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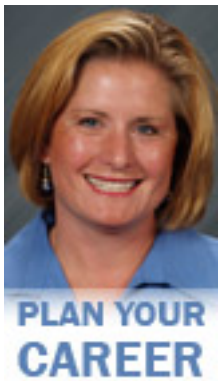

If you donate blood on a regular basis, that's a good thing. But does it make you a Key Advisor to the American Red Cross? Of course not. Inflating work experience on a resume or job application is one of several mistakes job seekers make, leaving them wondering why no one is hiring.

The Resume Inflator is easy to spot. During an interview, employers will walk straight through your list of positions asking you to describe your work. In the case above, I asked the candidate what issues he advised on and quickly discovered that his advisory work actually involved making suggestions to administrators while he was giving blood. Did they seek your advice? No. Were you on a board of some kind? No. Were you paid for your suggestions? No. Okay. Now the integrity of your entire application is questionable, and I am immediately moving on to a more straightforward candidate. Under Employment Experience on your application or resume, include only positions for which you were paid. Add a section for Volunteer Work, Community Service or Special Interests if your blood letting activities are relevant to your job search.

Another mistake people make is to lose focus, applying to every position ever posted. Just because you can do the work doesn't mean you should. Employers think an experienced candidate who applies to entry level jobs is going to quit as soon as something better comes along. Of course you will. Why wouldn't you? Be flexible in your search, but keep it within the margins of what makes sense for you. The candidate with Blurred Vision is not automatically disqualified, but will often be passed over for candidates who are a closer fit. Make better use of your time by applying for positions you can realistically stay at for a year or more.

Time is a huge issue for employers. No one has extra minutes to spend guessing about what you can do or how much you should be paid. Don't sidestep salary questions. You know what you can live on, and you know what compensation is fair for the work you do, so be specific. If money turns out to be a deal breaker, fine. Don't waste time (yours or theirs) on positions that aren't going to pay you what you expect. Sidesteppers are sometimes worried they'll lose negotiating power by listing salary expectations. Don't worry about it. If you've done your research, you can state a range that is fair for both you and your future boss.

Finally, look on the bright side. You need someone to like you well enough to hire you, so be someone people want to be around. Find a positive spin on your situation, keeping lawsuits and other vengeful plans to yourself. Optimists live longer, are hired faster and make more money than pessimists. What more do you want?

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