

## Is Leadership a Key Skill?

I have had the marvelous opportunity to meet fantastic folks transitioning to the civilian world. One of the key sticking points in our discussion is the development of the key skills that a identified on the resume.

As a director of Human Resources, I would receive a hundred, sometimes hundreds, of resumes and applications for a position, depending upon the position. My challenge was to reduce this number to the 15 to 20 applicants who I would contact for phone interviews. These phone interviews would average 30 minutes each. Imagine the time spent on this process while juggling my other duties. I scanned a resume or application in 10 to 15 seconds and could determine if it went into that “yes” pile for the phone interview.

How did I scan and determine to pass the resume to the next step? First, let’s define key skills. These are the “tactical” skills that have been learned and developed throughout not just the career, but life. These are not the broad punch words that “platitudinize” the resume. These should be the nuts and bolts skills. I wasn’t looking for a 50K level of generalities. I focused on the hard skills that matched with the skills needed to successfully perform in the prospective job.

The first priority for the job seeker is to create that list of key skills. There is a wealth of information for this. Review all of the past performance evaluations and list the accomplishments, including results. Take a skills assessment available through school careers offices, books, websites, etc. Look to extracurricular activities that have provided skills learning that may be a tangent off of a career path or may be something that has been accomplished that is unrelated. BRAINSTORM THE OPPORTUNITIES!

Now the task is to match the skills of the job seeker with those required of the desired position. The best source to find those key words is the job description or the job posting for that job. A job description should be available for every posted position. If not, be wary if one is not available. I once joined a company and was told that the job description was being re-written as I was completing the new-hire paperwork. Knowing the hiring manager, I didn’t doubt that everything was going to work out ok. Wrong! I lasted four months in that position. There was so much turmoil in that organization. I couldn’t accomplish that goals of the position. I was not happy.

So, let’s get back to the point raised in the first paragraph. The most favorite key word identified in a resume of a transitioning military member is leadership. Now that’s a 50K word. Why? The Oxford Desk Dictionary and Thesaurus defines a leader as a person followed by others. This definition is followed by a list of job titles – chief, head, director, chair, etc. In other words, these words really don’t define what skills the job seeker is bringing to the table.

To be tactical, the focus must be realigned to think of the words that make up leadership. These are skills that the transitioning member has in abundance. Look for words like critical thinking, problem solving, project management, process development, staff development, training, mentoring, team processes, we can go on.... Again, a great source for identifying key words is from job descriptions. Google similar job descriptions and look for the key words highlighted for that position. Pull out the words that match your skills and abilities. Use these in your resume.

Remember the 10 second window. Choose the key words that match you with the job desired. Focus on how you will be able to meet the needs of the hiring manager. The resume is a marketing tool. It must portray you as THE one to hire. Best of luck!

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