

Improving the Accounting Student Resume Language: Accounting Faculty Best Practice Tools

Nancy L. Johnson

Augsburg College

Abstract

The resume serves as the applicant's first written communication to the perspective employer. This paper expands on research discussing content and format. It also examines root causes for why some individuals are unable to define their experiences through professional accounting and business language to form a properly constructed and competitive entry-level resume. Root causes include lack of resume rules knowledge; lack of passion or understanding of the profession; lack of communication skills; inadequate articulation of prior work experience; and no sense of urgency. Also presented are recommended best practice remediation processes for faculty which include; 1) a tool for individuals to independently reshape their resume language; and 2) suggestions for accounting faculty to expand their trusted advisory role with intentional incorporation of modeled, standard professional language into the classroom.

Key words: Accounting Resume Language, Accounting Faculty Advising, Teaching Best Practice, Accounting and Business Language, Entry Level Resume

Introduction

Supporting individuals in pursuit of their education to obtain and achieve career aspirations is a critical and time consuming part of the faculty role. Faculty are the subject matter experts in their field and the classroom can be the first exposure and inspiration for students to their future career. In addition to educating students, I find myself spending increased amounts of time in the role of trusted mentor and advisor performing resume review. Of the hundreds of resumes I have reviewed in recent years (as a consultant, educator, and friend) an alarming number are lacking in areas of standardized format, development of categories (Whitcom, 2010; Cole, Rubin, Field & Giles, 2007) professional content (Burns, Christiansen, Morris, Periard & Coaster, 2014), and explanation of key responsibilities. While the review experience is unique for each resume holder, the process is highly repetitive and time consuming for faculty. This paper addresses two research questions:

- Why do individuals struggle to create a new, or revise an existing resume to properly reflect career focused content from prior work experience?
- Could a standardized tool for evaluation motivate students to accurately self-revise their resumes and reduce the amount of time faculty spend revising entry level resumes?

To answer these questions, this paper expands on prior research discussing desired resume content (Violette and Douglas, 2008), the impact of resume attributes and characteristics on the decision to interview the candidate (Thoms, McMasters, Roberts & Dombkowski, 1999) and examines contributing factors to the root causes for unsuitable entry level resume preparation. Different from other research is the introduction of a time saving, standardized, language reshaping tool for use in student advisory, and in-class best practice remediation recommendations for faculty to support language elevation. While the applicant cover letter is considered equally important for obtaining the interview (Violette & Chene, 2008) it is not included in the scope of this article.

Recruiter Expectations and Evaluation:

The resume serves as the applicant's first communication to the perspective employer. A recruiter's perception of candidate employability is based on evaluation of resume content in all three areas of academics, work experience and extracurricular activities (Cole et al., 2007). The reviewer's initial impression is formed in a relatively short period of time and is critical for determining who is invited to interview (Burns, et al. 2014). Some of the key skills continually sought by recruiters at accounting firms include leadership potential, strong interpersonal, communication, initiative, enthusiasm, and motivation toward the profession (Violette and Chene, 2008). Resumes for accounting positions should showcase position specific relevant experience performed with information that demonstrates skills and results (Ryan, 1995). Robert Half (2013) suggests a well-crafted overview of the most impressive qualities at the top of the page can better convey candidate attractiveness. A one-page resume for an entry level candidate remains the preference of recruiters (Ryan, 1995; Violette & Chene, 2008; Robert Half, 2013). Resume content provides formal cues about the applicant's personality (Burns, et al. 2014) and is evaluated based on the recruiter's initial impressions of content attributes (Cole et al., 2007). Karniol's (1990) study of psychological responses and reactions (thoughts and feelings) to written stimulus prompts (written words) suggests an individual uses prior knowledge and self-characteristics for building connections and associations to make judgement decisions, which occurs in the resume review process. Cole et al. (2007) also found a strong correlation in their study of the recruiter's formation of opinions during resume review and the assigned employability rating. Prior research by Ross (1997) suggests that fundamental assessment errors occur because of reviewer bias and judgement (i.e. under and over-estimate of applicant ability) further increasing the need for properly constructed and standardized language to reflect a candidate's qualifications.

Contributing factors - Rules for Creating Resumes

According to Enelow and Kursmark (2012) one of the greatest challenges for preparing a resume is the lack of definitive rules for writing one (10). At the time this paper was written a cursory online search located 78,000,000 resume resource results. These resources overwhelmingly showed both unclear priority and organization for an entry level resume. Libraries and bookstores also offer many sources about the customary approach to resume writing including organization of content into standardized sections (Burns et al., 2014; Cole et al. 2007) to help the reviewer discover and evaluate candidate experiences as compared to those of another (Noble, 2012; Enelow & Kursmark, 2012). Most sources for resume revisions primarily focus on activities considered life changes related to education, work experience, volunteer activities and achievements (Whitcomb, 2010).

