Using One-Minute Video Résumés as a Screening Tool for Sales Applicants

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This paper introduces video résumés as sales applicants' initial introduction to recruiters and sales managers. Results of two studies reveal that recruiters who viewed one-minute video résumés prior to meeting sales applicants had more favorable perceptions of video résumés than those who did not view video résumés. One-minute video résumés were more effective in conveying the candidate's communication skills, energy level, and potential benefit to the company. Respondents consider video résumés a time saving tool and would be more likely to open the traditional résumé and to contact a candidate for an interview if impressed by the video résumé.

INTRODUCTION

New college graduates seeking sales-related positions are faced with the challenge of differentiating themselves from other applicants. For those graduates who say, "If I could just get the interview, I know I could get the job," a brief video introduction, accompanying a traditional résumé, may provide the opportunity to showcase skills and traits relevant to a sales position that are difficult to communicate on paper alone. At the other end of the spectrum, recruiters and sales managers are bombarded by e-mailed résumés on a daily basis, and the drive to look at yet another résumé often wanes. The recruiters' challenge is to find tools that increase efficiency in the applicant screening process.

The purpose of this research is to examine sales recruiters' perceptions of video résumés. Two exploratory studies were conducted. The first study focused on identifying general perceptions of video résumés among recruiters. One-minute video résumés were employed as brief introductions in the second study in an effort to assess sales recruiters' reactions to that specific type of video résumé as a screening tool.

RELEVANT LITERATURE

Recruiters are frequently looking for sales talent to either grow an organization or to replace salespeople lost due to turnover. In a recent study with over 2,000 participating sales organizations, respondents were asked about their hiring plans for 2011; 78 percent reported that they would add salespeople, and nearly half of those planned to grow their sales forces by more than 10 percent (Dickie, 2011). According to a ten-year (1996 to 2006) study of sales organizations, "the turnover rate (including voluntary and involuntary departures) among 3,700 U.S. publicly traded companies across 19 industries was 39.6 percent," with even the top organizations reporting an 11 percent turnover rate (Hrehocik, 2007, p.24). Significant amounts of time and money are spent recruiting and interviewing potential candidates for sales positions. The expenses associated with posting recruitment ads, hiring recruitment firms, reviewing résumés, interviewing candidates, and paying candidates' travel expenses all equate to a large investment in the hiring process, not to mention the sales revenues likely lost while filling a position.

Newly hired sales representatives require time and training to become productive. The American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) reported that "U.S. businesses spend approximately $15 billion per year on sales training" (Salopek, 2009, p.71). Approximately 55 percent of sales organizations spend an average of $1,500 to $5,000 on training per salesperson (Accenture, 2011). Some companies spend significantly more; for example, Federated Insurance invests approximately $100,000 in training new sales representatives over the first year of employment (N. Hayati, personal communication, September 5, 2012). The amount of time required for a new salesperson to generate revenue levels similar to an experienced representative varies, but one study indicated that less than 40 percent of new hires have ramp-up times under six months (Dickie, 2011). With all the costs associated with recruiting, hiring, and onboarding new sales representatives, increasing efficiency and accuracy in the recruitment and selection process is invaluable.

Several studies have revealed that sales managers consistently rank enthusiasm, ambition, organization, ability to persuade, and verbal skills as the most valuable to a successful salesperson (Churchill, Ford, Walker, Johnston, & Tanner, 2000). In evaluating competencies, recruiters observe candidates' personal characteristics such as confidence and the ability to deliver a compelling presentation in a clear and concise manner (Graham-Leviss, 2012). In a 2002 survey conducted by Moody, Stewart, and Bolt-Lee, recruiters ranked communication skills, both written and oral, as the most important quality of new candidates entering a business related field. Recruiters also highly ranked interpersonal/social skills as necessary for successful businesspeople. These qualities are vital for sales representatives as they are often a customer's only line of communication with the company.

