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ABSTRACT

What is the best way to teach someone how to write an effective résumé? A workshop format was used to teach college students the skills needed to write a successful résumé. Archival data consisting of student résumés and rubric score sheets were used to determine the effectiveness of a résumé-writing workshop by using a pre–post design evaluating student résumés. The authors used a rubric to produce quantitative data for comparison purposes. Participants' post workshop résumé rubric scores were significantly higher than their scores were before attending the workshop. The authors offer possible explanations for the results and make suggestions for future research.

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University career centers provide a wide array of services including career counseling/ advising, career fairs, on-campus recruiting, and employer relations (Dey & Real, 2010). Students are able to participate in outreach programs as well as experiential educational opportunities such as internships and co-op programs (Garis, Dalton, Akin, & Wang, 2003). Specific programs offered by career centers may include choosing a major, choosing a career, self-exploration of interests and abilities, and how to find either a part-time or full-time job.

As university students prepare to graduate and join the ranks of the working masses, they begin to explore the use of job-search skills. Especially with the current condition of the economy, the acquisition of solid job-search skills has become a major part of the college experience. By the second semester of the junior year, students should have a polished résumé for internships or part-time jobs and in preparation of the post graduation job search (Behrens, Arnold, & Statman, 2008). Many students look to university career centers for guidance in this area. Even during their freshman year, students rank job-skills training as the number two reason to seek career center assistance behind world-of-work information (Behrens et al., 2008, p. 35).

Job-skills training takes many forms. Activities may include interview competencies, employment database training, and résumé-writing skills. The résumé is one of the most important aspects of a job search (Ross & Young, 2005) and is viewed as a powerful tool to market a student to a potential employer (Shakoor, 2001). A résumé is a brief summary of a person's education, job experience, and professional accomplishments (Hoheb, 2002). Résumés also contain a person's contact information; qualifications; association memberships; and special skills, awards, and honors (Crosby, 2009). A well-

designed and well-constructed résumé is one of the keys to opening doors in the employment market (Nichols, 2001). An organized, professionally designed résumé can showcase an applicant's strengths, accomplishments, and skills (Crosby, 2009; Ross & Young, 2005). A well-prepared résumé may get a person noticed and considered for a position by a recruiting manager, whereas a poor résumé may cause a person to be overlooked (Ireland, 2002). A résumé reflects what skills and abilities a person has, what he or she has accomplished, and, perhaps most important, how he or she can help an organization achieve its goals (Kimbrough-Robinson, 2007).

If résumés are so important, how does someone learn the best way to create one? Résumés can be organized based on several different formats and contain specific rules for grammar, punctuation, and professional appearance (Schuttey, 1985). There are many books that have been written on the subject (e.g., Nichols, 2001; Ross & Young, 2005), detailing the preparation methods of creating the perfect résumé. Many people consult handbooks, online research/resources, and even professional résumé-writing services (Crosby, 2009). In the 1970s and 1980s, workshops were a popular method of learning résumé writing because most students had never prepared a résumé, and they needed one to enter the job market (Murray, 2002). The first résumé a person prepares is clearly the most difficult to write (Smith, 2002). The responsibility to provide assistance in preparing the student's first résumé often falls to university career centers.

Career centers are feeling the crunch of the current economy and are searching for creative ways to provide their services, including job-search-skills training (Testa, 2010). Using workshops is one way to provide career services to many students at the same time. This modality provides efficient services and lowers the cost and counselor time

constraints (Dik & Steger, 2008). Halasz and Kempton (2000) suggested that using group interventions (e.g., a workshop) produce positive effects when students are in a career development phase.

Workshops in career exploration and decision making have been shown to provide positive results (D'Eon, 2004; Dik & Steger, 2008; Jepson, Dustin, & Miars, 1982). D'Eon (2004) found that workshops resulted in beneficial changes for their members by increasing and improving the behaviors being taught. Furthermore, Dik and Steger (2008) found that students participating in career-oriented workshops reported significant benefits from the activities and interventions they experienced when compared with participants in a control group. Jepson et al. (1982) found that training programs influenced the way students approached career issues better than other learning strategies. Workshops used for team-performance training have also been shown to result in significant improvements (Mazany, Francis, & Sumich, 1995). In their meta-analysis of career services delivery methods, Whiston, Brecheisen, and Stephens (2003) found that workshops demonstrated a greater career counseling effectiveness than did group counseling.