While Guffey (2007) explains that the focus of the resume is how skills and past experiences can contribute and add value to the hiring organization, Noble (2012, 7) suggests that an average resume can actually decrease a candidate's chance of being called for an interview. A negative resume could include unclear irrelevant facts (Ryan, 1995) and over used phrases like "hard worker" and "highly qualified" without supportive examples (Robert Half, 2013). Resumes can be assessed as incomplete for being too vague or too general reflecting an inability to market oneself (Ryan, 1995). Given the major role a resume serves in determining who to extend the interview to (Cole, et al., 2007) a negative first impression may result in the applicant being given no further consideration (Burns, et al., 2014).

Contributing Factors - Lack of Passion and/or Understanding of the Profession

Many students declare an academic emphasis before entering college, however, an estimated 50 to 75 percent of students change their major at least once (Titley & Titley, 1980; Kramer, Higley, and Olsen, 1994). Several who have declared a major at the time of first year enrollment frequently do so only when directed because they lack decision making skills. Some individuals report as having allowed parents to select the major which could be indicative of maturity, or level of dedication to their education (DeMarie & Aloise-Young, 2013). These uncertainties often lead to a current resume reflecting the emotional tie to an unfulfilled dream for a different career path (Gordon, 2000). In these cases I have observed career and field specific resumes fail to use the appropriate language because of attachment to prior career aspirations. The individual may be unable to identify key responsibilities or have unknowingly minimized them in the resume presentation because of lack of exposure or

passion to the real world/field. These resumes may jeopardize the chance of being considered for the job (Young, 2006; Robert Half, 2013).

It generally is assumed that by college graduation an individual has independently selected, declared and fulfilled the requirements of a major aligned with the passion, interest and skill of an informed adult. In their survey of over 150 undergraduate business students, DeMarie and Aloise-Young (2003) reported “wanting a career in the area” as the highest ranked reason for selecting the college major (p.469). While some students may have declared an accounting major because of a career choice, research suggests that some students selecting accounting as a major do so because they have strong quantitative skills (Lin, Grace, Krishnan, Gilsdorf, 2010), which may not specifically be related to a passion or understanding of the accounting field.

As it relates to the current field of accounting, the industry continues to have high turn-over suggesting students may not be fully aware of the climate, pressures and responsibilities of the professional accountant (Skousen, 1977). There also remains a low rate (approximately 50%) of accounting certification (CPA) exam section pass rates suggesting students remain less prepared than they perceive themselves professionally (American Institute of CPAs, 2015).

In theory, internships bridge the gap between lack of knowledge of the profession and the undergraduate student. To gain perspectives and prepare for their careers students will seek internship experiences related to their major. Internships provide experiences to develop professional skills and transfer fresh industry knowledge into the classroom (Hurt, Thye & Wise, 2014). The employer also gains access to the latest academic information and skills (Cook, Parker & Pettijohn, 2014). Advantages of completing an internship include making connections for future employment, obtaining practical experience, and technical and soft skill development (Pernsteiner, 2015; Hurt, Thye, Wise, 2014). However, in order to be considered for an internship the student will need to submit a resume that reflects professional accounting language.

Contributing Factors – Inadequate Communication Skills

Research shows that a significant perception gap exists between professionals and students, with respect to both written and speaking communication skills (Lin, et al., 2010). Strong communication skills are consistently rated of high importance for job applicants, and seventy-five percent of employers want colleges to place more emphasis on developing written and oral communication skills at the undergraduate level (Stephenson, Mayes, Combs & Webber, 2015). The individual holding an entry level resume may not be aware of the language gap if the industry specific communication has not been intentionally infused for professional development throughout the student’s educational experience. The language gap has been informally observed to be a greater issue the later the major is declared and provides an opportunity for continued research.

Contributing Factors – Inability to Articulate Prior Work Experience

The most frequently held entry level jobs I have observed in resumes include cashier, server, coach and nanny which are not directly related to an area of study. Students may not possess the emotional intelligence to recognize their own qualities, capabilities and values in terms of professional language in relation to their majors and future career plans (Pernsteiner, 2015). Students also appear unaware of the skills desired in the work place or how to articulate those as values from the work they have performed (Kermis & Kermis, 2010; Gordon, 2010). Chia (2005) posits that public accounting firms are more eager to hire candidates into entry-level positions when they reflect the emotional intelligence to demonstrate the soft skill of communication. Chia (2005) suggests that employers also correlate emotional intelligence with strong problem solving skills. It is difficult to quantify the prior development of communication skills. However, the individual’s ability to produce an acceptable resume depends on this prior development. Further investigation into quantifying communication skills provides an opportunity for new research.

Contributing factors - Sense of Urgency

A student internship or job search can be either passive or active (Noble, 2012, 7). A passive job search is one where the individual is open to considering an employment opportunity but with low sense of urgency (Doyle, 2015). Individuals passively seeking employment opportunities may be less compelled to maintain an updated or complete resume. An active job search is where the individual is actively seeking a new job opportunity, performing activities such as networking, researching companies, creating interview scripts and cover letters, and working intentionally each day from a check list of tasks to secure a new job (Noble, 2012, 7). Talent placement firm Right Management reported that twenty-five percent of survey responders indicated updating their resume “maybe once a year” and nineteen percent indicated it had been “more than two years (Teller Vision, 2010) regardless of the job search being active or passive.

