



LNP 296

How to Polish Your Resume and LinkedIn Profile Howie Appel

Pat: Hi, this is Pat Iyer and today we're going to be talking on Legal Nurse Podcast about something that's important in terms of how you present your credentials to your clients and your prospects. And that's how you write your résumé and write your profile on LinkedIn. I have with me today an expert who can address both of those questions, who has experience helping others in presenting their credentials in the most polished way. His name is Howie Appel.

Howie, thank you for joining me for this program today.

Howie: It's great to be here and thanks for the invite.

Pat: I thought we would start with résumés. A little-known fact about me is that in the early 1980s, when I was just starting my business, I volunteered to help people write their résumés for the princely sum of \$5. I'll bet you charge more than that, Howie.

Howie: I would say so.

Pat: And there was something about writing résumés that fascinated me, and one of the things that fascinates me the most is how you lay it out, how you make sure that it's the right length and that you don't have too little information on it, but you also don't have too much information on it. What are the recommendations now in terms of how long a résumé should be?

Howie: First, the résumé is all about you, but it's geared to make the recruiter or the decision maker happy. Their goal is to find the right people and obviously, you're the right person.

Now, what makes the recruiter content with the résumé so they're willing to read on?

The first thing we want to do is the format, and it's called "white space." White space needs to be on either side, with your name, your contact information in the center of the résumé.

Now you asked how long it should be. It varies by person because a résumé is a personal issue. First, a person with no experience at all, right out of college or right out of high school has a one-page résumé. Ninety-eight percent of the résumés I work with are two pages long, and a person who's got a master's degree or higher plus 15 or 20 years of experience will have possibly a three-page résumé, realizing that the recruiter is going to focus on only page one. Once they read page one, and they're excited about it, the next thing you know they're going to say, "Well, let's read on," and that means they're going to read page two, and page two is going to have more information.

You will begin the résumé by saying you have a summary, and the summary is going to give the fine points and the achievements and your traits. And once it gives the recruiter that information, then you build on that, based on your background, which, of course, is in chronological order on your résumé.

And that's basically what they're looking for, a way to separate you from somebody else. And the way you do that is by letting them know what kind of position you're seeking and then after that not justifying it with an objective. The objective is old. You don't want to tell the recruiter or the decision maker what kind of work you want to do because they know what kind of work you can do. So, they're going to look at your summary to justify everything you need to do, and that is a way to introduce it.

Pat: In the field of legal nurse consulting, usually about 99 percent of the time the person looking at the résumé is the attorney, who is interested in hiring a nurse as a subcontractor, independent contractor, or an expert witness to be involved in litigation. And I know you've got some familiarity with this field because your partner is a legal nurse consultant, so we have a double whammy right now.

Howie: Right. I have a good feel for the language in both medical and legal.

Pat: Right, and what I have seen is people, particularly expert witnesses, have more extensive documents. They have curriculum vitae as opposed to a résumé. What are the differences between a résumé and a curriculum vitae?

Howie: First, there is a misnomer there. Curriculum vitae, it originates in Great Britain and, believe it or not, curriculum vitae means it is a listing of courses. It's a listing of publications and that is basically what curriculum vitae is, a listing of your publications and the courses you've taken.

The résumé, on the other hand, is a history of your background, your experience, your affiliations, your achievements, and your certifications. All this stuff is going to be on your résumé.

By the way, typically a curriculum vitae is far, far longer than a résumé. It's interesting reading, but primarily in an academic environment.

Pat: Yes, I have seen those documents written by physicians and sometimes they are an inch thick. It's amazing that they list every publication that they've ever been involved in. And if they have a long and illustrious history, there are a lot of publications and involvement being on editorial boards, their board certifications, their clinical experience. It can be very extensive.