In a 2005 National Association of Colleges and Employers survey, 94.3% of career centers responding indicated that they used workshops to provide services (Dik & Steger, 2008). However, very little research has been published regarding the success (or failure) of these workshops (Halasz & Kempton, 2000). Workshop effectiveness is occasionally measured by indirect methods (Rosenbloom, Levi, Peleg, & Nemrodov, 2009) in which the benefit can only be concluded by comparisons of unstructured participant feedback. Halasz and Kempton (2000) indicated that most research on career services focuses on the use of career courses or career counseling groups rather than

workshops. They further explained that workshop evaluation is usually conducted through the use of simple departmental forms and questionnaires.

When universities evaluate workshops, the methods tend to consist of participant questionnaires taken immediately following the workshop, asking about the level of satisfaction with the workshop (D'Eon, 2004). Cervero (1984) pointed out that participant satisfaction is not necessarily an indication of behavior change, which is the goal of the workshop. D'Eon (2004) pointed out that most workshops are not rigorously evaluated. D'Eon, Sadownik, Harrison, and Nation (2008) offered an explanation for small-scale workshops' evaluations being nonexistent or completely superficial. The proper evaluation of educational interventions is a very challenging and resource-intensive task. Many levels of participation (e.g., trainers, teachers, and developers) must be involved for workshop evaluations to be rigorous enough to be valid. Halasz and Kempton (2000) have conducted surveys that indicate most career centers do not use any type of standardized assessment to evaluate workshops on career development. Accordingly, "hardly any journal-based information exists on the use or effectiveness" (Halasz & Kempton, 2000, p. 165) of workshop interventions. As previously discussed, using workshops may be a good vehicle to teach résumé-writing skills. However, the lack of research gives little direction to universities on the development or delivery of such workshops. Halasz and Kempton (2000) made a case for the need for further research on the use of career-oriented workshops with college students. The current study was designed using archival data provided by a large university career center that conducted a résumé-writing workshop in conjunction with two career exploration classes. Because students attending the workshops were asked to prepare a résumé before the workshop

and then submit a revised résumé after the workshop, the researchers (the authors) were able to use a pre–post design, an effective methodology for determining improvements within group settings (Mazany et al., 1995). The goal of this study was to explore changes in résumé-writing skills as a result of attending a résumé-writing workshop.

Method

The literature review shows the potential benefit of using workshops to teach skills such as résumé writing and also shows a lack of research to support using such workshops. Therefore, Research Question 1 addressed those needs by asking if a résumé-writing workshop is an effective way to teach résumé-writing skills. The authors hypothesized that the workshop would allow students to significantly improve their résumé-writing skills as shown by improved scores on an evaluative rubric (see Appendix). Additionally, the staff of the career center expressed their belief that based on their experiences, there was a relationship between the scores in the objective and the total score sections of the rubric used to score the résumés. Research Question 2 asked if there was a significant relationship between the objective section and the total score of the résumé. The staff’s prediction, and therefore the authors’ hypothesis, was that there would be a relationship whereby students with better objective statements would have better overall rubric scores.

Participants

The participants were students enrolled in one of two undergraduate university career classes that were offered for credit. There were 40 students enrolled in the courses. Because this study used archival data consisting of only student résumés and rubric score sheets, no information is available regarding the demographics of the students in terms of race, gender, or year of study. It was reported to the researchers that participating students represented all levels

of undergraduate education at the university. One of the requirements for the career class was to create a résumé prior to an in-class workshop on résumé-writing skills. Thirty-eight students completed this assignment, and their résumés were collected and scored by the workshop presenters using a rubric (see Appendix) created in the university career center. Following an in-class workshop on résumé writing, the students were required to create another résumé reflecting the information and rubric presented in the workshop. These résumés were scored by the presenters who reported the scores to the instructors who assigned the students their grade on the assignment. Thirty-one students completed the second part of the assignment. Only 30 of the students who completed the second part of the assignment had also completed the first part. This provided a sample of 30 pre–post scores to analyze. The archival data were rendered unidentifiable prior to sharing with the researchers, except for a random numeric code that allowed the researchers to match pre-workshop and post-workshop résumés for comparison.

