

In This Issue: “Caveat Hiror” (Beware Of Taking Resumes At Face Value)

Test for Success
Tools, Tips, & Techniques for Avoiding
Hiring Mistakes and Developing People
From Helm and Associates, Inc.
And Kurt Helm

Published on the fourth Thursday of every other month
January 2009; Volume 4, Issue 1
Barbara Otto, Editor, mailto:botto@helmtest.com

Please pass Test for Success to those in your network.
To leave list or change email address, please scroll to bottom.

Word count for this issue: 1,117 words
Approximate time to read: 8 minutes

Happy New Year, and welcome to 2009! We are starting a new series of ezines with this issue of “Test For Success.” In each of these issues we will look at a different step in the selection process, with quick tips for improving, streamlining, or just approaching that step in a new way. Let’s start with the resume, since that is often the first opportunity the candidate gets to present himself or herself to you.

You’ve no doubt heard that “caveat emptor” means “let the buyer beware” in Latin, to which I would add, in my personal version of Latin, “caveat hiror!” (Let the hiring person be aware – and beware of taking the resume at face value!)

The problem with resumes is that you must be cautious about taking them at face value. Granted, we all know that, but it’s easy to forget and here is why. The written word has power. Talk is cheap, as they say, but the written word looks so substantial, so official! Add to that a nice font, heavy paper and no typos, and a resume has all the appearance of a legal document, which it is not.

Here is what I want to remind us all to be aware of: First, there is no such thing as a totally objective written document. All writing contains the biases of the writer, both the intentional and unintentional. Second, a resume isn’t intended to be objective! It’s purpose is to present the individual in as positive and attractive a way as possible. Third, there are yards of shelf space in bookstores and libraries devoted to writing resumes that make a person stand out from the group of applicants.

What does this mean for the hiring manager or recruiter? It means that, while the resume

is your starting place for learning about the individual and his or her qualifications, you have to do some work to verify the information on the resume, and to find out what it all means. Here are some tips that I consider pretty basic when I read a resume:

- Do I have dates of education, employment, etc. that I can verify? (And then I do!)
- Can I tell what the individual did from day to day? What were his or her daily activities? To whom did he report? Who reported to him? If I can't figure this out from the resume, then I make notes to ask these questions in the interview or when I check references.
- Are there gaps in employment or education dates? Can I reconcile any gaps with information from the resume? If not, more notes to myself to investigate further.

Do people falsify information on resumes? All the time! Does everyone do it? No, not everyone does but, when they do, it can create big problems for you. Let me share a quick story with you about a falsified resume:

Several years ago, I worked for a mid-sized firm that provided consulting services in banking, industrial engineering, and industrial psychology. One of the things we offered was pre-employment psychological assessment. The banking area of our firm received a very impressive resume for a high level banking consultant position. The partners of the firm were so impressed during interviews with the individual that they hired him on the spot. He was seen as "too strong" to require a psychological assessment, background check, or any attempt to verify the strengths of his glowing resume. Several months later, two gentlemen showed up and asked the receptionist if Mr. Golden Resume worked there. When she asked what their interest was, they showed her their FBI identification. It turned out that Mr. G. Resume was a con man wanted in several states. By this time, unfortunately, he had been introduced to our banking clients and was working with several of them on consulting projects. The resulting embarrassment and loss of credibility for the firm cost us a couple clients and did serious damage to the firm's reputation.

Here's a reminder about how to evaluate resumes:

1. Verify all education claimed on the resume. Contact previous employers and try to reach the applicant's former boss or a coworker in order to get as much information as possible about what the applicant actually did and how well he did it.
2. Try to get specifics about the accomplishments the applicant claims. Exactly how much did he improve his department's productivity? How was the improvement measured?
3. Identify any discrepancies, gaps in employment or oddities on the resume and seek reassurance that there is a reasonable explanation for them. This is not the place to simply "give the applicant the benefit of the doubt." You want to get a

credible explanation for anything that doesn't look right on the resume.

Remember, resumes should be seen as the result of an exercise in creative writing on the part of the applicant, rather than as a 100% accurate description of the applicant's relevant personal, educational, and professional qualifications and experience. As former President Reagan used to say, "Trust, but verify."

Caveat hiror!

=====

Remember, People ARE your most important asset!

To Hire the Best, Test!

To Reveal Management Potential, Test!

To Diagnose Problem Behavior, Test!

About this Newsletter and About Your Subscription

© 2009, Kurt G. Helm, Ph.D. All rights reserved. You are allowed to use material from this newsletter in whole or in part provided that you include complete attribution. Please notify me where the material will appear. The attribution should read:

"By Kurt G. Helm, Ph.D., of Helm and Associates, Inc. Please visit our website at www.helmtest.com for more information about how to avoid hiring mistakes by using pre-employment testing as part of the applicant evaluation procedure."

If you want to change your email address or take yourself off this list, please don't email us. Click the link at the bottom. Only takes a second or two to leave or to make changes. Thanks!

PRIVACY and SPAM POLICY: We never rent, trade or sell our email list to anyone for any reason whatsoever. You'll never get an unsolicited email from a stranger as a result of joining this list.

Until next time, all the best,

Kurt Helm - Helm and Associates, Inc.

Ph: Toll Free 800-886-4356

Email: khelm@helmtest.com

P.O. Box 130
Helmsburg IN 47435

Website: <http://www.helmtest.com>