, like shopping, checking sports scores or stock quotes. Hitting the Alt and Tab keys simultaneously will bring up another window, concealing your non-work pages.

While I don’t recommend using company time for personal tasks, a new survey from Salary.com found that U.S. workers waste roughly 20 percent of their workday, with personal Internet usage topping the distractions, and ExecuNet’s own research revealed that more than one-in-five executives are searching for new jobs during business hours.

Sincerely,

Dave Opton
ExecuNet Founder & CEO
www.execunet.com/davesblog

The New Executive Résumé

By Marji McClure

Regardless of whether you’re currently in transition, seeking your next new opportunity, satisfied with your present job situation, or anywhere else on your career path, you need a new executive résumé.

“Today, executives must be prepared to chart their own course,” says Michelle Dumas, executive director of Somersworth, N.H.-based Distinctive Career Services, LLC. “They need to take full responsibility for managing and developing their own career, and they must be ready at all times for the next opportunity. Of course, part of being ready for the next opportunity means having your résumé and executive profile updated and ready to go at a moment’s notice.”

Dumas says she advises clients to freshen their résumés whenever they achieve a noteworthy accomplishment or milestone; or at least every six months. Many executives may not recognize the urgency surrounding having an updated résumé; some don’t even think they have a legitimate reason for a revision.

“Time has a way of erasing achievements, or we may have a tendency to take our strengths for granted — or even the possibility that we don’t consider such events to be worth noting,” says Mark Freedman, managing director of The Resource Planning Group. “It has often been my experience that upon ‘coaxing’ noteworthy achievements from a client, they tell me things that are stunning, yet the client mentions them in an ‘Oh, by the way...’ manner of presentation.”

The natural evolution of most executives’ careers is oftentimes enough reason for a regular résumé revision. “Your value statement is ever-changing and evolving, day-by-day, month-by-month and year-by-year based on unique experiences you move through and marketplace conditions you address,” says Jacqui Barrett, president of Kansas City, Mo.-based Career Trend. “It makes sense to continually revisit the language you use to communicate your ‘sell’ and ‘market value.’”

But there are many reasons why it’s such a smart idea. “Taking this proactive approach to updating your résumé and executive profile ensures that you will never be caught short if there is a sudden change in the company you work for — or on the positive side — if you are sought out by a recruiter for a position that interests you,” says Dumas.

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The Look of Today's Résumé

The new executive résumé is more than just a listing of past job duties. Potential employers are looking for definitive proof that a candidate can do the job. Freedman says that résumés now need to be a value-based marketing presentation.

"Today's marketplace requires that executives go beyond job descriptions to accomplishment-based bullet points — The Value Proposition," says Freedman. "It's no longer sufficient to tell a future employer that hiring you would be valuable; you have to prove it. The opening paragraph/section, replete with hyperbole and boilerplate is history. Today, it's all about the numbers, which means putting in as much quantifiable information in your bullet points to illustrate the results of having acted — your impact. People want to know that you can do an exemplary job for them along the same lines or better as for your most recent employer."



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Dumas suggests beginning with a profile/summary section, followed by a reverse chronology of work history and achievements, education and other qualifications, such as professional affiliations. Barrett says the traditional résumé should include an executive profile, performance overview in reverse chronological order, and education/credentials.

"You need to position yourself strongly from the very beginning. The top third of page one is the 'hook' upon which the rest of your résumé hangs," says Freedman. "If that section can elicit the response of 'Okay, let's see if you can

Your Communications Strategy

Having an updated résumé and an online profile are just two components of successful career management, according to Kathy McAfee, The Marketing Mentor and president of Simsbury, Conn.-based Kmc Brand Innovation, LLC. McAfee says there are five others that executives need: a web presence, a speaker's bio, a strong network, personal brand and thought leadership.

One step in creating that web presence is by presenting your ideas to a global audience via a blog. "Many of today's top CEOs have their own blogs and are actively having conversations with consumers, customers and potentials everyday, everywhere," says McAfee.

Another way is to display those ideas as an expert in your field — by creating a speaker's bio. McAfee says this is a great way in which to strengthen your credibility in the marketplace.

First, McAfee suggests developing a speech or presentation that can be presented to local/regional networking groups or industry groups and have a professional photograph taken. Then, create a speaker's bio or speaker's introduction. "This should not be a truncated version of your résumé, but rather insight into you as a person," notes McAfee. "Position yourself as an interesting, multi-faceted and successful person in many areas of life, not just work. People want to hear from interesting people and they buy from people they like and trust. Don't be afraid to include personal information as it can be very helpful in building rapport with your audience."