Most businesspeople embrace technology as an effective means of communicating, but younger generations are much more comfortable than previous generations with the facets of information sharing that result from technological advances. Younger generations also tend to reveal much more of themselves in a public fashion than their predecessors. Facebook reports now having over 900 million users, and Twitter and smart phones allow individuals to continuously update "followers" or "friends" with personal information about their lives. The YouTube Generation is clearly comfortable with the concept of streaming and starring in viral videos in a way that earlier generations simply are not (Hewlett, Sherbin, & Sumberg, 2009).

Given the technological intelligence possessed by younger generations, one should find little surprise in the emerging trend of cyberfolios and video résumés in the job application process. Graphic designers, photographers, and artists realize the positive effect a carefully selected portfolio can offer when applying for a new position. In 1998, Clayton College and State University in Georgia had its Information Systems students develop "cyberportfolios" (i.e., multimedia résumés) in order to distinguish themselves to potential employers by showcasing their design skills (Siegmann, 1998). Furthermore, the National Institute for the Deaf at the Rochester Institute of Technology used video résumés to develop the communication skills of its students and to attempt to secure jobs for them (Kelly & O'Brien, 1992).

The idea of presenting oneself digitally is not new, and it can be quite beneficial in certain career paths as a means to gain a competitive edge. One study revealed that 76 percent of those recruiters not

offered portfolios by applicants believe these portfolios would be useful (Moody, Stewart, & Bolt-Lee, 2002). In open-ended responses about why the recruiters felt these demonstrations of talent might be useful, several pointed out the usefulness in showcasing a candidate's presentation skills in making a hiring decision.

The concept of a video résumé may take on several connotations. The traditional view is a lengthy (five minutes or more) monologue describing the applicant's traits and past performance. Some have used humor in the video résumé with antics such as Aleksey Vayner's notorious YouTube video résumé in which he demonstrated weightlifting and karate chopping in applying for a position on Wall Street (Cullen, 2007). Recruiters offer mixed reviews with the main issues being the time it takes to view a video résumé (referring to five-minute versions) and legal concerns (Sullivan, 2007). On the positive side, a 2007 Vault.com survey of employers revealed that 89 percent would watch a video résumé though only 17 percent had ever been offered one (Yaptangco, 2007).

Several online recruiting firms have emerged and are offering applicants the opportunity to develop a 30 or 60 second video introduction to sell themselves to potential employers. YellowDogRecruiting.com is an example of an online recruiting firm for the hospitality industry that allows job candidates to post video introductions. According to Berta (2010), this recruiting site posts more than 100 candidate videos and received 3,000 hits from potential employers in one month. Berta (2010) also cited a 2007 survey conducted by HireMeNow.com, an online job forum, which found that over 80 percent of respondents in charge of hiring are willing to consider video introductions in the candidate selection process. The president of HireMeNow.com company, Allen Bornstein, states that candidates are finally able to display their "enthusiasm, energy, and attitude" in a way prohibited by paper résumés ("Cover Letters," 2008). A brief introductory video résumé can and should be seen as a natural complement to portfolio materials and used in conjunction with a traditional paper résumé. As Generation Y moves into recruiting and hiring positions, their comfort level with technology could potentially increase the acceptance of video introductions.

CREATING AND USING VIDEO RÉSUMÉS

The one-minute video résumés used in this research were created by a video production company specializing in both TV advertisements and professional video résumés of varying lengths. Videos are assigned a URL and can only be accessed through the company's server. When a recruiter clicks on the URL, the screen contains three components – a viewing pane for the video with the applicant's picture, a bulleted list of highlights from the applicant's résumé, and a button for opening a print version of the résumé document. The total charge for the video production and the use of the server is $150 per person until the résumé is updated.

Using the production company's resources, two scenarios for contact between the recruiter and the applicant may occur. First, recruiters who visit the production company's website will find several categories of job applicants (e.g., sales, management, nursing, banking, and advertising). After choosing a category, the recruiter may select videos from the applicants posted. Recruiters may contact desirable applicants, but only through email which is routed through the production company as the applicant's name and contact information are omitted for confidentiality. Should the applicant want to communicate with the recruiter, s/he may reply to the recruiter's email and provide direct contact information at that time.

