

Sell Results to Sell Yourself

By
Mariette Edwards

I met a young man recently who was looking for a job in sports marketing. Despite his obvious passion for his objective, he was concerned that he didn't have enough experience to qualify him for that role. After we talked for awhile, it became clear that he did have quite a bit of relevant experience. Prompted by questions to help him think in terms of results, he was soon telling me stories about the impact he had had in different situations. Far more interesting than a long list of duties and responsibilities, his stories made his resume come alive. We agreed that he would spend some time reviewing his past work experience to identify and polish the stories he would tell to underscore why a potential employer should hire him.

Even more compelling is the experience I had recently at a meeting of an executive networking organization. Started by a group of powerful but out of work executives, these individuals meet weekly to share resources and exchange leads. The meeting started with the typical, "My name is and I was the VP of _____. I'm looking for an opportunity to _____". The faces sitting around the enormous conference table quickly became a blur. Then the guest speaker asked, "Would anyone like to tell a story to illustrate something he or she is particularly proud of?" The three individuals, who volunteered, in just a few sentences, separated themselves from the herd and became memorable. Granted, the stories needed a little work to maximize their impact but I left that meeting with a connection to those three. In fact, before leaving I went up and spoke to each one and learned even more, so attractive were their stories to creating connection!

Nothing succeeds like success!

Start crafting your stories by reflecting on the results you have produced. Then tell a story about each making sure you position it to demonstrate what skill, gift or special talent you have that produced that result. For example, one very senior executive at the meeting described above told the story of how he got a group of department store workers to accept a new and complex transaction processing system by appealing to their desire to have more control over tracking their commissions. He quickly turned these hostile employees into raving fans, which resulted in a very smooth transition.

Obviously, this is someone who could size up a situation and create a strategy to implement change with a minimum of resistance. Build your stories around the results that you feature in your resume. Use the following guidelines as you do.

Keep it short. Take a lesson from the movie business. Millions of dollars are committed to projects pitched in one sentence or less using powerful images that instantly connect. For example, when Steven Segall was pitching "Under Siege", he got the studio's attention with just five words, "Die Hard on a boat!" What's the essence of your story's message?

Keep it simple. Narrow your story down to just a few key points.

Include three essential elements. Every good story has a setting, a situation and a solution. Outline each as you develop your story.

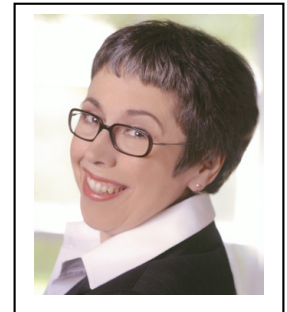
Use vivid language to create pictures and feelings. Was it a Tuesday or was it a cold, rainy Tuesday in March?

Practice. Practice. Practice. How do you get to Carnegie Hall? Practice your stories, tape them and listen for places where you can add impact, tighten or change the emphasis. Ask others for feedback

Knowledge is power! The more you know, connect with and can communicate the results only you can deliver, the more interest an employer (client/customer) will have in engaging your services.

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