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“The Executive Rules: A Complete Guide to Landing an Executive Job”

www.landanexecutivejob.com

interviews

Lisa Chapman,

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THAD: Lisa is a Certified Professional Resume Writer and the Managing Partner with Chapman Services Group, LLC which is a resume writing service. Good morning, Lisa.

LISA: Good morning Thad.

THAD: Let me ask you right off the bat: does it really make a difference having your resume professionally written as opposed to just doing it yourself?

LISA: It absolutely does. A professionally written resume aids job seekers in several ways. When it comes to format, a lot of clients use resume templates and this really is a bad move. It's the number one marketing "don't." Your resume really needs to stand out from the crowd, not blend in with the crowd. When a hiring agent looks at your resume you want the hiring agent to say, this is the best darned resume I've seen in weeks, months or years. Most people don't know how to format their resume really well.

Then when it comes to content, people don't really understand what it is that hiring agents want to review. They don't talk about core competencies, accomplishments or value offered to employers. Professional resume writers will make sure that these items are showcased in the resume written for their client.

Another item is, people that do include accomplishments on their resume, 9 times out of 10 they don't include all the necessary information. For every accomplishment noted on the resume there really needs to be a result, followed by a challenge and a reaction. For instance, let's say John Doe increased annual sales by three million dollars. Hiring agents want to know how John Doe increased those sales. The accomplishment statement really should read something similar to "Grew annual sales to thirteen million dollars from ten million dollars by developing new sales

channel within manufacturing sector.” Most people don’t go into that much detail.

When it comes to detail, resume writers know how much is just enough.

THAD: Right, why do you think it is that most people try to do it themselves as opposed to just automatically turning it over to a professional? I guess it’s probably the same reason why people try to do their taxes themselves.

LISA: I think you’re right; I think people are trying to save money and in the end it actually costs them money. When an individual uses a professional resume writing service, very often what happens is they get jobs much faster because it’s a much better resume. That actually saves them money. They also get job offers at higher annual compensation - - with higher annual compensation results, so you know that provides them with more money. It’s a return on investment.

THAD: I agree and I think it’s a misnomer that most people exaggerate on their resumes and “over inflate” themselves. I find that to be just the opposite. I don’t think people give themselves enough credit and I think they generally sell themselves short on their resume. What are your thoughts?

LISA: I totally agree with you.

With the resumes that we look at every day from candidates that are prospective clients of ours, we notice the same thing. They don’t give themselves enough credit. It goes back to the accomplishments that we spoke about earlier. They may tell the hiring agent on the resume, “I increased sales by three million dollars,” but they don’t tell the hiring agent how they did it; a prime example of how they are not providing adequate information and they’re not “tooting their own horn” loud enough.

One of the things that sets us apart from our competitors is that we conduct one-on-one telephone consultations with all of our clients versus supplying them with multiple page questionnaires that they have to spend hours completing. What we do is we conduct a 30 to 60 minute telephone consultation, get all the information we need, develop a relationship with our clients and then create the resume and cover letter and any other supporting documents that that particular client needs from that telephone consultation.

THAD: Can you share with me just some different scenarios of the typical candidate that comes to you? I would suspect some of them are very frustrated that their current resume hasn’t necessarily yielded the opportunities they’re looking for. Can you give an idea of the mind set of

the average candidate that comes to you wanting to have their resume rewritten?

LISA: I can tell you that most of the candidates we work with are employed. However, a fair amount of people that we work with are going through a downsizing, have been laid off for one reason or another and those candidates we find we enjoy working with them—we enjoy working with all of our clients, but we enjoy working with those people because at the end of the project, once they see the resume and the cover letter that we've developed for them, you can tell in their voice that they are more confident.

They didn't understand at the beginning of the process how successful they really were because they just got kicked in the knee, okay? They just lost their job, they're feeling pretty badly about themselves and at the end of the process they read about themselves in black and white and the confidence level boost a hundred and ten percent and they are just thrilled that they did what they did for several reasons. The resume and cover letter that was developed is going to get them interviews and it has really increased their self confidence.

THAD: As I said earlier, I compare it to taking your taxes to a professional and have them looking because they can almost always save you money. If you're not a professional in the industry and not doing it on a daily basis, it's impossible for you to be as competent in that area as what professional is going to be.

So can you walk me through the process? I know you had mentioned the one-on-one interview and the distinction between your company and other firms that use some sort of questionnaire to gather information.

LISA: Once we receive an inquiry from a potential client, we reach out to that them the same day and set up a time to conduct the telephone consultation based on their availability. A certified professional resume writer is assigned to the project. That certified professional resume writer contacts the client via telephone at the scheduled time, asks the client very targeted questions in order to gather the information needed to strategically compose the resume and cover letter. Once that telephone consultation has occurred, the certified professional resume writer then begins creating that strategically developed resume and cover letter for the client.