A second route for utilizing the one-minute video résumé involves the applicant contacting a recruiter via email, providing the URL for their video résumé, and requesting a viewing of the video and printed résumé. This route is the subject of the current study.

In preparation for videotaping, students prepared a one-minute script highlighting accomplishments, relevant attributes, and professional aspirations. The subject matter was intended to complement the paper résumé rather than just re-state its contents. Students were instructed to rehearse the script; however, a teleprompter was provided during taping. They also received coaching from the staff and were offered as many as five "takes" to provide editing possibilities for the production company. Professional dress was

required, and each job seeker sat or stood in front of a choice of a white or black screen. Students were onsite for approximately 30 minutes, and the edited version was available for distribution within 24 hours.

METHOD

Samples

Two exploratory studies were conducted to gauge recruiters' level of approval of video résumés in today's hiring environment. The first study employed a convenience sample consisting of sales recruiters at a national sales competition for college students (otherwise referred to as the NSC sample). These sales recruiters were asked to complete a questionnaire regarding their general perceptions of video résumés. A total of 23 participants completed the questionnaire with approximately 82.6 percent (19 recruiters) representing business-to-business sales organizations. The majority of respondents (91.3 percent, 21 recruiters) represented large organizations with over 1,000 employees, and 87 percent (20 recruiters) worked for organizations with a separate human resources department.

Participants in the second study included recruiters scheduled to attend an on-campus sales and marketing career fair (otherwise referred to as the CF sample). The objective of the second study was to measure recruiters' perceptions of the one-minute video introduction as a specific type of video résumé. Prior to the career fair, a brief email was sent to recruiters to review one-minute videos prepared by ten students enrolled in an Advanced Selling course and attending the career fair. This email included the URL for the video résumé (imbedded in the text for easy, one-click access) and an attached paper résumé. The video résumé, in this case, was intended as a "hook" to entice the recruiter to take a quick look with the hope that the result will be a more careful consideration of the paper résumé and increased interest in the student's application. Recruiters who received the video résumés were asked to complete a questionnaire at the career fair. A total of 32 recruiters who viewed the one-minute video résumés responded. Approximately 40.6 percent of respondents (13 recruiters) were in business-to-business sales, while approximately 22 percent (7 recruiters) were in sales in the insurance and financial sectors. This sample was more evenly represented by small (i.e., less than 250 employees) and large organizations (i.e., greater than 1,000 employees) at 37.5 and 43.8 percent respectively. Approximately 68.8 percent (22 recruiters) worked for organizations with a human resources department.

Measures

A questionnaire was created and distributed to respondents in both the NSC sample and the CF sample. The questionnaire contained nine scale items designed to measure recruiters' perceptions of using video résumés as a recruiting tool (see Table 1). Upon receiving the questionnaire, recruiters in both samples were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with each item. All items were measured using a five-point, Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

A principal components analysis (PCA) was conducted to investigate the underlying structure of the items. Table 2 identifies the two underlying dimensions revealed by the PCA along with the supporting results. The first dimension, labeled "VR Usefulness," consists of three items that suggest how useful the video résumé is to the recruiter. The second dimension, labeled "VR Comparison," consists of three items that compare the traditional print résumé to the video résumé. Coefficient alphas for both scales exceed the 0.80 benchmark (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The scale items are consistent in capturing the VR Usefulness and VR Comparison dimensions.

RESULTS

Impressions of Video Résumés

An independent samples *t*-test was used to determine if there were differences among the two groups of recruiters (i.e., NSC and CF) on these two dimensions. Significant differences were found among the

TABLE 1
QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS*

1.	Video résumés are a useful screening tool for sales recruiting.
2.	Video résumés save time in recruiting.
3.	I am very likely to open a video résumé when I receive it.
4.	I believe I can get an accurate first impression of a sales candidate by viewing a one-minute video résumé.
5.	Video résumés are more useful than printed résumés in assessing a sales candidate.
6.	If I am impressed with the candidate's video résumé, I am very likely to open the traditional résumé file.
7.	If I am impressed with the candidate's video résumé, I am very likely to contact him/her for an interview.
8.	I prefer to screen video résumés rather than screen printed résumés.
9.	I am more likely to open a video résumé than a traditional résumé file.