McAfee says it's also very important to continuously build a strong network and not just reach out to people when you need help (such as a new job). "Networking is all about building and maintaining meaningful relationships before you need them," says McAfee. "Think relationships, not transactions. Think conversations, not sales pitch."

Understanding and demonstrating your personal brand is also a key communication strategy. Your brand is who you are, not just what you do, says McAfee. "It is a promise of what people can expect from you now and in the future," she says. "It's how you want them to remember you. It's how they feel about being with you." If you need help identifying your personal brand, McAfee suggests asking customers or colleagues to respond to the following questions:

1. What value did/do I create for you? Peel back any vague responses with "What's so great about that?"
2. What do you think I'm best at? What is my competitive advantage?
3. If you had to describe me to someone else in one sentence, what would you say?

Finally, demonstrating thought leadership can also help yield career opportunities for executives within their industries. By presenting new ideas into the marketplace, executives can better position themselves as a strong leader. "To attain it, you must be willing to put yourself out there and risk criticism," says McAfee. "You must infuse your energy and passion into activity that will help to educate, inspire and engage people in your topic."

prove this!' you've got the reader hooked and progressing into the body of the résumé." Freedman suggests using the space to include a statement about the value you bring, as well as keywords. That should be followed by value statements — "two or three strong examples of strengths/accomplishments backed up with matching achievements from your career that illustrate them. It positions you as you wish the reader to perceive your strengths and abilities, and greatly enhances your presentation."

Making sure those strengths and

abilities, not your weaknesses, are front and center is crucial. For that reason, Carol Schultz, a retained search professional and consultant, cautions against using a historical résumé format that lists jobs (and dates) in chronological order. "It tells people how old you are and how many jobs you've had," she says. "Historical résumés are ineffective. They raise every red flag or liability about a candidate."

Expert opinion varies on the page length of a résumé and the correct answer usually depends on the preference of the

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recipient (which, of course, isn't known). Most do agree that two to three pages is appropriate, but that can vary depending on the length of a candidate's 'story.'

"The most important factor is that you use only as many pages as necessary to convince the reader that you are an ideal candidate," says Dumas. "Just remember that with each page you reduce the chances that the résumé will be read thoroughly. Likewise, while a one-page summary — what I call a 'networking résumé' — is an effective tool when networking, or as a 'leave behind' at interviews, it is usually an ineffective replacement for a well-written, dynamic executive résumé."

The cover letter is a necessary component, as it is a vital tool that helps an executive make the correlation between his skills and the requirements for a particular position. "A cover letter also personalizes communication — the executive can specifically address the message to an individual reader," says Barrett. While presenting a powerful message, a cover letter must be brief and to the point. It should be a one-page, standalone document, says Freedman.

The Online Profile

Executives are now adding online profiles to their portfolio of job search materials. These profiles are typically posted in confidential networking directories, such as ExecuNet's member-to-member directory or public networking sites, like LinkedIn. Some of the same information from a résumé can be included online, but profiles tend to be more concise than the traditional résumé.

Freedman suggests first listing value proposition and value statements, current career information, a short career history, industry of specialty, education and accomplishments. Add examples of positive feedback from supervisors or peers along with their name and position. Also include a link to a personal website, if you have one.

"Online profiles need to hit the highest

Expert Resources:

- Jacqui Barrett, Career Trend (CareerTrend.net)
- Michelle Dumas, Distinctive Career Services, LLC (DistinctiveDocuments.com; 100kCareerMarketing.com)
- Mark Freedman, The Resource Planning Group (ResourcePlanning.com)
- Mark Jaffe, Wyatt & Jaffe (WyattJaffe.com)
- Louise Kursmark, Best Impression Career Services Inc. (YourBestImpression.com)
- Kathy McAfee, Kmc Brand Innovation, LLC (MarketingMotivator.net)
- Carol Schultz (cschultz@CareerTransition.com)

and most recent points of your career as tersely as possible," says Freedman.

"Include just enough information to impel the reader to want to learn more."

Still, some recruiters believe that having a more traditional résumé is enough and question whether executives need this online publicity. "Résumés are necessary. Profiles are not," says Mark Jaffe, president of Minneapolis-based retained search firm Wyatt & Jaffe. "Profiles are like movie trailers; they may be interesting, but once you buy a ticket to the movie, they're irrelevant. The purpose of the profile is to get you to read the résumé. The purpose of a résumé is to get you to meet the person."

