

The Way-Too-Long Resume Activity

When I work with clients who are struggling in interviews or networking, I often ask them a few questions about their resume and the work that they have indicated. What are their accomplishments? What did they achieve? How did they do it? What specifically were the actions that my client took in order to get from point A to point B and how did they measure success?

Often, the client is not able to answer these questions. They know what was done, but not specifically what they did or how they did it.

This is why I have clients create the “way-too-long resume” (WTLR).

This article will outline what the WTLR is about, and how to create one for yourself. It isn’t rocket science, but it will take time and intention.

What is a WTLR?

A “way-too-long resume” is a document that is for your eyes only. You will never submit this for a job application. You will never post this on your website. You will never share it on LinkedIn. You will never give it out at networking sessions. It is for you only.

So why, you may wonder, should I invest hours and hours in creating a “way-too-long resume” if no one else will ever see it?

Because you will need the information that is on it.

Your WTLR will inform every interview you ever have. It will help you network as you talk with others, discover commonalities and talk about your experience. It will help you apply to jobs as you tailor your resume for every job that you apply to. It will give you confidence and help you find your ideal position as you scroll through the hundreds of opportunities that exist out there in the world.

It is, in short, an invaluable tool that will pay dividends.

How do I create my WTLR?

Start with your standard resume and save it under a different file name. Remember – this is for your eyes only. You may want to call it, for example, “my way too long resume”. You want a distinctive name that will never get confused with your actual resumes that you might send out for job applications. This document could be 15 pages or 20 pages or longer. It is for you only.

Your current resume is likely a series of bullet points. It is where you worked, what position you held, and what you did while you were there. It’s a summary. It’s the facts. It’s often the outcomes and accomplishments. It’s the basics.

You are going to go WAY beyond the basics for your WTLR.

Under every bullet point that lists an accomplishment, you are going to write the entire story about what it took to achieve that outcome. What did you do? Who were you working with? What strengths



did you leverage? What were the milestones? What were the struggles and how did you overcome them? What did you learn? And for your own notes, write what you enjoyed about that particular achievement or process, and what was taxing or draining for you. We'll come back to this.

Here's an example of what that might look like:

Basic bullet point:

- Babysitter for three children under 7 years old for the summer

Here's what you might write about that:

- Showed up every day at 7am. Children were sometimes sleeping and sometimes awake. Had to prepare breakfast for them and feed them. Kids didn't all like the same food so had to learn their preferences. One day we were out of Cheerios and the youngest threw a big fit and I had to keep my calm but after a while the child did try Alphabets so that was a good thing and I felt good that I was able to help a child expand their horizons and be a little adventurous.
- Parents left a list of instructions that I had to follow each day – ensuring that the oldest did piano practice and that the middle child worked on their spelling to catch up over the summer. I read to the children over and over again. It was a little boring reading the same things all of the time but the kids seemed to enjoy it so that was ok.
- I learned a lot about being calm, dealing with catastrophes, and how to manage competing priorities from demanding stakeholders. I leveraged my strengths of organization and creativity.
- I enjoyed most when we played outside and the kids got to be very creative with nature. I also enjoy being in nature and we followed animal tracks and built things out of natural materials like wood and stone. Creative play was the best time each day.
- I did not enjoy making food for people who didn't really appreciate it and I didn't enjoy having to make the kids stick to schedules, especially the youngest with afternoon nap time. Having to enforce rules that I didn't make and didn't agree with wasn't great for me.
- The parents were appreciative and that made things better and sometimes I stayed for dinner – I learned a lot about cooking from them which will help me later in life I'm sure.
- I like to know that my hard work is being noticed and appreciated – that makes it easier for me to do the tough things, and when the kids were being super difficult, I would remind myself about the importance of this job and how much my work matters to the parents.

As you can see, this resume is going to be WAY too long – and that's the point.

[I can't possibly remember everything I did – what should I do?](#)

If you are stuck, you have many options.