*All items measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

TABLE 2
PCA RESULTS

		Components		Descriptive Statistics		
		1	2	Mean	Std. Dev.	Item-to-total Correlation
Survey Items* (n=54)	**Alpha**					
VR Usefulness	0.83					
Video résumés are a useful screening tool for sales recruiting.		0.81		4.11	0.88	0.71
I am very likely to open a video résumé when I receive it.		0.89		4.31	0.86	0.77
I believe I can get an accurate first impression of a sales candidate by viewing a 1 minute video résumé.		0.76		3.78	0.90	0.57
VR Comparison	0.84					
Video résumés are more useful than printed résumés in assessing a sales candidate.			0.84	3.57	1.00	0.62
I prefer to screen video résumés rather than screen printed résumés.			0.87	3.31	1.02	0.85
I am more likely to open a video résumé than a traditional résumé file.			0.79	3.54	1.09	0.67
	Variance Extracted=75.78% Varimax Rotation					

*Measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree

groups on both the VR Usefulness (*t*-value=3.06, p=.003; $\bar{X}_{CF}$ =4.31, $\bar{X}_{NSC}$ =3.72) and the VR Comparison (*t*-value=2.41, p=.020; $\bar{X}_{CF}$ =3.72, $\bar{X}_{NSC}$ =3.14) dimensions. For both dimensions, career-

fair recruiters who viewed the one-minute video introduction résumé had more favorable perceptions of video résumés.

The remaining three survey items were also tested for statistical significance between the two groups. The career fair sample indicated they would be more likely to open a traditional résumé file if they were impressed with the candidate's video résumé (t-value=2.82, p=.008; $\bar{X}_{CF}$=4.75, $\bar{X}_{NSC}$=4.21). In fact, 89.1 percent of all recruiters agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. Statistical significance was not found for the remaining two items on the survey (i.e., whether video résumés save time in recruiting and whether an impressive video résumé would make a recruiter more likely to contact the candidate); however, both groups of respondents see value in video résumés. Specifically, 89.1 percent of all respondents are more likely to contact a candidate for an interview if impressed by the video résumé. Video résumés were also perceived as a time saver since 63.6 percent of all respondents strongly agree or agree with the statement, "Video résumés save time in recruiting." Overall, the results suggest that those who viewed the one-minute video résumé before completing the questionnaire (i.e., the CF sample) had more favorable beliefs regarding video résumés than those who simply answered the questionnaire based on their knowledge of video résumés (i.e., the NSC sample).

Video Résumés as an Effective Recruiting Tool

In addition to measuring their overall beliefs regarding video résumés, the career fair recruiters who viewed the one-minute video résumés were also asked to identify the degree to which they believed video résumés would be an effective tool in communicating a candidate's energy level, oral communication skills, personality traits, accomplishments, and their potential benefit to the company. The items were measured on a five-point scale ranging from "very ineffective" to "very effective." One-minute video résumés were perceived as most effective in communicating a candidate's oral communication skills ($\bar{X}$ =4.31), energy level ($\bar{X}$ =4.22), and potential benefit to the company ($\bar{X}$ =3.84). Since recruiters view enthusiasm and verbal communication as important qualities in new hires for sales positions, the one-minute video résumé can be a useful tool in conveying such desired qualities.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF THE ONE-MINUTE VIDEO RÉSUMÉ

The sales recruitment and selection process is quite challenging as the resulting hiring decision impacts company revenues and reputation as well as the customer's experience with the company. Any method for saving time and improving the odds of a good hire should be considered. The one-minute video résumé appears to be especially appropriate for sales recruiting as presentation skills, impact, and personality are employed daily in job execution. While it is no substitute for the more traditional paper résumé, reference checks, and formal face-to-face interviews, it is a viable complement to those methods as a screening tool.