Five business days after the telephone consultation has occurred, first draft documents are delivered to the client via email. Now I hesitate often on saying first draft documents because often times the first drafts are the final drafts. However, we always give our clients the opportunity to review

what we've written, ask questions, verify acronyms; that kind of thing. If there are any revisions we address those revisions within one business day and deliver finalized documents back to the client via email in Microsoft Word, PDF format and plain text format.

While the client is waiting for us to complete the first draft document, we also ask that the client complete a DISC behavioral assessment to support the resume writing and cover letter writing process and to support the client in interviewing skills and this disc behavioral assessment report is provided to the client, one to two business days after the client has completed the assessment.

THAD: I think that's really important because a lot of companies, particularly large corporations, Fortune 2000 for example, use the DISC assessment in their pre-employment screening, so I think it is very important for the candidate to understand how they test out. You're talking about taking it a step further and actually incorporating those results into the resume which I think is terrific.

LISA: It also provides the client with a "leave behind." When the client is interviewing, they can be prepared to answer that dreaded, "Tell me about yourself question."

THAD: Right.

LISA: They can answer that question with confidence and can leave with the team of people that they just interviewed with a report of the DISC behavioral assessment

THAD: That's great because the company they're interviewing with sees the consistency. They see the consistency from the resume and then if they administer the DISC assessment themselves before the interview they'll see that the candidate's done their homework.

LISA: Correct and that they're prepared.

THAD: So how important is it for somebody that's looking at changing careers or getting into an industry that's totally different than what they've been doing to have their resume professionally written?

LISA: I'd have to say that would be the person that needs to reach out to a professional resume writing firm more so than anybody else. If you're looking to change careers or to change industries: let's say you've been an accountant for the last ten years and now you want to get into sales of some sort. How are you going to make a hiring agent notice you if you don't put the resume together correctly? What I mean by that is

professional resume writers will unearth “transferable skills.” The advantage of using a professional resume writer is the fact that resume writing is their core competency. They know what needs to be done given various projects and with a career changer it’s imperative that transferable skills are noted on the resume so that the resume gets the attention it needs.

THAD: How important do you think a factor such as formatting is? I see a lot of resumes where it’s obvious the candidate has written it themselves and they’re using Microsoft Word templates or they’re using some format that was used commonly 15 years ago. Do you think hiring managers and human resource managers are judging candidates based on things like formatting?

LISA: Absolutely. If your format is exactly like 80 % of other resumes received, why would the hiring agent look at yours? If your resume is filled with grammatical errors, the hiring agent’s going to say, “This person isn’t detail oriented.” Those kinds of things are very important.

THAD: I think it really is a reflection of who the candidate is, so I look at the resume as, other than your birth certificate, the most important professional document you’ll ever have in your career. I don’t think the resume gives you the job, but it gives you the opportunity to become a candidate for a particular position. It gets your foot in the door and I don’t think enough emphasis and enough attention is given to the resume.

People are very busy, they don’t necessarily have the time to sit down and put together an appropriate resume. That’s why I strongly advise having a professional services firm like yours handle those responsibilities.

LISA: The resume is the first impression a candidate is going to make within the four walls of any organization that they’re trying to get hired into and if the resume is not strong, the candidate is not going to be interviewed. If the candidate is not being interviewed, the candidate is not going to be working for ABC Company. So I totally agree with you.

THAD: I think what people need to realize is that recruiters and hiring managers, have access to so many more resumes today than what they did 10 or 15 years or so ago because with the national job boards like CareerBuilder, Monster, Yahoo! Hot Job, they can tap into tens of millions of resumes. Whereas fifteen years ago, the only resumes they had access to were the ones that they received either unsolicited or as a result of running an ad in the newspaper or a trade magazine or something like that, so your resume is definitely being judged against a lot more resumes than was just a few years ago.

LISA: Exactly right, however, if you look on Monster, CareerBuilder, any of those top job boards, you still have resumes that are not strong. If you're going to be using those job boards, you still have to have a resume that discusses your values, your core competencies and your quantifiable accomplishments. Employers want to see numbers.

THAD: And if I had to guess, I look at hundreds, if not thousands of resumes a month and my firm works on are executive level positions, everything from mid-level management all the way up to C-level and vice presidency level positions. I would have to say probably less than five 5% of the resumes I look at are professionally written. I think that's a staggering number for somebody who's looking for a position paying six figures. To me it makes no sense whatsoever not to let a professional do that, especially when your income potential is that high.

LISA: So Thad, how many of those 95% of resumes that candidates write themselves do you pass on to employers?

THAD: Obviously I pay attention to the content but there are some things that I look for; for example, grammatical errors. I really don't care what the candidate's background is, who they are or what they've done, if there's a grammatical error in the resume, then I immediately toss it aside because that is something that's critically important. I really feel like it's a reflection of the candidate. That may sound unfair but that's just the reality. I liken it to, showing up at an interview wearing a black suit and a pair of tennis shoes. You could argue that that has nothing to do with your capability to perform the job or your track record but those small, little things people need to realize, they're accountable for those small details. "The devil is in the details." Candidates are being judged based on those seemingly trivial aspects.