Howie: It is and that's why I recommend that you stick to the actual résumé when identifying yourself. You want to tell the attorneys that you're going to be addressing and/or their case management exactly what your background is, more so than the courses you've taken. The courses you've taken and your publications - they have done their homework. They have an idea, and if you get to the point where you're being interviewed, that is all now in the history. That is all understood. Now they want to get to know you personally and what your background is and hear it directly from you in what they call a "talking paper" as opposed to the actual software in this case.

Pat: Yeah, and you've brought up a good point because if you are an expert witness and you've listed the courses that you've taught, for example, then that gives the opposing counsel the opportunity to say, "Well, I want the handouts from the lecture that you gave on compartment syndrome because you're an expert on a case involving compartment syndrome, and I want to see what you're telling other people about the condition."

Howie: Right.

Pat: That's a trap for an expert witness and I don't think anybody really cares what courses you have taken in nursing school or in college as much as whether you have the capability demonstrated by your résumé or CV to show that you're sufficiently qualified for whatever it is you are testifying about.

Howie: That's when experience is very, very important.

Pat: I didn't hear you, say that again?

Howie: The practical experience that you have had is very, very important.

Pat: Yes, absolutely. Are there any terms that we used to put on résumés that are now out of fashion or antiquated?

Howie: Yes, there are. There are several. The first one I want to discuss is the word "objective" When you put the word "objective" on a résumé, you're literally telling the reader that this is what you want to do and no matter what they have available, this is what you want to do. And primarily what they have available and what you want to do is already given, so "objective" is replaced in most part by the word "summary."

Now at the end of the résumé typically people wrote, "References available upon request." When you fill in an application for a job, they're going to ask you for references. It's obvious, okay, and so that becomes antiquated. We no longer use that.

Now the other term that a lot of people use is "responsible for." "Responsible for" means that you are taking your job description and you're making that into your résumé. That's called "plagiarism," so therefore, you're using somebody else's terms to describe what you can do, "Responsible for X, Y and Z."

However, if you put an action word in there - handle, manage, directed, monitored - all these terms are going to be more directed toward what you've done as opposed to what you can do. And, believe it or not, in some job descriptions you can do far more than they want, and they know that, but they can see the words "responsible for," and then that's another thing that we avoid.

So, those are the three major areas that are no longer used. Of course, you know you never use the words "I," "me," or "my" on a résumé

because obviously it's written directly to the people. Those are the basic terms that you want to avoid using on a résumé.

Pat: And can you comment a little bit about being able to proofread your own résumé?

Howie: Proofreading a résumé, a very important point. First, there's another term that you need to avoid using, and that's going to go right into this, and that's called "attention to detail." Now the term "attention to detail" implies that there are no typos on your résumé, not one, and that a third person reading your résumé is not going to say to you, "You missed this word," or "You put a grammatical error in there," whatever. The point is do not send a résumé without having another person, myself, review that résumé to make sure there are no typos because one typo will put you on the other pile.

So yes, it's very important to have another person read your résumé after you've written it.

Pat: I have looked at résumés, probably thousands of résumés at this point in my life, because I looked at people who I wanted to hire as employees, and I looked at résumés of nurses and doctors who wanted me to give them expert witness work. And I was amazed, particularly at the résumés that contained typographical errors with dates. I saw several résumés where the dates overlapped, indicating the person was working in more than one job, and in some case, it was true but in other cases it was a typographical error. I've had résumés that have had phone numbers that were incorrect. I couldn't reach the person to contact them for an interview because the phone number was off.

There was one woman who applied for a job in my company more than one time and I happened to remember her résumé because it was so horribly laid out with the way that the font was used. It was an unusual font and it was hard to read, so I kept it aside in a drawer of people I hadn't contacted for an interview.

Then I got the new résumé with the same terrible font. Then I started comparing them and she had changed her experience around from the time she did the first résumé to the second. She changed years and jumbled things out of order, so I wondered which résumé I should pay attention to.

Howie: Well, first you've got some very, very good points there. Digital is the name of the game and you don't put down D-E-C for December 2019. You put down 12/2019, especially if you have a position for a year or less. See if you have 2011 to 2012 on your résumé, they don't know whether that means from December to January or whether that means from January to the following December, which is two years. So, you've got to be very careful in that.