1. Write what you can and leave it and then come back to it. Sometimes, you will remember more with a bit of time to percolate.
2. Write what you can in one place, then go and write something else. Sometimes, writing about other tasks at the same company or in the same position will help you remember what you did

elsewhere. This isn't a linear process. And it will take days or weeks to complete. So just get started – you will eventually fill in most of the blanks.

3. Reach out to your network. One great side benefit of the WTLR is that it gives you an opportunity to reconnect with people you haven't thought about in a long time. This is "networking" and will help you with your job search as well. So let's say that you remember that you were working with David on a certain project, but you don't remember how it went or what the milestones were. Reach out to David and ask! Find a time to talk. Meet for coffee. Reminisce about what it was like working at XYZ Company and how horrible that boss was and how impossible those projects were. Then David will tell you what he remembers, and you have more fodder for your WTLR. While you're at it, you can ask David what he thought your strengths were, and what he valued about you as a colleague. Now you have even MORE material for your WTLR.
4. If all else fails, forget about it. You will be creating so much material for your WTLR that it probably doesn't matter if you can't fill in all of the blanks. Chances are you have already documented the really important pieces.

I created my WTLR – Now What?

After you are done your "way-too-long resume" or at least gotten to the point where you want to move on and do the next step (because, really, a WTLR is never entirely complete...), I recommend printing it out. You don't have to – you could do this next step on a computer – but it's more impressive and easier to see patterns when you have the pages in front of you. Up to you – your mileage may vary.

Get two highlighters – I recommend green and orange.

In **GREEN**, highlight all the elements in your WTLR resume where you felt energized. The things you enjoyed doing, the people you enjoyed working with, the projects that elevated you, the times where you shone and felt amazing.

In **ORANGE**, highlight all the elements where you felt drained. You didn't enjoy the work, you didn't like the project. You may have done very well and achieved or surpassed all of the goals, but it took a lot of energy and given the chance, you wouldn't do that again.

As you go, other thoughts may occur to you. Note them down. Write them in the margins. What are you noticing about what energized you and what drained you? What are you noticing about your strengths and weaknesses? What are you noticing about environments and situations that were great and others that were not so inspirational?

What do I do with all of this now?

By this point, if you've done all of the above, you will have the following:

- More information for all of your interviews – now you know how to answer those questions about "tell me about a time when..." because you have written out every workplace experience that you can remember. If you don't have an answer to the "tell me about a time when..." question, it's probably because you didn't do it.



- Lots of experiences to choose from when you are tailoring your resume to apply to different positions. Yes, it takes a lot of work to tailor and adjust your resume for different positions, but different job postings list different requirements and have different focus for those requirements. Some may focus on technical skills, others may focus on teamwork or interpersonal skills, and other jobs may focus on self-management (such as time management or the ability to shift priorities quickly). Now you have a wealth of information from which you can draw to tailor your resume to those different job ads.
- Greater activation of your network. If you reached out to your former colleagues to ask them about your work and accomplishments at previous places of employment, you probably also told them that you are on the job market. This increases your network and therefore increases the number of eyes looking out for opportunities for you.
 - Side note – this is genuine networking. Networking is NOT going to “press the flesh” events where strangers wearing business suits exchange superficial conversation and business cards. More on this in another career coaching tool.
- More confidence in your accomplishments. Many of my clients tell me that they have a hard time “selling themselves”. When you see everything that you have done, and how you overcame obstacles, and what strengths you have used to achieve all those accomplishments, increased confidence and feelings of self-worth usually result. This confidence will help you in networking and interviewing as well.
- Fodder for your memoirs. I mean, eventually you will retire, right?

Contact Lisa

If you want to do this on your own, please go ahead. That’s why I put this together for you.

If you want an accountability coach, please contact me. My contact form is on my website at <https://www.lvsconsulting.com/contact/>.

Remember, doing this activity – creating a “way too long resume” – takes a lot of time, effort and dedication. When my clients complete the work successfully, they are amazed at the benefits and positive outcomes that result.

Yes, it’s a lot of work. It is a full-time job to look for a full-time job. Why not get every advantage that you can?