Being Found — The ABCs of Keywords

Still, one reason online profiles have become so popular is that executives view them as a way in which to be more easily found by recruiters and hiring managers. While success ultimately hinges on whether those recruiters and hiring managers visit the sites in which an executive's profile appears, including the right keywords in a profile is crucial to being discovered for the right opportunity.

"Keywords are nouns and noun phrases that someone would use to search for an individual capable of filling your ideal position," says Dumas, who suggests that clients locate these keywords by searching job boards for positions that interest them; the most descriptive ads are the best.

"At a minimum, I ask them to find three ads, but up to six is even better," notes Dumas. "We use these ads to identify the descriptors, keywords and keyword phrases that recruiters and employers are using to find candidates for the

target position. These are, of course, the same keywords they will use when they search for online profiles, so we make certain to include all of the most important ones within the résumé and the executive profile."

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Freedman cautions executives not to use general terms such as "seasoned," "hands-on," "team-builder" and "decision-maker." "What does belong are the key noun phrases that define the position to which you aspire or are specific to the industry niche in which you wish to continue, and you should have concrete bullet points in the body of your profile/résumé that back them up, such as Strategic Planning, P&L, TQM, QA, SAP, CRM and Risk Management," says Freedman.

"Speak to the specific needs of recruiters and hiring managers," adds Barrett. "Be a match to their needs — mirror back to them what they are asking for and be concrete in your message. Fluff will not attract — tangible actions and results will elicit response. Keywords that model their language will resonate."

One caveat: many experts agree that reliance on online job boards is a bad

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idea. “The problem with the job boards is that they lead people to believe that’s where they will find a job,” says Schultz.

“While the diligent executive cannot ignore the various job boards that exist, reliance on them alone are in the majority has not proven to be generally productive to this point in our experience,” says Freedman. “The best method remains networking followed by membership in high quality executive job transition organizations (such as ExecuNet) and direct targeted campaigns to executive recruiters, specific companies in your desired industry or private equity/VC firms.”

An Ongoing Project

Regardless of your current job situation, keep in mind that creating — and maintaining — your résumé and online profile is a vital responsibility, and one that takes time and commitment.

Louise Kursmark, executive résumé writer and career consultant for Best Impression Career Services Inc., recalls a client who Googled herself and found no references to her career online. “This was not good news for a senior sales executive who was looking for a new position. She knew that recruiters and others would be looking online to verify what she said about herself,” says Kursmark.

The client first updated her résumé, created a profile on LinkedIn and built an entire web portfolio. “She worked for six months or so to build her visibility — and as a result, when you type her name

into Google, her portfolio is the first listing. Now she’s taking it one step further and started a blog in which she comments about her area of expertise (sales process) and other work-life issues. She’s enjoying it. And though she’s found a new position, she intends to keep up her efforts so that she can always be found — in a positive light — online.”

Online Reputation Management

- 83% of executive recruiters find additional information about candidates online
- 43% of executive candidates are eliminated due to negative online information
- 70% of executive recruiters say positive online information improves candidate’s prospects

Executives Get Proactive

- 20% of executives have taken steps to portray positive information online
- 14% of executives have a website to display professional accomplishments

Source: ExecuNet, 2007

Kursmark’s client is certainly not an exception. Overall, executives are taking advantage of technology that is connecting them to valuable contacts, while complementing traditional tools such as the résumé.

“I see executives using the networking features quite energetically,” says Kursmark. “They are reaching out to others — people

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The problem with the job boards is that they lead people to believe that’s where they will find a job.

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they know and people they don’t — and asking for career advice, information about people and companies, connections to their target companies, and more. They are making use of the tools in membership sites, such as the ExecuNet Forum, to post questions and get advice from many different sources at once. They are also using online sites (such as JibberJobber) to manage their career information, networking and job search.”

When embarking on a career management strategy that includes a new résumé and profile, don’t rush to get your documents into circulation. “Take your time — be prepared to spend several weeks rather than several days to derive meaningful updates or revamps to a traditional résumé or online profile,” says Barrett. “Plan time for introspection — enjoy the process of continually unveiling your unique value proposition and brand. It’s amazing the difference one word or phrase can make in the performance of your career transition.” ■

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