Workshops

The résumé workshops were conducted by two graduate student interns in the university career center and consisted of a PowerPoint presentation, class discussion, and a work period where the presenters helped individuals with specific questions. The interns were graduate students pursuing a master’s degree in counseling with specialization in career counseling. They were both near the completion of their degree and had received additional specific training from career center staff prior to conducting the workshop.

Using third-party evaluations is a proven method for measuring changes in participant behaviors (D’Eon et al., 2008). The résumés were scored by the presenters using a résumé-skills rubric created by and used in the career center (see Appendix and the following section for rubric description). The presenters were trained on the proper use of

the rubric, as stressed by Boulet, Rebbecchi, Denton, McKinley, and Whelan (2004), and the resulting scored rubrics were spot-checked by career center staff for accuracy and consistency.

Résumé-Skills Rubric

Prior to this research, the professional staff of the university career center developed a rubric (see Appendix) that is used to evaluate résumés on a numeric scale. The rubric consists of seven categories (header, objective, education section, experience section, other sections, format, and communication skills) that are evaluated on a scale of 1 to 4, offering a maximum score of 28. The career center considers an acceptable résumé to be one that achieves a minimum score of 21. A score of 1 on any section indicates that the section needs significant improvement and could be grounds for the résumé to be rejected by a potential employer. A score of 2 on a section indicates that the section is marginally adequate but needs considerable revision and improvement. If a section is considered average and requiring few adjustments, it receives a score of 3. Finally, a score of 4 indicates an above-average section that enhances the overall value of the résumé. According to career center administrators, the rubric has undergone considerable research analysis to determine its validity and reliability and is used by the professional career counselors on a daily basis to evaluate student résumés and provide feedback to students on ways to improve their résumés.

Procedure

Archival data consisting of student résumés and rubric score sheets were presented to the researchers upon commencement of the study. All identifying marks had been eliminated except for a random number that had been assigned to each résumé and was

used to pair up pre-workshop and post-workshop résumés for each student in the sample. The data scores were compiled and compared using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 19) to determine the repeated-measures t-test value. The research questions were tested by comparing the means of the total scores for the pretest and the posttest conditions and running Pearson product–moment correlations among objectives and total résumé scores. Further analysis compared the means of each section of the rubric for each condition.

Results

A paired-sample t test was applied to the pre- and post-workshop rubric total scores to identify a difference in students’ ability to write an effective résumé before and after the workshop. Thirty complete sets of data were obtained, whereas 10 participants did not complete both résumés. A summary of the raw data is shown in Table 1. The mean total score for the pre- workshop condition was 15.2 (SD = 2.8) and the mean total score for the post-workshop

Table 1 Average Scores by Rubric Items

Item	Preworkshop		Postworkshop	
	M	SD	M	SD
Header	2.80	0.80	3.17	0.79
Objective	1.80	0.80	2.53	0.97
Education	2.20	0.76	2.23	0.77
Experience	2.10	0.76	2.60	0.81
Other sections	1.87	0.73	2.13	0.82
Format	1.97	1.03	2.53	0.77
Communications	2.47	0.73	2.97	0.72
Total score	15.20	2.80	18.20	3.40

Note. N = 30. Calculations were performed using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 19). Scores range from 1 to 4, with a maximum total of 28.

condition was 18.2 (SD = 3.4). Comparing these means resulted in a statistically significant difference of 2.97 ($t = 5.55, p < .001, df = 29$).

When the Pearson product–moment correlation was calculated for the pre-workshop condition comparisons, there was no relationship found. However, the post-workshop objective section was significantly correlated with the post-workshop total score ($r = .61, p < .001$).

Discussion

The data show that students were able to prepare a better résumé after the workshop than before. With respect to Research Question 1, the post-workshop total résumé rubric scores were statistically significantly higher than the pre-workshop scores. This supports the use of small group, interactional workshops (D'Eon, 2004; Dik & Steger, 2008; Halasz & Kempton, 2000) as an effective way to teach résumé-writing skills. Results also lend partial support to the anecdotal suggestion by career center staff about the significance of the career objective. Although a strong career objective prior to a résumé-writing workshop was not related to the overall résumé scores, a post-workshop strong career objective was statistically correlated to overall résumé scores. One possible explanation for this relationship is that a career objective, a person's vocational identity, becomes more solidified and thus the overall résumé score increases. Future research might examine the relationship of one's vocational identity to clarity of one's career objective. No other research was found that used a rubric to evaluate the quality of a résumé. The use of an established rubric to determine qualitative scores for research comparison is a clear strength of this project. Jonsson and Svingby (2007) pointed to the increase in consistency of scores and the reliability of scores across multiple raters when using a rubric for the evaluation. In future research, it would be interesting to determine the amount of variance for each section scored by

using the rubric to find out if any one (or more) of the sections could be considered the most important. Because this research was conducted with a sample size of only 30, the amount of variance in the total score from each section could not be determined. According to Cohen (1992), to have enough power to conduct a multiple regression on seven variables with a medium effect size would require a sample size of 102.

