Are You Presenting Résumés

OR

Giving Away Your Profits?

A Tutorial on Presenting Resumes in Today's Digital Jungle in an effort to be more competitive and to reduce potential candidate POACHING!

Jeff Skrentny, *CERS*

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Recently, I was contemplating my fax machine. Remember those? Mine broke, and frankly I couldn't help but wonder if it was even worth replacing. I never use it …who faxes me a résumé? I get them all via email. And I can't remember the last time a client asked me to fax them the résumés of candidates for their review. The only time I use my fax is for marketing to new prospects and past clients *(because it works in this era of email overload)*, and that fax work is more easily accomplished with my computer fax program, not the fax machine.

But remember what an uproar fax machines caused when they were introduced to our industry in 1988-1989? All those who have joined the industry since the mid 1990's are laughing right now, saying **"NO,"** and **"Why?"**

I have been in this industry since 1987, and I learned how to present candidates to clients by making PHONE presentations. Or even better, as I worked the downtown metro market in Chicago placing clerical support help, as often as we could we would go to our clients and prospects and make our candidate presentations for the open search, face to face. That is a novel idea that **STILL** works, if you haven't tried it recently. I still recall a most important part of my early training: it was learning to make ***concise, competitive, and compelling presentations of my best candidates*** to my peers with whom I did splits, and eventually to my clients, so they would interview my candidates. You had to be a quick impromptu thinker and speaker. You also HAD to *really know your candidates well*, and know why they were a good match for the opening in question, or you were shot down almost instantly.

Of course, setting up interviews based on these phone presentations alone **required a great leap of faith and trust by clients and prospects,** but there simply was no other reasonable way to make candidate presentations outside of mailing the resume. When I first learned this business, usually clients or prospects did not see a candidate's résumé until the candidate showed up for the interview, résumé in hand. As often as I can, **I still try to make phone presentations to set up candidate & client interviews**. Saves time, and puts my candidate into the hiring process immediately, not after the paper chase is done!

Back then *(and even today)* **if you screwed up and sent a candidate you shouldn't have sent,** the phone call right after a typically very short candidate interview with your client *(or worse yet, a co-worker's client)* was typically very uncomfortable, if not downright unpleasant. So a trust evolved fast, and all the good recruiters I knew made great impromptu presentations of candidate backgrounds that were designed to get the client to schedule an interview NOW. All was good as long as the trust placed with the recruiter by the client or prospect was not violated by poorly skilled or poorly matched candidates sent to interview for to the client's specific need.

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Then, in 1988, the worst of all possible things happened: the fax machine was made commercially available for all to use. Rolled-up resumes on that early fax paper were most annoying. But worse than that was clients first requesting, **then demanding,** to see résumés **BEFORE** they would schedule interviews to see our candidates. The whole process slowed down as internal bureaucrats hemmed and hawed over this and that on a résumé, versus simply trusting a good recruiter's phone presentation. By the time they decided to see your candidates, ***it often seemed*** that the best candidate had already accepted another job. **UGH!!!** We had whole training meetings devoted to this fax versus phone candidate presentation dilemma.

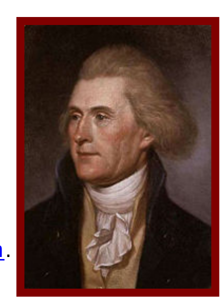
Thankfully, by 1990, everyone had adapted to this new presentation process, and balance was restored to the recruiting/staffing/search industry. The best recruiters earned the right to make phone candidate presentations, but until you earned that respect, you faxed résumés to be reviewed before interviews were set up. So it was no big deal then in the mid-1990's when the switch was made from faxing résumés to clients for review, to emailing résumés for review. You had to type a fax cover sheet; you had to type the introductory email. It was great! Occasionally, early in the game, there were problems with formatting and fonts that couldn't be read. But other than that, it was smooth sailing accomplishing the same transfer of information without all those faxes. Since mid-1995, presenting candidates to prospects and clients via email with résumés attached has been our standard, and the profession's standard since at least 2000.

But there have been a few lessons to learn along the way. I would like to share three.

Lesson ONE: Make all submissions blind. Don't ever present to a client, and especially to a prospect you don't know well, a candidate résumé that includes the candidate's name, contact information *(phone, email or address)*, or current company name on it. After a few sleazy interactions with prospects where I should have known better, I have decided the only way I can protect my inventory is to keep both the client AND candidate names confidential until BOTH mutually agree to see one another. If at that time I tell each one the name of the other and learn they know of one another *(which they let you know right away)*, I simply back out of the process and lament that I was a bit late on that one. Sure, it hurts, but not as much as when they try to maliciously do this to you, which someone will do to you eventually if you tell them who your inventory is BEFORE they agree to interview it.