Poe Hood (2009) put forward that empowering change starts with self-ability to envision something different from what currently is, from a new perspective. This requires an individual to identify the situation at hand as needing change and have a sense of urgency, inspiration and motivation to act upon it. The vision and inspiration for changing a resume requires the influence or intervention of some additional information, an opinion, or view point to trigger the action. The two research questions - why can't a student make the change and how can faculty inspire the motivation for proactive self-driven change, pair together and beg for a remediation planning. Outside mentoring and advisory may be the prompt for individuals studying accounting to proactively revise and elevate the language and descriptions in the resume to reflect professional business standards, definitions, and descriptions, sought by the prospective employers. This will require doing different and new things (Maruska, 2013) in the classroom and during advisory.

In summary, these five contributing factors – lack of rules for creating resumes, lack of passion and/or understanding of the profession, lack of communication skills, inability to articulate prior work experience, lack of a sense of urgency, and likely many others, answer the first research question as to why individuals struggle to create a new, or revise an existing resume to properly reflect career focused content. I feel there is value for the faculty to consider each as a unique contributing factor as the student population is diverse coming from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences.

Method

While informal research has been ongoing for many years, for this formal experience 69 resumes were gathered with permission obtained for use in this study. All participants were in an active job search seeking entry to mid-level internships or full-time positions and in contact with prospective employers. Many of the samples were from individuals with entry to mid-level work experience, and all had or were currently pursuing degrees in accounting, finance or business programs. In each case the resume was visually inspected with the average amount of time consumed reviewing and providing feedback per resume of approximately 30 minutes.

In each situation individuals reported having access to self-selecting support options for resume preparation including but not limited to online resources, in-person help sessions, and drop-in appointments in college career service offices. The access to resume writing support was generally offered at the discretion of the individual with the assumption that 18 to 30-year-old individuals possess the confidence and maturity to prepare a professional resume. Also assumed was that individuals possess the ability to adjust the lens through which they view their own resume structure and content to integrate, reshape and transform their language to reflect professional accounting and business norms. The following criteria by Whitcomb (2010, 70) were used for evaluating the resumes.

- Sections: Standard sections of education, experience, qualifications or skills, and activities/awards or achievements.
- Format: Placement of items within each section in inverse chronological order, the recommended preferred by hiring managers for college students, recent graduates, and changing fields.
- Data Standards: Standard representation, presentation and placement of common items including dates, company names, and location information such as city and state.

- Position Title and Description Key Words: Standard use of professional business language, nouns, verbs, correct tense, comprehensive phrases common to the position, representation of responsibilities and tasks.

The resume stylistic difference such as narrowness of margins and placement of select attributes in the seven broad technical categories studied by Burns, et al. (2014) continue to be evaluated as part of further research.

Results

The resume samples reviewed in this experience included primarily positions of cashiering, data entry, food service, home health care attendant, lifeguard, nanny, retail sales, and service. Twenty-five percent of the resumes samples were in very good condition, depending on the level of prior preparation support obtained, and the confidence in major selected by the resume holder.

Key findings include:

Item	Portion of Population	
	Number	Percent
Number of participants (accounting, finance, other business majors)	69	100%
Males	48	70%
Females	20	29%
Gender neutral	1	1%
Major - never changed	16	23%
- one change	50	72%
- two or more major changes	3	4%
Objective section included	7	10%
Education section included	67	97%
Experience section included	68	98%
Dates for jobs held and responsibilities included	62	90%
Consistent placement of the date locations used	36	52%
Company and job descriptions included full company names	66	96%
City and state of employer included	54	84%
Qualifications or Skills section included	47	68%
Awards or Achievements section included	50	72%
Narrative written in first person versus Whitcomb’s (2010) recommendation to omit “I”, “my”, “me” personalization	10	14%
Prepared from online downloaded template	15	22%
One page resume	53	77%

Additional findings by section include the following

- Education: The standard format appeared to be non-standard presentation with random omission of an indication of the current degree being pursued, the major(s), reference to college, location of college, and estimated completion date.
- Experience:
 - Completeness: Language use and job description were subjectively evaluated and ranked (e.g. 100%, 75%, 50%, and 25% or below) for accuracy and inclusion of descriptions of key responsibilities assumed to be associated with the job title included.

Percent Completeness	100%	75%	50%	25%
Number and Percent of Population	20 (29%)	15 (22%)	25 (36%)	8 (12%)

- Most common findings included the following
 - Inaccuracy of job titles, related responsibilities or omission of the most current jobs.
 - Prioritization of job tasks order to reflect comprehension of accounting and business value sought by a hiring manager.
 - Unclear accounting skills in responsibilities including the trusted handling and reconciliation of cash, other resources and inventory. Cashiering tasks were frequently stated as “rang up customers” when the actual job description may include responsibilities of merchandise inspection for quality and freshness, preparing and processing cash and credit purchase and return transactions, documentation, reconciliation of receipts and cash drawers, and safeguarding company assets.

