

Make Your Message Meaningful

Brian's employer hit him with a double whammy: the company reorganized AND relocated. Brian didn't fit into the new picture. He prepared his resume and began networking. Since he didn't want to limit his options, this is how he described at the top of his resume what he wanted:

"Seeking a senior management position with a fast-growing company where I can use my proven management skills to further the growth of the company."

He used that same description when he networked. Brian figured this would lead to a flood of inquiries from recruiters and prospective employers wanting to interview him.

After mailing out 500 letters and resumes, Brian soon understood a new meaning for the phrase "shock and awe." He didn't receive a single positive response! To add to his disappointment, the number of referrals he got from people he met during his networking efforts was the same – zero.

Where did Brian go wrong, and how could he make his message more meaningful?

Brian's first mistake was to say that he was looking for a "senior management position." I can't think of a single company that has a "senior management position." They do, however, have positions with titles like chief financial officer, VP of marketing and sales, VP operations, CIO, product manager, regional sales director, etc.

When someone reads your resume or hears your verbal business card (the short sentence or two in which you tell others what you want), they need to understand quickly and clearly which functional position you're seeking.

If I'm hiring for any of those positions I just mentioned and I see Brian's goal of a "senior management position," I throw his resume away. I don't have time to figure out what he really does.

Brian's second mistake was to say that he wanted to work for a "fast-growing company." That's too vague. Employers tend to think of their business as being in a particular industry, such as pharmaceutical, apparel manufacturing, fashion retail, wireless telecommunications, etc. When they recruit senior talent, they most often look for executives and managers who have a record of accomplishment in their industry.

So, quickly and clearly, you must inform the person listening to your verbal business card or reading your resume which specific industry you're targeting.

Let's use an example to illustrate how most companies search for candidates. If a medical device company is looking for a new vice president of marketing and sales, they and their recruiters

start by targeting executives who are already VPs of marketing and sales in competing companies.

Employers pay recruiters substantial fees and expect them to find exactly what they want. They don't waste time. If you were expecting employers and recruiters to delve deeper into your resume so they can appreciate your industry experience, or perhaps to get that information during the interview process, think again. You probably won't even get an interview.

Make sure your verbal business card and the opening message on your resume contain a short but meaningful message. Include nothing more than these three points:

1. The position you want.
2. The industry in which you want to work (as supported by your experience).
3. The location where you want to work... and only include this if you're restricting your search to specific locations.

Here's an example of an effective verbal business card or resume opener:

"I'm seeking a regional sales director position in the pharmaceutical industry, and I'm willing to relocate anywhere in California."

Any recruiter who needs to fill that specific position will immediately delve deeper to see if you're qualified.

Now go take charge of your career!

Carl Wellenstein is an employment and career strategist located in Southern California and is the author of 12 Steps to a New Career. He helps those in mid-career facilitate career advancement, expedite job changes, and pursue new career destinies. These stories reflect actual experiences, modified to protect the identities of individuals and employers. If you have a question you would like answered, contact Carl at carl@execglobalnet.com.