Yes, I have been called paranoid, and much worse, because of this practice, and I can't tell you all of my existing clients loved this new practice of mine when I first started it in the late 1990's. **But all of them got used to it, and now no one even cares.** I continue to do this for a number of reasons. **First,** prospects and clients can't take my inventory and add it to their database. **They do this!!! REGULARLY!!!** I have been told by one of my CLIENTS—one of my clients!—that she regularly lists open searches with recruiters she has no intention of hiring from, simply to get candidate inventory for future recruiting, or for her recruiters to use to network through to find the candidates they want to hire, eliminating the need to pay some search fees.

Second, from less scrupulous prospects and even some desperate clients, I now protect my inventory until they agree to see the candidate from ME. This reduces *(does not eliminate)* the number of times I have to deal with the issue of ***"We already know that candidate."*** You do understand that if you present résumés of candidates with names and contact information, often a quick Internet search can find the same résumé. What you will hear from your unscrupulous prospect or client is, ***"Sorry, we already identified that candidate"*** or ***"That candidate is already in our system."***



Damned if that isn't always the one they seem to hire, and when you talk to the candidate, the candidate had yet to be contacted by your prospect or client. What do

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you do? Call the client or prospect a cheat or a liar because you KNOW they had not called the candidate until you presented them for the search? That will endear you to them. It is easy to find great candidates in your database if someone tells you who they are.

Just take the name, contact information and, if you think necessary, the current or most recent employer from the résumé. **This is just plain ol' securing your inventory from theft, or poaching.** I have also learned from experience that if you don't put names on résumés with your initial presentation, later when you do share the candidate names, those they don't see, or don't hire, almost never get added to their databases because no one goes back and enters them into the database. This is fine with me, as it is my inventory, not theirs; I am glad for it not to be in their database.

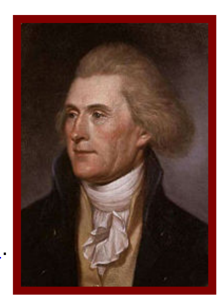
Third, stupid things happen. I don't want to be sued by a candidate because they lose their job due to a presentation I made. This has happened: A recruiter presents a candidate background to a client or prospect, and some dumb suit reviewing the résumé decides to call the candidate's boss to see what kind of an employee she is because he happens to know the candidate's boss from the country club. He makes this call and the candidate loses her job because the candidate's confidential job search is lost as a result of this careless call. Something very similar to this has happened to me. I did not get sued, because the candidate didn't lose their job. I have read legal settlements where candidates have successfully sued over situations like this because they **DID** lose their job. They got treble damages. It is good to have errors and omissions insurance, but do you need to use it?

Keep candidate names confidential until your client or prospect agrees to see the candidate based on the résumé, and your ***compelling and captivating*** **presentation** of it as a result of your thorough interview with the candidate and the candidate references you checked. This is how good recruiters get the sendout. And this is the difference between mere résumé "brokers" and search consultants.

It's not paranoia; rather, we are just working smart and in a manner that protects our three key assets: our client's identity, our candidate inventory, and most importantly, our time.

Lesson TWO: Send candidate presentations as .rtf or preferably .pdf files. Like me, you remove candidate names, contact information and current employer from candidate résumés, and present blind résumés to your clients and prospects. Like me, you have also unfortunately learned from experience that this is a necessary course of action in today's digital jungle, where, with a touch of a button, information can be accessed instantly, **occasionally to your financial peril.**

But in what format do you now make your resume presentations to your clients? Most of you probably present résumés to your client as Microsoft Word documents. That would be fine, except for one thing: Unbeknownst to most of you, in every document created by Microsoft Word, all the prior changes made to that document are saved and can simply be accessed if you know how to open that document using a text reader. That's right, you present a blind résumé where the name and candidate contact information have been removed, BUT, because you presented that résumé to your client or prospect as a Microsoft Word document, and because your client or prospect knows how to open that résumé with a text reader, they can quickly find out all the information you have deleted because it has all been saved in the background. Thus it can be used against your interests, should your client or prospect be so inclined.