Research continues pertaining to the frequency of being invited to interview following a revised and submitted resume. To date 36 (52%) participants have shared they were invited to interview by recruiters, though it should be noted that they may have been invited without a resume revision.

Discussion

Accounting faculty tools

Research continually supports the value proposition and positive correlation between high –quality student-faculty interaction, both in and outside of the classroom, and positive student outcomes (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Pascarella, et al, 2005). McKinsey (2016) cites the recent Galloup-Purdue Index report based on a survey of 30,000 college graduates, showing long-term benefits for students of feeling most engaged when they felt a great sense of well-being from having faculty who made them “excited about learning” and cared about them “as a person”, or served as “a mentor who encouraged pursuit of goals and dreams” (Ray & Kafka, 2014)

Accounting faculty are a trusted source of information linking students to opportunities with a variety of off campus resources and experiences to help the student associate learning with their career field (Berdahl 1995, 7). Accounting professors introduce students to the “language of business” which accounting is often called (Wild, Larson and Chiappetta, 2007, 5). The process of mentoring is different from teaching and commonly occurs in different settings involving orientation of others to standards and cultures of a profession (McKinsey, 2016). Good teachers help advance one’s knowledge and skills, but mentors are credited with life-changing inspiration and support (McKinsey, 2016). The effective accounting faculty, as subject matter experts, provide up-to-date occupational knowledge for students to address re-examining prior experience for proper resume presentation, and later for interviewing. The challenge faculty face is to effectively educate and mentor the student under great time constraints while trying to balance the requirements of teaching, service and scholarship as well.

Merriam-Webster (n.d.) defines best practice as a procedure that has been shown by research and experience to produce optimal results as a standard suitable for wide spread adoption. The recommendations include leveraging what has evolved into a best practice two-part approach for remediation and skill development.

Part I: Accounting Resume Language Reshape

Career services is many times staffed with generalists who provide a substantial amount of support to students pertaining to a wide range of majors, resources, credit hours etc. Providing individuals who seek entry level resume revision support with an accounting and business focused best practice tool for self-revision and language standardization encourages student ownership and awareness in the personal transformational process. The tool specifically speaks to entry level resumes and leverages a repeatable (e.g. used many times) and scalable (e.g. used for unlimited audience size) process for defining many different entry level positions phrased in professional accounting and business language. The left column includes a list of common entry level job titles observed in resumes, organized alphabetically. The center column provides examples of professional accounting and

business language (Kimmel, Weygant & Keiso, 2013; Wild, Larson & Chiappetta, 2007) used to highlight and showcase work experiences performed most frequently in the job. The right column expresses the business values and capabilities the person hiring will infer from the professionally phrased candidates experience. This column attempts to remediate the gap in student awareness of communication skills identified by Lin, et al., (2010), by improving students’ awareness of skills values, and the ability to communicate them. Research suggests that individuals use rules of repetition to make predications and weigh differences when performing repetitive evaluation procedures (Karnoil, 1990). A perspective employer evaluating a large number of resumes seeking to achieve impressionistic accuracy (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990) is inclined to associate differences and identification of key words (Burnette, 2001; Whitcomb, 2010) in language as an applicant screening criteria. During the development of this working tool it was vetted with and feedback obtained from teaching colleagues specializing in areas of accounting, finance, marketing, management, MIS, sales, strategy, and other business programs. Feedback has also been gathered and incorporated from staff in career services and human resource departments, and from accounting and finance recruiters and service providers for development of job description. The overall design includes the following considerations:

- Repeatable and scalable: To have in place one process which can be repeatedly used to quickly advise individuals how to phrase resume language for a specific audience (accounting and business).
- Key words: Whitcomb (2010) recommends the use of standard key words which appear in many accounting, business and finance entry level position descriptions. Key words are used by recruiters and hiring managers to quickly sort and rank applicants. Whitcomb (2010) indicates that 67 percent of people surveyed reported they search for just 3 to 4 keywords. The order of importance was position title (80 percent), nouns common to position (55 percent), employer names (55 percent), degrees (35 percent), and skills (15 percent). (p.169). During a job search key words should be used on the resume, when searching for positions at target companies, and during interviews to communicate experiences verbally. Burnett (2001) suggests that while resumes should not be just a list of key terms, the effort should be made to try include as many such keywords as possible to increase the likelihood that the resume will be selected by a recruiter for an interview (711). Additional research continues pertaining to the use of key words in automated online resume screening.

By responding to the initial inquiries for resume support with directions to self-revise resumes with the language reshaping tool [Exhibit A], this faculty’s role has shifted from an average of 30 minutes of review time per resume to an average of 5 minutes for brief review and recommendations for polishing. By providing explanation of each column and the values provided, most students are capable of making revisions similar to the following examples which are shared with permission.

