

Tell me a story **by Rose Jonas, Ph.D.**

You have spent countless hours and possibly money creating your resume. You may, for all its crisp brevity, not have created a winning document. Yes, you have your key word summary, your objective, your accomplishments, your education and hobbies, but may not yet have the compelling story you need to tell about you.

You're not far off, but off in the heartbreaking way a world-class athlete barely misses the bronze medal. Only a hundredth of a second separates you from the placeholder, but you're in the stands, not the record book.

Here's how you get the winner's edge with your resume:

1. Know what your industry wants and use that structure. Buy books, software or time with a resume writer so you get it right.

2. Tell me a story. We may be eons from our ancestral campfires, but nothing makes a group scrape chairs closer than when someone says, "Let me tell you a story." Think about what makes a great story. The language is simple. It has a logical plot, and the pieces fit together. It has interesting characters who do interesting - sometimes tragic, funny or unique - things.

Put the "story" template over your resume. Do you look like a creaking automaton marching toward the corporate maw, or like a three-dimensional strider over life's hills? You don't have to swashbuckle your language, but look at your resume with the eyes of a stranger.

Imagine you're going to tell someone the story of your life. Start at the beginning and work your way forward. Jot down what might be meaningful. That means you speed past your American Legion Award in elementary school but - if you're young in your career - it may include the athletic scholarship. Walk through your jobs. A.B. Jones after high school. What does the company do? What did you do there? What are you proud of achieving? Do all the

jobs that way. Consider the extra stuff you've done: TA in college, Little League coach, treasurer of a board. When you've finished you'll have a rich story to tell on a resume, and the reader will understand the path you've trod.

3. Tell me a clear story. Be sure to use the language of where you want to go and drop the language of where you've been. Whether it is finance, auto manufacturing or hotel management you've learned to communicate as that culture does. No one outside gets the shorthand verbiage, so unless you're going from one financier's cubicle to another, get the words clear, simple and jargon-free.

4. Tell me one whole story. Your resume reader must understand how you've lived your work life thus far. If you're in college, include all the ways you scrambled to make money since age 16. If you're at mid-career with many stories to tell, give the most focus to the last 10 to 15 years, but however you organize it, give the reader a way to follow your trek.

DON'T simply list the relevant or good jobs. A resume gets followed by an interview, a complete chronology. If you've only hit the high points on your resume, the interviewer will doubt your overall honesty and you won't get called back.

5. Tell someone else your story. Show your resume to colleagues or people in the field you're targeting. Ask, "Am I clear? Do I look desirable for the job I want? Have I left out anything?"

You are fascinating in more ways than you know. Make sure your "resume story" shows that.