

# EMPLOYMENT

## THE JOB SEARCH

# The “Art” and “Verse” of the job search

Irving Stone, the founder/chairman of American Greetings Corporation, was often quoted as saying, “Art attracts but verse sells.”



Mike Milby

Simply stated, art draws the buyer’s attention to a particular card and the verse inside creates the sell. If the outward appearance of the card is not appealing, the buyer will never select it from the display. If the verse inside the card does not effectively convey the desired sentiment, the potential buyer will not choose the card regardless of its beauty. The good people at American Greetings have followed this logic for many years and it has served them well.

Why are we talking about greeting cards, and what is their application to a job search? Well, by analogy, think of your resume as the “art” and your interviewing skills as the “verse.” These two component parts are of critical importance when selling your credentials and capabilities to a potential employer.

Too often you hear, “I perform great once I

get in front of the hiring manager, but I just can’t seem to get enough opportunities,” or “my resume gets a lot of attention, but I never seem to get past the first round of interviews.”

To conduct a successful search, you must develop an excellent resume and continually improve your interviewing skills.

Consider the following when developing your resume:

### Make your resume easy to review

Contrary to what we want to believe, recruiters do not thoroughly review a resume looking for reasons to keep it in the “good” pile. The easier you can make it for them to assess your experience, the better your chances of being considered for the opportunity.

Generally speaking, employers and recruiters prefer chronological resumes to functional resumes. There is a presumption among recruiters that people design functional resumes to hide something such as a break in employment.

Consider developing a career summary on the top third of the first page of your resume. Don’t identify a career objective as part of the summary. Instead, let the summary reflect what you have done throughout your career and identify key competencies and experiences you have acquired during that time. This way, a recruiter can quickly determine whether your credentials appear to match with their job requirements.

### Make your resume consistent

Identify each company that you have worked for, and provide a brief description including revenue, product, service, industry, and number of employees. Don’t assume that everyone knows the company just because they recognize the name.

List each job you held and identify your responsibilities and the job title of the person to whom you reported. Also list the number of employees reporting to you and the size of your budget if applicable.

After each position you have held in the past 15 years, identify three to five key accomplishments. Quantify the impact of each accomplishment in ways such as increased revenue, improved productivity, or customers served.

### Make your resume complete

You are who you are. Let the breadth and depth of your experience be reflected in a single document. If you have 35 years of work experience, don’t try to conceal it. You will just make the employer suspicious when he interviews someone who is obviously 50ish rather than 30ish.

Don’t tailor or create multiple resumes. You lose control of your resume once you put it into the marketplace. The last thing you want is your “marketing” resume, instead of your “general manager” resume, being sent to an employer who is looking for an accomplished general manager.

When it’s time for the interview, be prepared with the following:

### Have three accomplishments and three details ready

Identify three of your most significant accomplishments in the past 10 years and the quantifiable impact of each on the organization.

For each accomplishment, list three detailed actions that you undertook to help make the event a success. Keep the information top of mind throughout the interview process and you will find it much easier to handle situational questions. Connect the dots between your experiences and the needs of the company interviewing you.

### Ensure continuity and consistency in your message

When preparing for an interview, read the position description, research the company and reflect on your career.

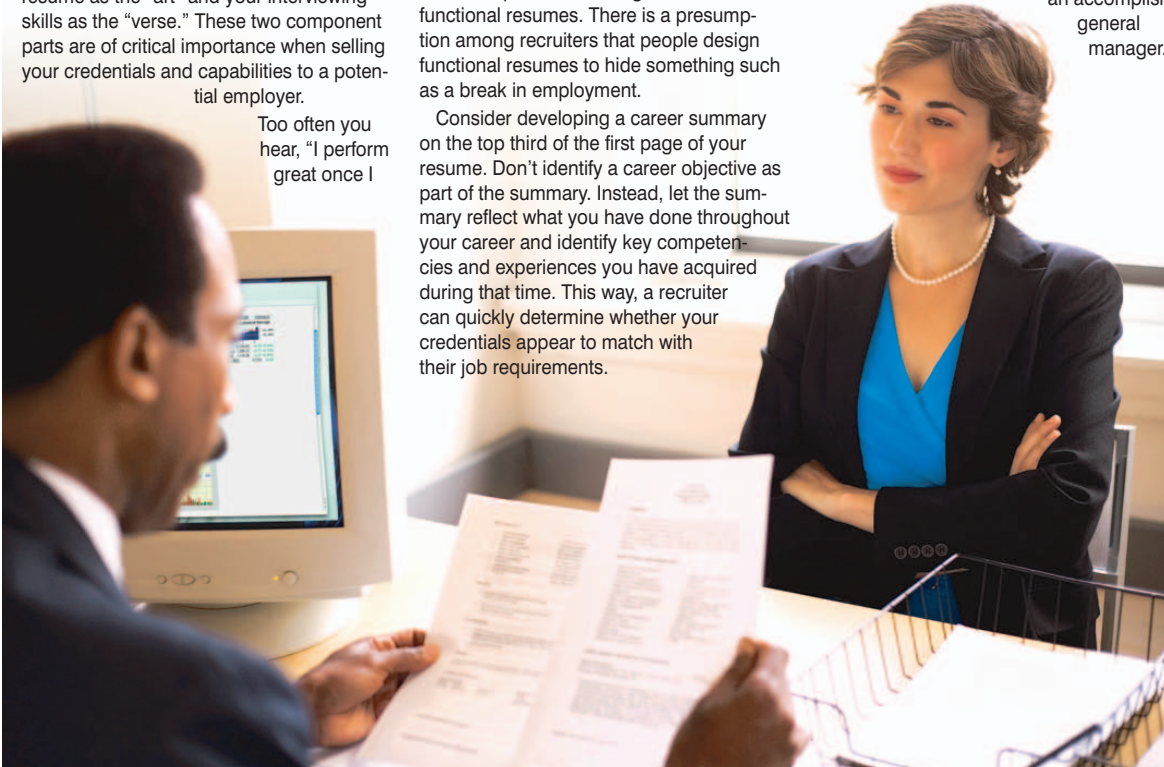
Then develop three key messages that you want everyone in the interview to hear. Unlike the accomplishments discussed in the previous section, these messages should be specifically tailored to this company and this round of interviews.

Be sure to incorporate these messages into every conversation with the recruiter and company representative. This is very important because interviewers compare notes with each other after every round of interviews. The more your message is on target and consistently conveyed to each person, the better your chances are of advancing.

### Address themes not questions

Most people think of the interview process as answering a series of specific questions which can be a bit overwhelming. Instead, think of it as addressing a variety of job-related themes. People want to know what you will be like as a boss, subordinate and peer. They want to know about your greatest strength and weakness and your greatest accomplishment and disappointment. Don’t try to prepare for each specific question. Instead, decide how you will address each theme itself. In doing so, you can be more consistent with your message and handle specific questions with greater comfort.

Having a great resume and interviewing well is not always enough to land the next great job. You really begin to thrive when you develop both the “art” and the “verse” of the job search process.



Mike Milby is the chief operating officer of Ratliff & Taylor, a global talent management firm. He is a former human resource executive with a Fortune 1000 company and coaches senior level executives at Ratliff & Taylor. Mike can be reached at mmilby@rtcp.com