Example: Capabilities or Skills

The students “before” resume below includes a “highlights” section with soft skills, and while important feel less professionally stated then in the “after” example. Revisions include renaming the section to “capabilities” and revising the language to increase professional skills reflected in the work experience, and desired in the work place.

HIGHLIGHTS - BEFORE		
Very Patient		
Willing to help others		
Willing to learn		

CAPABILITIES - AFTER		
Adaptable	Microsoft Office	Communicator
Analytical	QuickBooks	Inclusive
Customer Service	Social Media	Spanish - fluent

Example: Education

The student's "before" resume include "summary of qualifications" section with the education embedded without focus or prioritization. This approach requires the reader to hunt for the key information in the resume. The "after" example reflects a revision to include creating a new section titled "education" listing the full name of degree in a priority place over the institution where it is earned.

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS: BEFORE

Dedicated and a reliable professional.
 Able to work independently and with a team.
 Outstanding communication and effective listening skills
 Self-motivated, hardworking, and high level of energy
 Current Education: NAME OF College
 Major: Economics combined with Business
 Minor: (MIS) Management Information System
 G.P.A 3.2
 Expected June 2017

EDUCATION: AFTER

Bachelor of Arts: Economics, Business Management, College, City, State
 Minor: (MIS) Management Information System
 G.P.A 3.2

June 2017

Example: Experience

An examples of "before" and "after" language revisions made by a two students include the following documentation of their work experience. Here the students leveraged some of the tool language, but also reported having been inspired to evaluate their position to include a more comprehensive list reflecting the responsibilities performed. In these examples the students show evidence of understanding recruiter perception of the responsibilities, creating focus with expanded detail and elevation of responsibilities.

EXPERIENCE - BEFORE

October 201X- **Student Financial Services**

- Interact with students and parents to discuss Financial Aid
- Processing transactions of payments
- Perform projects to organize documents/workplace
- Respond to telephone inquiries on student account on Financial Aid

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE - AFTER

Assistant Enrollment Counselor, October 201X-Present

- Perform the reconciliation of student accounts to ensure cash batch is balanced
- Oversee and complete financial aid adjustments to student's accounts
- Finalize student's budgets to determine if they are eligible for the scholarship programs
- Train and mentor new student workers on the processes and policies of the office
- Appointed owner to update and strengthen the new employee training manual
- Serve as communication link to facilitate with students and parents to discuss financial aid
- Manage the processing and transactions for payment
- Respond to telephone inquiries regarding student accounts and financial aid variances and problems

This next "before" example includes language which would have been considered a "negative resume" defined earlier from the omission of dates, statement, and structure. The "after" example of the same position reflects an

understanding of a deeper value of the responsibilities and a more accurate representation of the professional skills acquired.

Experience, BEFORE

COMPANY NAME, City, State

- Worked as cashier while providing maintained supervision.
- Stocked shelves hourly to continue to obtain sales.
- Managed and encouraged employee production.
- I carefully handled and financed money.
- Purchased inventory when needed.

Experience, AFTER

Cashier – COMPANY NAME, City, State

May 2013 - Present

- Process customer cash and credit transactions verifying accuracy, providing safe and secure custody over company assets.
- Reconcile cash drawer daily to ensure accuracy of transaction processing.
- Provide excellent customer service, serving as the first point of communication.
- Monitor inventory and reorder to ensure consistent product offering and quantity availability.
- Calculate inventory needed by checking sales receipts.
- Assess turnover and out-of-stock points to ensure target inventory levels are maintained.
- Coordinate display areas and point of purchase to focus customer for increased sales.

Student feedback about the tool includes comments of “this is resume magic”, “I wish I had seen this before sending my resume to employers”, “look at me on paper, I can’t believe it’s the same job or that I didn’t think to include these things before”. An overwhelming sense of pride has been observed in the students when they have self-revised their resumes. In these cases students transform from feeling their entry-level work provides little value, to believing they have qualifications to offer an employer. It has also been observed that students who were able to self-revise their resume using the tool, were also able to update it following changes in key areas such as experiencing an internship, participating in an activity, or adding a new skill.

These result examples support and answer the second research question, that students can leverage tools to self-revise their resumes. As noted previously this change also has contributed to reducing the time this faculty is required to review student resumes.

