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Is Your Career A Novel or a Series of Short Stories?



It often takes business trends a little time to show up in people trends, and in the last six months, we've seen a significant shift in people changes across our client base. People are shifting roles, leaving companies and thinking through their next career move. We are adjusting resumes, developing messaging documents and coaching clients for high-profile interviews. Something is in the air!

While some of the shifts are driven by business objectives, we have talked to a lot of managers and leaders who are proactively changing the game themselves. It has given us a fresh perspective on coaching people how to think about their careers and how to tell their stories.

It's a shift from representing a career as a novel with an on-going series of chapters to a more defined collection of short stories. Here's what I mean by that analogy.

Historically, people stay at companies for a significant length of time. As they map out their career path, you see an evolution of roles and a steady progression up the leadership ladder. In the past, a resume represented two or three company changes and the storyline for an executive was often the progression of skills learned along the way.

What I've learned is that people who have longevity with a company (that's my analogy of the novel with multiple chapters) can often find it difficult to quantify a specific success or skill. Their career story is a progression through chapters, and their experience has grown and expanded with time.

When we coach these leaders to interview for another opportunity, they struggle with packaging their story into sound bites or short stories. They would prefer to give you the whole novel and focus more on the last chapter.

We've coached many leaders to rethink that approach. Today's marketplace is fast moving, and companies have gotten very good at profiling the experience and skill sets they need in a position. Leadership teams change more frequently than they used to, and that's because different skills are required to help companies keep reaching the next benchmarks.

The people who are doing well in interviews right now are presenting themselves as a series of short stories. And, we're helping them do that.

To us, that means moving beyond a resume that captures a progression of roles to a more meaningful messaging document that highlights specific skill sets and examples or stories that illustrate the value of that skill. This helps define your brand and position your core attributes of leadership. Most importantly, it helps leaders organize their thoughts and put their best foot forward in interviews.

For some leaders, it becomes a part of their resume package. For others, it's simply an organizational tool that helps them prepare for interviews. In either case, it's learning how to tell your story around specific skills and highlighting those skills with measureable outcomes and memorable sound bites.

I have seen the impact of the tools and coaching first hand. Repeatedly, people who are transitioning in their careers tell us that interview coaching has helped focus and define the way they talk about their skills. And, with a little practice, they can ensure that the skills they want to highlight are always a part of the interview. Most believe this has had a significant impact on offers and opportunities. People who do well in interviews stand out, and we can help you be one of them.

There's no question that something is in the air, and people trends will continue to show mobility in the marketplace. So, whether you're considering a company change or planning for the next step internally, rethink your resume as a series of short stories. If you'd like a little help packaging it, we can do that.

Call us when you need us!



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