I learned this simple fact when I emailed a prospect a contract with all the terms we had agreed to. They called back and began asking why one of my other prospects got this arrangement, and why another got that. I was baffled—how could they know this

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unless they had hacked into my network? They knew it because, like many recruiters, I made their contract by pulling up my last most similar contract, and then changing what needed to be changed. This prospect opened my contract in a text reader, saw all the changes made to it in the past, and was able to ascertain what terms I had offered to every prior client or prospect I had used this document with when I created their contract. We never worked together. I felt betrayed; they felt I was cheating them for not offering the rate one of my best clients had recently received.

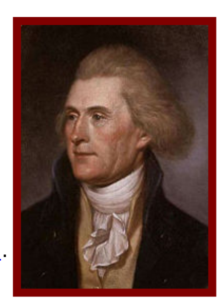
The point is, if you ARE being careful and you ARE making blind presentations for the reasons outlined above, your caution is being thrown to the wind if you use Microsoft Word documents to make those blind presentations.

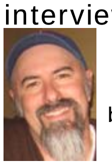
This can be easily solved! Simply save your blind resumes as RICH TEXT DOCUMENTS, or **.rtf** formatted documents. After you make the changes you need in order to make the resume blind to protect your inventory appropriately, do the following: Go to **FILE**, then **SAVE AS;** when that pop-up window appears, at the bottom of that pop-up box, under **FILE NAME**, you will see the option **SAVE AS TYPE**. Click on the arrow at the right for that option and choose RICH TEXT FORMAT and save the document. Because the **.rtf** type does not keep any changes made to the document in the background, what you see is the entirety of the document. **This is the easiest solution for most.**

Another option: Microsoft has added security features to its most recent software, which COULD offer some protection. But I chose not to hope that the security Microsoft provided was foolproof, which is why for years we did as outlined above, **UNTIL a better, more competitive option was brought to our attention:** using Adobe software to create **.pdf** files from our Word documents. We now use Adobe Professional software to accomplish this, but you don't need to invest $500 to own and use this software, as this is the most expensive option. There are now a number of $30 software products that will convert any document you can print into a **.pdf** formatted document. Simply install any of these many software options, and from that point forward you can write any document into **.pdf** form with a click of a button or two.

Why do we prefer the **.pdf** format? First, it looks nice. Second, it is very difficult to alter **.pdf** documents, and that is before you even consider using the security support offered *(which we don't even use)*. If you have never had the "pleasure" of an HR representative changing a resume that you presented to include a skill a candidate DID NOT HAVE just to make it look like she was able to find the candidates a demanding department manager needed, and then had to deal with the ensuing fiasco when that manager learned the candidate YOU sent didn't have the required skill as ***listed on the resume***, well then, you would know why we don't want our presentations changed in any manner. The **.pdf** format offers us that security. Third, **.pdfs** are typically smaller files and can be emailed more quickly. And yes, every computer now has a **.pdf** reader installed, so it would be only the most archaic computer that wouldn't be able to open your **.pdf** résumé presentation.

Lesson THREE: Create resume presentations for clients that are complete and compelling. Most search and staffing professionals present résumés with an email introduction of why a candidate should be interviewed, and the pluses and minuses of this candidate versus that. The problem is, often that well-crafted email note is separated from your résumés, and thus those actually making the decision to interview your candidate won't see your most excellently crafted email detailing the reasons why candidate A, B or C should be interviewed. All your hard work of screening, selecting and matching the specific candidate to a client's specific search **is lost,** and those who need this information the most don't ever have the benefit of your knowledge and insight. And sometimes the failure to transfer this presentation information is **WHY** your candidate does not get a scheduled interview. Worse yet, you learn that someone else DID get an interview scheduled





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because they made sure the appropriate information DID reach the decision maker. It happens.

How do you ensure that your presentation gets read by those deciding to set the interviews?

Include it as page one of the résumé. That's what we do. And because we send our résumés as **.pdfs**, it is not particularly easy for someone to remove your introductory page. And though it can be done, most become accustomed to and even really like those one-page summaries. It becomes an interview cheat sheet for those not so well prepared for an interview. Additionally, we almost always highlight specific points within the résumé with ***RECRUITER'S NOTES***. That's right, we add short notes into the text of the résumé to highlight items that are particularly important for the job for which the candidate is interviewing, to note accomplishments you do not want overlooked, and to draw attention to items you really want discussed during the candidate interview process. We use a font that is clearly other than the one the candidate is using, and looks like this:

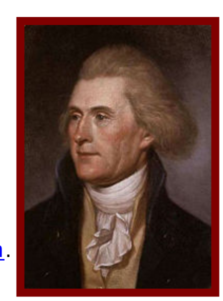
> ***RECRUITER'S NOTE:*** *Don't forget to ask Andrew about the training program he wrote in his spare time which saved his last employer $6 million annually…isn't that the type of self motivation you want from a programmer on your team?*

Our clients love this now. It helps them with the interview they must conduct AND it often sets up a platform so that your candidate gets an opportunity to discuss their best or most relevant accomplishments. **Can there be a better way to set candidates up to succeed on an interview?**

Besides the page one summary, which is merely a duplication of our email summary, and the ***RECRUITER'S NOTES*** **we regularly add into the text of the résumé**, now, because of the way we check references via email, we usually have checked **one or two candidate references** before we present the résumé to a prospect or client. We also include one or two of those with the résumé presentation we make. This has helped us get a number of sendouts that we would not otherwise have arranged, because we had outstanding references of candidates they were not sure they wanted to see. Several of those sendouts have become great placements. **Because our clients have come to like this so much, they are now asking our competitors to have references checked when they present candidate résumés!!!.**

That demand is adding a competitive advantage to our business because my competitors still check references the old-fashioned way with a phone call and a pen, wasting time they just don't have, with candidates they might not place. And because they do their reference checks this way and we don't, our checks are a world more detailed and complete than their checks are. They can't really even compete with us on this. Finally, if our clients want it, we have begun including a digital copy of our candidate's completed **Candidate Assessment Questionnaire** (**CAQ**). If you are not familiar with this process, please email us for a copy. This document has answers to 6 simple questions completed by the candidate before we agree to interview them, and some of our clients have found this additional information useful in developing their interviews with our
candidates.

So, our complete candidate presentation includes: a quarter- to half-page summary of why they should interview the candidate, and what the candidate brings to the table that makes him or her particularly on target for the current opening. This is the first page of the presentation. Next comes the resume, which is presented blind—no candidate name or contact information, and sometimes we remove the current company name as well. Within the résumé, we regularly add ***RECRUITER'S NOTES*** to point out specific items we don't want to be overlooked within the résumé. After the résumé we add one or



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two typed-out candidate references that we have completed, again regularly highlighting items that should be of specific interest for our clients or candidates. Finally, based on our client's or prospect's interest, we may include the completed **CAQ** which our candidate completed before we agreed to interview them. Altogether this presentation package is a complete, professional and thorough document of the candidate's résumé, references and background, including the reasons why the candidate should be interviewed, and is much more like a presentation that an executive search firm would present. **Our clients and prospects are typically blown away by these presentation packets. They give us a great competitive edge versus the simple resumes some of our competitors regularly send.**

By making all of your résumé presentations blind, presenting those résumés as **.pdf** files, and then taking the time to make sure all of your résumé submissions are complete and compelling as we have outlined above, you will find that you are protecting your inventory from poaching and from becoming part of a prospect's or client's candidate database. You will also ensure that your presentations remain the ones you made, clearly marked with your brand and/or corporate logo. And you will learn that, if done right, gathering this information is easy and does NOT take extra time. Then, when packaged as outlined above, your presentations look much more professional than those of most of your peers. If you would like to see a sample of one of our presentation packets, email us and ask. Finally, using this presentation format will increase your presentation-to-sendout ratio, and more importantly, your sendout-to-hire ratio. **That means you will have more time to make more deals.** And that is something we should all be looking forward to in the market ahead of us.


Jeff Skrentny, *CERS*

Jeff Skrentny, *CERS***,** had an inauspicious start in the recruiting profession as his first placement left after 93 days. But since then he has put **1154** greater Chicagoland professionals into fantastic new careers with some of Chicagoland's best organizations. Jeff has been a recruiter for 23 years, and has also been a trainer, author and motivator for his profession for the last 14 years, as well as being a business consultant for its producers, managers & owners for the last 9 years, all while still running a busy IT search business in Chicago at his firm JEFFERSON GROUP SEARCH. Jeff not only helps bring candidates and clients together with his search services, Jeff also regularly does training sessions for candidates and his clients to ensure both have competitive interviewing and hiring practices. And he doesn't just help his clients hire new employees; with his new **Certified Employee Retention Specialist *(CERS)*** credential, he now consults for his clients with ideas on how to best onboard and retain their best talent to ensure profitable human capital best practices.

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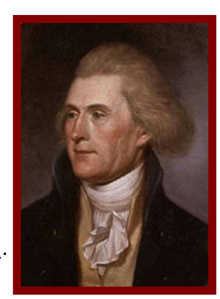

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