Part II: Classroom Instruction:

- Face to face classroom: Faculty have the opportunity to integrate career advisory into the classroom lecture to increase intentional development of professional accounting and business language in student communication. McKinsey (2016) suggests that “unplanned” and “natural” mentoring is crucial to student learning and development, and close student-faculty interaction is a key factor in college student learning. In support of McKinsey’s (2016) theory, as each new accounting concept and process is explored, reinforce the use of the professional language explaining how it translates into entry level and future work experiences. Highlighting key words in the lecture and intentionally prompting students to use the language encourages development of professional communication skills in the student. At the time of the writing of this article an informal poll of the big 4 accounting firm recruiters reflected the top three skills students need to improve for work place readiness included technology (Excel), project management, and professional communication. Robert Half (2013) cited written and verbal communication skills as key for current applicants. Students respond to literal examples. An easy in-class experience includes reviewing current job postings to examine the professional language. This enlightens students to improve their own communication of skill and ability in their resumes. Finally, encourage students to keep a working resume in their course materials for perpetual revision as new

accounting and business language is learned. Hold a before and after in-class day of student resume review. Students appreciate showing their own growth, and classmates are provided a wide range of examples to review. Have students brainstorm and improve peer resumes. In addition to improved self resumes students will be provided the opportunity to exercise use of the professional language needed during the interview process, and in class discussion (Armstrong, 2016). My experience is that students value this blend of teaching and advisory practice and research is currently underway to assess the impact if any on performance and overall communication skill development.

- Online asynchronous: I have observed increases in student use of professional language when online course management systems include discussion boards. Composing questions and prompts for students to relate their work experiences to the concepts being dynamically covered increases understanding, comprehension and connection from entry level roles/responsibilities to professional industry use of the language. Creating a discussion forum with job postings and encourage or require students to discuss language versus tasks helps student bridge the language gap identified earlier in this paper. It has been observed that the peer pressure of writing in a public forum encourages the elevation of professionalism and self-review contributing to communication skill development. Further research to more formally document the student evolution in communication skills is ongoing.

Limitation:

Limitations which I have observed when using this structured and standardized tool include the following:

- Duplication: Some students simply cut and paste the example job description language into their resume without editing to ensure applicability for their prior experiences. Others have used the same language repeatedly without editing or customization. Groups of students with similar experiences may create resumes which are repetitive and duplicative. I find it imperative to reiterate the importance of customization and accurate presentation to reduce these limitations. Personal branding as an undertaking, is much like a jigsaw puzzle (Tucker, 2014). Stressing the values of highlighting personalized past action strengths statements help make the individual student stand out as unique. Research continues to learn more about the recruiter perceptions of personal branding in entry level resumes.
- Padding, exaggeration, misleading (Kidwell, 2004) overstatement and lying (Weaver, 1997), are all terms used to describe resume language which falsely represent credentials and accomplishments. Use of a standardized language tool could motivate a student to self-promote and embellish. Providing guidance and advisory for accurate representation will encourage honest and accurate resume language use. A reminder statement of this is included on the language reshaping tool.

Conclusion

There are benefits to both the resume holder and faculty for implementing these advisory strategies including but not limited to the following:

- Resume holder benefits:
 - Individuals appear able to make career specific resume language revisions from modeled examples.
 - Increased connections are made between the text book theory and the real work experiences.
 - Increased self-confidence through recognition of work experience values at a level which reduces the gap between prior work, and the position being sought.
 - Development of elevated professional communication skills in preparation for the interview process.
 - Potential for increased enthusiasm about education major and career planning. I have experienced that as students become more aware of the career language, they increase engagement in the quest to learn more and speak more confidently. Student course survey feedback has consistently included expressions of appreciation for connecting course content to their careers.
- Faculty benefits:
 - Reallocation of precious advisory time, improving schedule balance for teaching, scholarship and service.
 - Reduction in the time required to advise individuals in a repetitive process.

- Increase of student understanding and enthusiasm for the making connections between the work experiences and to the instruction and course content.
- Accounting faculty also take pride in successfully supporting the future accounting professional's transformative experience and achievements.
- Prospective employer feedback about applicant preparedness has also improved and has motivated most to return seeking additional students.
- Other: The amount of faculty time spent with individuals reviewing resumes is dependent upon the number seeking resume support, and the degree to which the resume has been completed, edited, and polished.

Though difficult to quantify, my experience is that intentional instruction incorporating professional accounting language connections to the resume and student entry level job, motivates an increased number of individuals to seek resume review and career mentoring support. Providing the accounting resume language reshaping tool with instructions to perform resume self-review does result in an improved entry level resume quality, and reduces the amount of time for faculty to review.

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Exhibit A
Accounting Resume Language Reshape Tool

Criteria used for resume evaluation: Whitcomb (2010, 70).

- **Sections:** Standard sections of education, experience, qualifications or skills, and awards or achievements.
- **Format:** Place items within each section in reverse chronological order is preferred by hiring
- **Data Standards:** Standard representation, presentation and placement of common items including dates, inclusion of company names, and location information including city and state.
- **Position Title and Description Key Words:** Standard use of professional business language, nouns or phrases common to the position, representation of responsibilities and tasks. Internet resume databases can be searched for key words or phrases (Burns, et al. 2014)

**Resumes should always accurately reflect and represent actual responsibilities performed without exaggeration or embellishment.*

** Suggestions reflect many typical responsibilities of the job title, though positions vary and only those applicable should be used in a resume.*

