

Q&A Column
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Email Subject Line: Treat Confidential Information Carefully

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Summary:

Question: I noticed that some people provide statistics on their resume such as annual sales of their division. My company does not publish this information publicly. Should I include on my resume or not?

Savannah G., Napanee, Ontario

Landing Page copy

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Dear Mark,

Question: I noticed that some people provide statistics on their resume such as annual sales of their division. My company does not publish this information publicly. Should I include on my resume or not?

Savannah G., Napanee, Ontario

Dear Savannah,

The mantra of resume coaches everywhere is “focus on your achievements, and quantify your results where possible.” Emphasis on the last two words: *where possible*. Since your company does not publish information relating to your division’s sales, for you to put these statistics on your resume and expose them to other employers would be a breach your duty to your current company to keep their data private.

Not only can this get you in big trouble at your present job if they find out about it, but the employers you’re applying to - while no doubt being pleased to receive this unsolicited business intelligence - are likely to see you as someone they can’t trust. That’s because you’ve already revealed somebody else’s confidential information, and without even being asked to.

The same goes with all that you do in your job search. You’re likely to meet with a number of employers as you go through your paces. Also when you’re networking with a wide variety of contacts in different companies and industries. You should be cautious about sharing the information you are bound to learn of with others. Always ask yourself this simple question: will the person I’m giving these facts or figures to see me as a blabbermouth who’s disloyal, or will they understand that I’m simply passing off readily available info for their benefit?

You can soften the blow by letting the receiver of your tidbits know that the data you’re providing is “in the public realm,” but only do this if it’s true. Otherwise it could come back to haunt you.

In your case, Savannah, you'll still want to give potential employers an idea of the scope of your accomplishments. You can do so by using broad approximations such as "annual sales in the seven figure plus range," or "increased sales by 30% versus year ago." It may somewhat blunt the impact of the bragging you're trying to advertise, however it's better than being branded shifty or sneaky.