But again, I see such a small number of professionally written resumes. What's surprising is that you do hear a lot of hiring managers and business owners say "I'm not going to hire somebody based on the resume because most resumes are exaggerated and over inflated." My experience is that it's just the opposite.

Lisa, can you give me some success stories? As far as candidates that have come to you, maybe that have had some frustration with their job search and they're turned the resume writing over to your firm and they've had a much easier time securing a position or it's helped them out?

LISA: We recently wrote a resume for a senior executive within the retail grocery business who submitted his resume to a recruiter who specializes in that industry. The recruiter reached out to us and told us that this client's

resume was the best resume she had seen in years and we now have a strategic partnership with that recruiter.

We wrote a resume for an executive in the banking industry and this particular client was looking for a lateral move due to the fact that she wasn't very happy with her current employer. She mailed a resume to various banks in the Dallas market, which is a fairly large market but she wasn't willing to relocate. She wanted to stay in that market and she ended up making a lateral move with a 40% increase in pay.

THAD: That's tremendous.

LISA: And the only thing that changed was the resume that she had submitted.

THAD: I researched a lot of firms before reaching out to yours. As far as just the different resume writing services, after looking at your website, after looking at your body of work and having talked to you I felt you were by far head and shoulders better than the ones that I have seen.

So in conjunction with the book offering of "*The Executive Rules: A Complete Guide to Landing an Executive Job*," that we have negotiated some discounts with your firm. If they purchase the book then they'll receive a pretty significant discount on your services. Let's talk about that. You've essentially got three different packages that you're offering: the mid-level or the mid-career, the executive and the C level. Can you give a brief overview on each one of those?

LISA: Sure, our Professional Package for mid-level professionals is for managers, supervisors, could be database administrators, those types of people. That package typically runs \$525.00 and we are offering nearly 25% discount on which brings the price down to \$450.00. All of our packages include the thirty to sixty minute consultation. They include resume writing with no restriction as far as number of pages. It includes a cover letter, it includes the DISC Behavioral Assessment and it includes delivery of the documents, the resume and the cover letter to each client in Microsoft Word PDF and Plain Text Format.

Our Executive Package would be for those people holding job titles such as Director, Vice President, Senior Vice President, General Manager. That package includes everything that we discussed earlier; all of our packages include exactly the same things. That package price typically is \$725.00 and because of our strategic partnership with you we're offering that for \$650.00.

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And then we have a C-level Package which would include Chief Executive Officer, Chief Operating Officer, Chief Technology Officer and that package typically costs \$825.00 and we're offering that for \$750.00.

- THAD: Can you explain the difference between the C-level and the Executive? What do you do differently for a C-level as opposed to the Executive?
- LISA: There isn't a difference as far as what's included with the package. The difference is the expertise involved with the certified professional resume writer used for those projects, meaning the writer assigned to the project has to know how to write for those level positions.
- THAD: Right; and it's really an understanding of the audience that the resume is being written for, correct? Which I something that the average candidate typically is not going to know?
- LISA: That is correct; these resumes are being reviewed by boards of directors, and a professional resume may be reviewed by a Human Resource manager, another departmental supervisor, a vice president. It's never going to be reviewed by anyone at the board level or at the C-level. The audience that you write for needs to understand the information included in the resume. It needs to include information that is very comprehensive, very quantifiable. The writer assigned has to know what they're doing and what audience is going to be reviewing these resumes.
- THAD: And I think that's a great point. I see a lot of technical resumes that are written strictly for other technical people. The only person that would be able to interpret that resume is someone that has the same level of technical skills, and that's not always the first person reading it. You may have an HR person that's identifying candidates for the IT Department and if they can't interpret how the resume is written, the resume is going to be passed over.
- LISA: We have a resume writer on staff that consults with the clients and says, "Talk to me as if I'm an alien. Assume I don't know anything about what you do." When we ask "Tell me what your top five job responsibilities are on a day to day basis. Talk to me as if I'm an alien and I don't understand anything that you're saying, and don't answer that question by saying 'I do everything' because 'everything' does not tell me anything." So the devil is in the detail.
- THAD: I see a lot of resumes that have acronyms, slang, and jargon that's specific to an industry and like I just said, what people need to understand is you may be dealing with a human resources person or a recruiter who's not an expert in that particular industry but maybe they're screening resumes for that particular department. If they can't interpret what your

resume needs to say or what it's trying to say, the resume is going to be, it's going to be discarded.

LISA: That's certainly right and a lot of people write their resumes as if their peers and their current supervisors are going to read the resume and that's not the truth. The truth is "aliens" are reading the resume.

THAD: That's a great point. Lisa, I appreciate all your time. As I've said I think this is critical to anyone that's looking to advance their career, particularly somebody that has the inherent skill sets to earn a position where they have a salary in excess of let's say \$75,000 or \$100,000 a year. If you look at it in the whole scheme of things, if you're making \$80,000 per year then it's 1% of your total annual compensation that you're just going to spend on having the resume written.

LISA: Right, Thad. We're really hoping to help a lot of people by offering the discount. We want people to be successful. We are in business to help people move forward.