Overall section and content suggestions		
Experience – overall format	Position Title, company name, city, state, dates • Brief bullet points with key items listed first	Attention to details, use of keywords awareness of proper presentation, and self- direction, confirmation of timelines and goals
Education - overall format	Intended degree, major, minor, college, city state, dates of expected graduation, year, GPA is optional. If seeking CPA certification, date eligible or 150 credits earned	
Language	Current activities = present tense (e.g. Create) Prior activities = past tense (e.g. Created)	
Entry level job title	Suggested professional business language for use describing responsibilities	Reviewer Perception Demonstrated characteristics and understanding of accounting, business and finance language, skill and capabilities
Accounting – Entry level	Prepare and post journal entries, general ledger account reconciliation, month end close, fixed asset entries budgeting and forecasting, special projects as needed. (include name of accounting system used)	Experience in various steps in accounting cycle, math skills, detail oriented, documentation
Bar tending, baristas	Prepare customer orders in a dynamic environment adhering to quality and quantity guidelines and controls for freshness and safety. Manage and inspect inventory under FIFO (or LIFO) process to ensure consistent customer experience and product quality. Process customer cash and credit transactions verifying accuracy. Dual reconciliation of cash drawer	Problem solving, adaptability, attention to details, customer service, trusted ability to work with resources (i.e. cash), accurate transaction processing, documentation
Billing clerk	Prepare invoices, verify shipping terms, research and resolve customer billing variances, answer customer questions, maintain files, scanning and or digitizing of records	Problem solving, tracking, accuracy, technological capabilities, documentation
Cashier	Process customer cash and credit transactions verifying accuracy. Dual reconciliation of cash drawer. Provide custody over company assets, resolve customer problems. Provide excellent customer service	Trusted ability to work with resources (i.e. cash) accurate transaction processing, adaptable and capable of customer service
Cashier – food service	Prepare and process cash and credit purchase and return transactions, inspect customer selections for quality and freshness, document return specifications, reconciliation	Similar to Cashier role with an increase in awareness of standards and quality control

	of receipts and cash drawers, and safeguard company assets	
Client support (translation) in a bi-lingual office	Translate written documents from English to (name other language), provide and explain resources to families in emergencies and educate for disaster preparation, provide cultural competency training	Bi-lingual, documentation capabilities, ability to multi-task and lead in stressful situations, problem solving, empathy, communication
Coach, training (youth sports)	Provide a respectful, inclusive and safe environment for participants. Document a base level of player capabilities and goals, create custom development plans, perform progress assessments and remediation plans. Support and encourage player growth and development. Communicate with parents and players. Resolve conflicts and problems. Recruit and retain players. Organized practice plans and delegated to other staff. Directed all day to day operations managing coaches and students.	Training, teaching, ability to assess various levels of skill, communication, awareness of diverse needs, inclusive, communication, leadership
Customer Service (relationships)	Leverage professional interpersonal skills to provide superior customer service driving substantial referral and repeat business Document and solve customer problems, provide multiple solutions for resolving conflicts and issues with products and/or service	Ethics, reliability, professionalism, customer service, communication
Data entry	Compile, sort, and verify client information before entering into a computer system via keyboard and/or scanning; compare and verify data with source documents in dual entry process achieving ##% accuracy results	Accuracy and detail capabilities in a highly repetitive role. Prepare, review, analysis skills, ability to work with sensitive information and in a stressful situation, documentation
Data or document review	Match electronic and paper documents based on attributes, research variances and resolve issues with a ##% resolution rate. (note: providing a measurement or rate whenever possible strengthens the resume)	Problem solving, attention to detail, measured success
Event Worker	Lead and coordinate day-of events serving as a contact for game day set-up and take-down meeting on-time event starts 100% of the time. Perform meticulous scoreboard operation ensuring accurate reporting of event stats throughout entire event and at all times Contributed to events by overseeing customer ticket taking, providing customer service and support ensuring paid event entrance policies are adhered to and enforced.	Cordial, meticulous, focused, communication, enforces policy
File Clerk	Organize client documents, update records in files, automate and digitize paper system to electronic files, provide safekeeping of sensitive customer information	Sequencing, attention to details, confidentiality, technology
Inventory – ordered and stocked	Monitor inventory and reorder to ensure consistent product offering and quantity availability, assess turnover and out-of-stock points to ensure target inventory levels are maintained, coordinate display areas, communicate and collaborate with vendors for ordering and delivery, performing documentation, reconciliation and inventory counting, pricing review, updating inventory system	Quantitative and analysis skills, attention to detail, responsible, business partner, communication
General Labor – Lawn service	Perform professional landscaping services under a variety of conditions, coordinated inventory quality inspection, assess conditions, make on-the-spot adjustments for	Quality control, attention to details, follow through, tolerance, flexibility, adaptability, communication skills