Also, I want to bring out the fact that you want to avoid the use of italics. The italic smudges. They're never going to tell you this, by the way. When you go through the Applicant Tracking System (ATS), it's going to smudge both lines and italics. As a recruiter for 25 years, I would shake my head when I saw italics because I knew it was going to smudge someplace along the road, and I don't like italics.

Now you mentioned font and the font is very important. A recruiter-friendly font is Times New Roman. All résumés and all the résumés I've put together are in the font, a 12-point font, of Times New Roman, and I take off all the italics.

Another thing I want to mention to you is that the job title at a company is far more important than the actual company. As a recruiter, I want to know what your title was. "What was your job?" "What did you do?" It doesn't matter—well it does to a certain extent—but it doesn't matter what the name of the company is. (Pat's note: I disagree.)

Now also, no abbreviations. You mentioned that earlier. Abbreviations are taboo on a résumé unless of course for example OSHA. Everybody knows what OSHA stands for, and to spell it all out is hazardous to your mind, so you don't. You could put OSHA in there. You've heard of a company called IBM. Back in the 60s and 70s, everybody typed IBM. You don't type the name of the company out because it's well-known.

States, for example New Jersey, you type out the word N-E-W J-E-R-S-E-Y. You don't type NJ. I'll tell you why. The reason why is that the decision maker thinks that you're looking for abbreviations to shorten the trip. You're looking for ways to cut corners. That's an indicator that you cut corners all the time, and you don't explain

yourself clearly each time. So therefore, no abbreviations, and spell everything out and do not put italics or underlines on the résumé.

Pat: And it's funny you mentioned OSHA. Let's spell out OSHA for the people who are listening who do not know what that organization is.

Howie: OSHA stands for the Office of Safety and Health Administration and most people in responsible positions are going to know what OSHA stands for. It's a compliance issue when you're working in an operating room you need a clean room. You need all your instruments hygienically clean and that means that there are going to be yellow lines on the ground for the areas you don't go into.

These are OSHA standards and the term "Compliant with OSHA Standards" is a very important factor on the résumé because you want to comply with local, state and federal regulations when it comes to anything to do with legal terms and nursing terms so that everyone understands where you're coming from. And by the way, that is one of the few acronyms that I use is OSHA, the Office of Safety and Health Administration.

Pat: And one more point before we go on from résumés is that I remember seeing a résumé from a physician who had listed his Social Security number and his drug enforcement agency number which permits him to prescribe narcotics. They were both on his résumé.

Howie: Okay, that comes under the term TMI (too much information). The writer of the résumé has got to understand the main purpose of a résumé is to get the interview. The main purpose is to get the facetime or on the telephone for a hiring manager, be it a lawyer, be it the office manager, or whomever may be the person who's been designated to screen you in or screen you out.

Now as far as numbers are concerned, I recommend, by the way, that if you are an RN, you put your credentials in there. Most of the people I know who are legal nurse consultants do have their BS RN and therefore they should have those indicators on their résumé.

Now if you have an RN number then that's okay, but most all of us recognize the legality and the certifications an RN goes through. And trust me by the way, I certainly appreciate all of that. You know my partner has her alphabet soup up there, and I think it's got to be up

there—by the way, both on a résumé and on LinkedIn, which we'll get in to. But yes, it's *not* necessary to have all that information on the résumé because you want something to talk to the person about and the résumé is going to introduce you.

Pat: Yes, yes it's not necessary and in the case of the physician who was an expert witness, I don't think he realized that his résumé would be passed on from one attorney to a paralegal to a clerk, and having his Social Security number and DEA number in there made identity theft and fraud much easier for the people who handled his document. I gave the feedback to this neurosurgeon as to why I thought he should remove it, and I got a very nice, gracious thank you back in response.