Conclusion

It is concerning to note that the average total score on the post-workshop résumé evaluations is 18.2, which is still below the career center acceptable level of 21. Further analysis shows only six students (20%) achieved a post-workshop score of 21 or higher. Future research might explore employer ratings of the résumés (informally and with the rubric). More research is needed on specific areas of the résumé and the best teaching methods and workshop design.

The purpose of this research was to provide empirical evidence that workshops can be effective for teaching résumé-writing skills. The current study supported the idea that workshops can be effective for teaching résumé-writing skills. The results of the research should encourage the use of workshops for teaching résumé-writing skills as well as foster additional research. Are workshops useful for teaching other career exploration and acquisition skills? What features of a workshop are most effective? These and other questions regarding the content and structure of career workshops should be explored in more depth.

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Appendix: Résumé Rubric

Name of Student: _____	RESUME RUBRIC			Name of Counselor: _____	SCORE
1 Resume needs significant improvement and probably would not be considered	2 Resume is adequate, additional improvement is recommended	3 Resume is average; could be helpful landing you an interview; few improvements	4 Resume is above average; should be competitive for landing an interview		
Header	Your name and header information are hard to read or may be confusing. Phone numbers are not clearly labeled and some information may be missing or contain typing errors.	Header information is easy to find but your name is not the most prominent on the page. Current and permanent contact information may be labeled incorrectly.	Header information is easy to read and contains all necessary information.		
Objective	No objective listed.	Clearly articulated objective statement with some supporting information.	Clearly states what position you are applying for, and your qualifications for that position are listed on the resume.		
Education Section	This section is missing some crucial information, i.e. institution listed without a location, graduation date is not listed, major is listed but not the proper name of the degree.	This section is organized and easy to read. This section includes institution and location, graduation date, and proper name of degree. Some "extra" information that might help you is missing (ex. Relevant coursework or honors and achievements.)	This section is organized, clear, and well defined. It highlights the most pertinent information. This section also helps add value for the position applied for by including relevant coursework or honors and achievements.		
Experience Section	This section is not well defined and there is no order to the descriptions of each position. Descriptions are not detailed and offer no illustration of what was done. No locations and dates of employment are listed.	Descriptions are clear in the form of bulleted statements beginning with action verbs in past tense. Descriptions are not detailed enough and do not directly relate to the position for which you are applying.	This section is well defined and information relates to the intended career field. Descriptions are clear and well marked in the form of bulleted statements beginning with action verbs. This section could be split into related and other experience.		
Other Sections	There is no relevant information in this section. Lacks descriptions or detailed information about leadership, teamwork, computer or other transferrable skills. It does not appear to support the career goal/objective.	This section contains all necessary information but is difficult to follow. Organization of information needs to be improved. Leadership roles within organizations are listed but skills are not well defined.	This section is well organized and easy to understand. Information relates directly to the position. Leadership, teamwork, and other character traits are apparent through the use of this section. Computer skills are listed.		
Format	Resume is either a half page or three pages long. Font is too big or may be hard to read. Too much white space on the page. Overall not a good format to use.	This resume has some uneven white space. Some information is inconsistent (dates, bolding, underlining). With minor edits can be corrected.	Overall the resume makes good use of space. Excellent layout. It can be easily scanned and is pleasing to the reader providing all necessary information.		
Communication Skills	There are multiple spelling errors. Resume does not display good communication skills.	There may be a single spelling or grammar error. Communication skills are moderate-good.	There are no grammar or spelling errors. Communication skills are excellent.		
NOTE: Total score of 21-28 is an acceptable range; however any section with a score of 2 or less needs improvement.					TOTAL

Note. Résumé rubric designed by the University of South Florida Career Center. Reprinted with permission.