	unknowns. Review project status with client and coordinate all changes and revisions with team.	
Learned the ins and outs of a small business	Job shadowing to learn business processes from end-to-end, (possible other activities may include - performing documentation, reconciliation and inventory counting, pricing review, updating inventory system)	Responsible, attention to details, development of broad generalist skills and awareness
Marketing	Support launch of promotional materials. Redesign and repurpose end-cap product displays increasing sales by ##% or, achieving product sales targets ##% percent of the time. Coordinate with purchasing of inventory to ensure target quantities were maintained during promotional periods	Awareness of product, price and promotion, increased results, awareness of the value of a measurable benchmark
Nannie	Provide safe and secure environment for children. Assign children learning tasks, create laddered benchmarks for success, and assess completion and comprehension. Plan and create nutritious meals and snacks factoring in dietary needs and allergies. Resolve conflicts between diverse groups of children. Communicate progress and updates with parents and other caregivers	Leadership, trust, critical thinking, ability to see value in role, attention to detail, responsibility, multitasking, communication
Nursing Home Assistant Or Direct Care Specialist	Provide timely and accurate personal daily life skill services to patients ensuring safety and care Adhere to the HIPPA privacy policies and procedures protecting all information pertaining to clients Maintained positive working relationships with clients and families.	Trusted, compassionate, understanding of rules, communication,
Office clerk or administrative role	Serve as first point of communication with clients (customers) in a busy office, general office duties, answer phones, scan documents, maintain files and perform other administrative duties and projects as needed	Personable, multi-tasking, flexible, organized, communication
Purchasing – order entry	Match purchase requests to purchase order (POs), confirm accuracy of terms, obtain approvals, file documents, research variances	Problem solving, attention to detail, understanding of key accounting processes, awareness of authority and control procedures
Reconciling, banking merchandise,	Perform secure download of sensitive cash transactions, use Excel VLOOKUP, Pivot tables, If-statements to reconcile the bank to cash account balances. Collaborate with multiple parties to analyze, research and resolve variances. Communicate variances and questionable items with proper superiors	Trust, analysis, critical thinking, reconciliation, collaborator, relationship development, software skills.
Roofing Assistant	Repaired, maintained, and removed roofs and the installed of new ones Measured roof to calculated the quantities of required materials Inspect roofing materials for defects ensuring use of highest quality products Support safe and secure working environment to reduce injury increase team work	Detailed oriented, safety concerned, math skills, inspection skills, team work
Sales person (counter sales)	Prepare and process customer proposals and orders, perform inventory counts and quantity and quality management reconciling to ensure target and margin of safety quantities are maintained. Provide professional customer service. Establish personal relationships and communicate professionally with customers. Seek solutions to solve problems. Process returns. Perform data entry and updates to sales system dashboards.	Communications, detail oriented, problem solving, creative,
Security Crew	Protect the company's primary location, assets and resources. Monitor and control access points to building observing for signs of crime or disorder. Ensure and	Trust, ability to adhere to and enforce rules and guidelines (key

	enforce strict safety guidelines in a highly visible and professional environment. Perform problem solving and resolved conflict resolution. Perform first aid and/or CPR	audit skill) in a potentially stressful situation
Server, host	Guide customers with food and beverage selection by presenting menu and special product offerings in an appetizing way. Prepares room for dining and presents self in a professional manner consistent with the business image. Ensures standard experience for all guest including table settings and placement, product delivery and presentation. Prepares and processes customer transactions, accurately reconciles cash receipts and drawers. Ensures fair and equitable distribution of tips.	Ability to multitask, attention to details, trusted with company resources,, math skills, communication, selling, thoroughness
Warehouse	Operate various types of equipment including forklifts and pallet movers, pressure washers, vans, trucks. Responsible for cleanliness and condition of the warehouse and product inventories, Follow-up on problems and complaints. Review worker schedules, perform administrative dues and communication. Reconcile inventory and ensure safe transporting of company assets	Responsible, attention to detail, take pride in work and environment, problem solving, organization
Athlete Club Volunteer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team member, ABC College Football team • President, ABC Accounting Club 	Active, involved, engaged and initiative if member Leadership captain or officer
Other Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported reengineering of operations processes to save additional profits of ##% • Supported on-time completion of project (include definition) • Prepared and presented proposals for new sales strategy (or other initiatives) resulting in ##% acceptance 	Increasing profits, detail oriented, statistical, math skills, results driven
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified cost savings and supported cost reduction initiatives saving ##% over ## years (or time period) • Designed new strategy to capture ##% savings in primary expense categories • Supported consolidation of services in a decentralized environment 	Conserving resources, creative, collaborative, math capabilities, leadership
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retooled job responsibilities and tasks to reduce overtime costs • Consolidated job responsibilities • Designed standardized work papers to reduce redundancies • Automated work steps to consolidate and reduce labor 	Increasing efficiencies, automation, re-purposing, standardization
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Served as the go-to Excel expert for team 	Capable, flexible, software skills, accuracy, detail oriented
Social Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responded to and monitored customer feedback on social media platforms including LinkedIn, Google+, Instagram, Pinterest, Facebook. 	Multitasking, communication, reliability