Howie: Yeah, you shouldn't put a Social Security number in your résumé. That's like saying, "I drive a car and here's my driver's license number." You don't need either one of those.



Before we continue, listen up. Are you taking full advantage of one of the most potent social media sites? LinkedIn is one of the keyways to connect with attorneys.

LNCs usually have a limited marketing budget. Many are inexperienced in reaching out to potential clients and do not know how to showcase their special skills.

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Get instant access to this training at the show notes for podcast.legalnursebusiness.com. Use the code listened in the coupon box at check out to receive a 25% immediate discount. Now we return to the show.

Pat: Exactly. Well now that we've talked about résumés, and we can go on even longer on this topic, I want to shift over to LinkedIn because the two of them are very closely related. How you present yourself and your credentials on LinkedIn is rooted on being able to pull together your qualifications on a résumé. Tell us about the profile portion of LinkedIn and how we can make that section be as impressive as possible?

Howie: Very good, thank you. LinkedIn has become the platform of the present and the future. The reason why is your profile. First, just to mention, by the way, on the résumé, you should put your LinkedIn profile URL, which I'll explain in a minute, which is your address basically. And they can click on your résumé, put a soft copy. They're going to click on that résumé on the URL for LinkedIn and that should take them directly to your LinkedIn profile.

Now what is the most important piece of information on your LinkedIn profile?

And that is very simply your picture. Your picture should be, must be, on that LinkedIn profile.

What is a good picture?

A good picture, of course, is from your mid-section here to just a little atop of your head. And it should be taken about three to five feet away from you because we don't want it right head on because that doesn't look professional. Now, you'll have a smile obviously. To have a spouse with you, no, you do not need a spouse with you. You just have it by yourself. The background of your picture must be neutral, neutral colors like what you have in your background or I have in mine. Mine might even be a little bit too busy.

So, the most important piece of information is your picture and second is your headline. Your headline comes right under your picture and that tells the recruiter or anyone what do you do. By the way, that's also searchable on LinkedIn. If I type a word from your headline or from your summary into LinkedIn, I'm going to get you and that's

what I want to do. The LinkedIn profile is a supplement. It repeats your résumé.

Now one thing that's very important is whether the résumé is static. The résumé stays the way it is if you can keep it that way. The LinkedIn profile is anything but static. It's continually updating. It's continually posting. It's continually giving people more and more good information about you, which means the summary on your résumé should be implanted on your LinkedIn profile.

And as things happen in your life that you feel are important, add them to your LinkedIn because your connections, which I'll explain shortly, are going to want to see more about you and more about information that's currently up to date. And there's nothing better than keeping your LinkedIn profile up to date because the person who's going to interview you wants to know what kind of person you are. They want to see if you're going to fit into the group basically, and by having your picture on there and having a headline on there along with your credentials is very, very important. Because if you don't have them there, then they're going to question. A red flag goes up.

Now on your profile you're going to also have, again, your education. You're going to have your affiliations, and finally you're going to have your interest, which is going to include groups, which I'll get into later, but the bottom line here is on your profile.

Now above your picture is a banner, and the banner most people forget about it. If you don't forget about it if you have a professional put that picture in there, that is also going to be a big thing for the recruiter to see that you know something about LinkedIn.

By the way, there are well over 500 million people on LinkedIn, so your next supervisor will be or should be looking at you if they're interested. Every recruiter no longer goes full-time to all the recruiting sites. They go to LinkedIn. So, basically what I do is I enable the recruiter to see you as you really are, which is even more so than on your résumé. Of course, the résumé is a very important part of LinkedIn, but on your profile what I call a "boilerplate," the boilerplate has got to display you at first glance and that's going to work good for you.

Pat: All right. I know that we've talked about how your picture should look, and definitely professional and no pictures of your children and no pictures of your dog instead of you. Can we customize our URL in LinkedIn, so it has our name in it as opposed to all those little numbers?

