

What the resume doesn't say....

(A personal reflection on interviewing by BLANKSLATE's awesome Alissa Bakker!)

In a recent interview with a candidate, I learnt a valuable lesson. By habit, I start off a conversations by asking the candidate the story behind their resume. "How did they get to where they are today?" "What are they looking for in their next opportunity?" On this occasion, the candidate I was speaking to was so thankful that I asked for her story. Her recent employment track record wasn't perfect by ideal resume standards. (There was a long self-employment stint, a couple of short tenures and a current break in employment of 7 months.) But her experience was relevant and her level of seniority was spot on.

Turns out, there was a story behind her resume that explained her "imperfect" track record. Up until our conversation, she had struggled to find someone willing to listen. As for the interview; she checked all the boxes for my screening questions around initiative, organization, accountability and adaptability. She was qualified for the role and is currently in the final hiring stages.

The Resume Vs The Person

A resume is a marketing tool, as a result, it doesn't get a candidate the job, it gets them the interview. It's the foot in the door. The resume can't successfully convey the candidate's great attitude, willingness to learn, ability to process new information quickly, resourcefulness, or their ability to motivate others.

It is, however, a great snapshot of someones career. Therefore how much can you actually learn about a person from a sheet of paper? Did you know [The average recruiter looks at a resume for 6 seconds!](#)

Getting Past the 6 Second Glance.

So what do we look for in those 6 seconds? Above all, relevant key word matches for skills/technologies, tenure, industry experience and qualifications. What we don't see is the story behind the person.

Does a candidates employment gaps or job hopping mean that they are unreliable, lacking responsibility, unmotivated or unable to make decisions? There are many reasons for these gaps that are often not explained on a resume. Was the previous company downsized or acquired? Were they were on parental leave? Maybe they reached their maximum capacity with their current role and there was no growth in front of them. Or they were sold on one thing only to realize the role or culture was something entirely different? (These are just a few of the things we hear in interview.)

Connect to Discover.

Phone interviews are a great way to gauge who someone is. A quick 30 minute phone call can give you a good sense of who someone is. It also gives them an opportunity to tell you their story. You get the chance to understand their communication skills, attitude, professionalism, ability to listen and general ability to fulfill the role. In addition, they get to understand IF the role is for them.

Values Based Interview

The Values Based Behavioural Interview ([See BLANKSLATE's Resource page for more on this](#)) will dive deeper into the "who" behind the resume. It will help you collect data from real situations that the candidate encountered and thus allows you to evaluate past behaviour and values. This would then inform potential future behaviour and values.

Assess

Pre-employment assessments are a great tool to understand the alignment between the employee's abilities and the desired job outcomes. Common pre-employment tests include coding tests, writing exercises, personality or emotional IQ tests and cognitive ability tests. But remember these too are reflective of skills and ability to test, less so than the individuals personal motivations.

In conclusion, remember we are humans. Life happens and sometimes life isn't perfect. We encourage our clients to get clear on the "who" it is they want to work with and the "why" behind the role.