Sorting through stacks of résumés can be a tedious, imprecise process while searching for a sales applicant worthy of the time and expense associated with a face-to-face interview. It is difficult, if not impossible, for words in a paper résumé to communicate an individual's personality and ability to have an impactful conversation with a prospective customer. An individual may look great on paper and be invited to interview only to find a prohibitive lack of presentation and social skills required for success in the position. Using one-minute video résumés as an initial screening tool could save time and serve as a cost effective screening method for the recruiter while getting a new hire into the field serving customers sooner.

Recruiters attend career fairs because they like "one-stop shopping" for applicants. In a survey of 401 human resource managers, Stewart and Anderson (1998) concluded that businesses prefer to hire through "on-campus interviewing and career days/fairs." However, the reason for this preference was reported to be the ease of meeting multiple qualified candidates "face to face." Additionally, the ability to prescreen candidates was viewed by respondents as a critical factor in choosing which campuses to visit. The one-minute video résumé may serve as a viable alternative when career fair attendance is not possible. As

used in this study, the one-minute video résumé served as an initial "peek" at an applicant. Employers made notes about certain students they wanted to meet at the career fair; they appreciated the extra screening step and knew something about the applicant prior to the face-to-face introduction at the event.

From the student's perspective, the one-minute video résumé offers differentiation from, and perhaps a competitive advantage over, other applicants. Taking the initiative to produce a video résumé can be impressive to sales recruiters who may look for bold self-starters. Many applicants send their paper résumé attached to an email, but the novelty and tempting nature of the one-minute video's URL may spawn curiosity and result in the recruiter's observation of relevant attributes to the job that may have been unnoticed in a paper résumé, assuming it was reviewed. The professionally-produced video résumé may be a reasonable investment in improving an opportunity to get one's foot in the door.

While there are many advantages associated with video résumés from both the perspective of recruiters and job applicants, there are also potential disadvantages. Many employers may be hesitant to view the video résumé due to legal liability issues. The legal concern most often identified is the fear that having viewed a video résumé in the hiring process, an eliminated candidate might use the viewing as the basis for an employment discrimination claim. At present, however, no such claims are known to have actually been filed.

Federal laws, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, are designed to protect applicants from various forms of employment discrimination. The issue of the legality of video résumés has been addressed by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) in an informal discussion letter written by a staff member in the Office of Legal Counsel for the EEOC (Miaskoff, 2010). According to the letter, "EEO laws do not expressly prohibit the use of specific technologies or methods of selecting employees, and therefore do not prohibit the use of video résumés." Employers can protect themselves by setting and adhering to specific screening criteria such as the following: creating a job description that specifically lists relevant traits; evaluating objective criteria first in the screening process; maintaining consistency in the evaluation process of all candidates; maintaining accurate records of the evaluation process; avoiding a requirement that a video résumé be submitted as part of the application process; and requiring several people to view the videos in accordance with the job requirements.

For some students, videotaping is a challenge due to the widespread fear of any type of public speaking. This fear can have a negative impact on the job applicant and job performance, especially in the area of professional sales. As a result, the recruiter may note some stage fright in the videotaped résumé and deem a candidate as unsuitable. Coaching may help, but ultimately, the student must take it upon him/herself to find ways to overcome the issue.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Due to the exploratory nature of this research, there are inherent limitations and many opportunities for future research. Convenience samples were deemed acceptable for this study in order to gain general insights into how sales recruiters view video résumés; however, the study needs to be conducted with a larger sample. Further research is also warranted for measuring the effectiveness of video résumés as there are likely other dimensions not accounted for in this study.

While the results suggest that the recruiters who viewed the one-minute video résumés had more favorable perceptions and regarded them as useful screening tools to accompany paper résumés, further investigation could explore whether their use actually saves time or is only viewed as an additional step in the recruitment process. It would also be interesting to examine whether recruiters perceive video résumés as an accurate reflection of the candidate's qualities.

Future studies might also consider the potential for various types of bias in the hiring process resulting from viewing the applicant in a video résumé. These biases might include gender bias, bias arising from an applicant's weight, and bias based on the applicant's physical attractiveness. Finally,

research could also be conducted in fields other than sales to determine if recruiters in other industries view video résumés as effective tools in the recruitment process.

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