Howie: Right and thank you for bringing that up. On the LinkedIn profile there is a section called "How to Contact" or "Contact Information". There should be at least three if not four different sections in there. First, your URL. When you join LinkedIn, they give you a URL, or address, and it has your name hyphenated, then five or six numbers after that. That is called a traditional given. Your mission is to go in there and change that to, for example, Pat Iyer will be P-A-T I-Y-E-R and then R-N or maybe it could be your middle initial in there. Anything that will separate you from everybody else on LinkedIn because they're going to tell you, "I'm sorry, this URL has been used. So, you got to go back in there and make sure it's personalized and once you get that done, that's great.

Now the other parts that should be on there will be your email address. Now if you have a cellphone, if you're looking for positions, it's a good idea to put that cellphone number in there because recruiters are going to want to reach out to you, texting for the most part. They are going to want to text you, "I saw your LinkedIn profile, let's talk."

Okay, your email address should be on there, not your home address. There's no need to have your home address anywhere on LinkedIn, just your email address. Your email address, your phone number, your URL, and basically that's it. Four pieces should be on that contact information. And if you have a website, by the way, even better. Add the website to that section. And they allow you to have no more than three different websites. If you've got a blog, you can put that in there. If you have a Twitter address, that's fine. But for the most part, keep it to those four. Keep it simple basically.

Pat: And a lot of the LinkedIn profiles that I see for legal nurse consultants list their services, but they're using the same language repeatedly in terms of "I screen cases for merit," "I locate expert witnesses." What can we do differently with our profile other than to list the services that we provide to attorneys?

Howie: Well, it's a good question. The bottom line here on LinkedIn is separating yourself from the crowd. If you've got a background with an attorney who's well-known or you know several attorneys who are well-known, then it's a good idea to name drop because I as a recruiter am going to go into that attorney's profile if he's on there and check it out and if you mentioned other names.

Now another important factor is recommendations. If you can get recommendations from these attorneys that you've worked for, all the better. Now there's a difference between recommendations and endorsements. Be careful. Endorsements are simply a click, "I endorse this person." It means next to nothing. I've got 47 recommendations on my profile. Anybody can go in there and see these recommendations. Now they may go back a bit because I don't push that.

But yes, find an area of your expertise, of your background. If you have courtroom experience, if you have experience working in a nursing home, if you have experience working in assisted living, all that should be on there so that it may separate you from others who are applying for the same position.

"How do you stand out?" That's one thing that I do is pull that out of you. I'm like a dentist. I extract teeth, extract information.

Pat: I have not heard that expression.

Howie: There's so much information that you don't know that a professional can pull out of you, you would be surprised.

Pat: Well that's a great segue to my last question, which is how can our listeners find out more about you?

Howie: How do you find out more about me? Number one, you go to my LinkedIn profile.

Pat: Right.

Howie: If it's okay, I'll give you my contact information right here and now.

Pat: Sure.

Howie: I live in Orlando, Florida, in a suburb of Orlando. And it's Lake Mary, Florida, and my phone number area code (407) 373-4293. My email address is HRA, for those of you with a military background, Hotel, Romeo, Alpha. And I'm an Air Force veteran, by the way, and I graduated from Northeastern University in Boston. And otherwise, my email address again is HRA246@gmail.com, and I do get back to you within 24 hours. If you go to my voicemail, trust me I'll get right back with you. And basically, I'm wide open for you. I enjoy working with legal nurse consultants, and I love the challenge, and I'm here for you.

Pat: All right. Well, thank you so much for being on the show. This has been Howie Appel and Pat Iyer talking about résumés, CVs, LinkedIn, all wonderful tools for conveying your expertise to the people who are able to hire you.

Thanks for being on the show, Howie, I enjoyed the chat and for you, our listener, please be sure to check us out again a week from today. We'll have a new interview and a new topic. And we love the fact that you're listening, and listener numbers are growing, and the comments are great, and we're happy that you're here with us today.

Howie: Thank you very much for having me.

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