

Two Secrets for Winning Market Differentiation & Positioning Yourself as a High-Value Target

by Cindy Kraft, the CFO-Coach

Whether we are discussing personal marketing collateral (resume, executive profile, and leadership addendum) or your communication message, there are two requirements. One, they must be cohesive. Who you are in person is exactly who is portrayed on paper; and vice-versa. Second, both must be packed with value.

As a Chief Financial Officer, you and every one of your competitors have climbed the corporate ladder in very similar ways. Those are/were your responsibilities ... things you did that got you to where you are today. From a marketing perspective, though, relying on responsibilities delegates you to commodity status. Standing out from the competition means you've moved from what you did - to how you impacted - and in a very measurable way.

Here are **two of my secret weapons** for moving clients to high-impact A-player positioning. These are questions you must ask yourself, and answer in tangible terms, to win market differentiation.

1. For each new position and every promotion, there are two critical questions that rarely get answered in most candidate resumes ... ***what were you hired to do, and did you accomplish it?*** If that goal was met, provide the details and how accomplishing it positively impacted the company.

If you didn't accomplish the objective for which you were hired, it needs to be explained. If you did achieve that goal, it builds a track record of success you bring with you to a new position. Making it crystal clear ***how*** you achieved the goal for which you were hired is key to distinguishing yourself from the competition.

2. Describe each of your contributions in C-A-R + SI format. Challenge - Action - Result - Strategic Impact. *What was the **challenge, problem, situation, or issue** that necessitated the action. How long was it going on? What would have been the potential outcome or potential risk of doing nothing? What **action(s)** did you take? Who else was involved? How long did it take? And finally, what did those contributions mean **bottom line** to the organization? What was the **longer term impact**? What could the company do that they could not have done otherwise? How did this favorably position them against the competition?*

Executive resumes are very different from those of middle management. As a finance leader, the emphasis is on "leading" and the resulting positive impacts to the bottom line. Responsibilities are important, but they also commoditize you. Initiatives you've visioned, executed, and which have made the company money, saved the company money, or positioned the company to do something they couldn't do before ... are what differentiate you.

Companies (and recruiters) who are seeking finance executives want to understand how prospective candidates think and how that translates to solving the problems it is facing.

Incorporating these two strategies into your personal marketing documents and communication message will make it easier for a decision-maker and/or recruiter to gauge if what you bring to the table is worth buying.

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