

## Eye-Catching Résumés for a Headship Are Accomplishment Driven

By Dr. Deborah Welch

*When crafting a résumé for a headship search, stand out from other candidates by communicating your accomplishments and results.*



More often than not, as a job seeker your résumé precedes you. It is the first impression a potential school has of you – and is usually a quick one.

At [Carney, Sandoe & Associates](#), we see hundreds of résumés for aspiring and current heads of school each year. Some catch our eye and capture our attention immediately and encourage us to get to know and pursue your candidacy. What distinguishes the résumés from others that blend into the proverbial pile? The most compelling ones describe accomplishments and results, rather than contain a listing of the responsibilities for the positions that you have held.

If you're interested in seeking a headship at an international school, your résumé needs to be different from any you have previously written. You must convince a governing body, consisting of prominent people in the school community, that you have the experience to be the right leader to move their school forward.

So, how do you best capture your accomplishments? You undoubtedly have added value to your school and eventually will be leaving it in better shape than when you arrived. The three steps below will provoke reflection to assist you in capturing and communicating your leadership strengths on paper.

### **1. What are the skills and leadership experiences needed for the headship?**

The Academy for International Schools Heads (AISH) has written the definitive [standards for an international headship](#). Compiled from research and the practical experience of hundreds of international heads of school, the standards cover six areas: *Mission for Learning, Governance, Human and Organizational Development, Operations and Resource Management, School-Home-Community Partnerships, and Professional Accountability*. These descriptors are a valuable resource for leadership job seekers because they detail examples of skills and actions that shape an international head of school's approach to the position. Begin by reviewing this open source document as a tool for you to reflect upon effective school leadership.

### **2. How does your experience align with the leadership areas?**

In your current position, what are your responsibilities that align with AISH's standards? Do you recruit, develop, and evaluate teachers? Lead faculty meetings? Manage and monitor budgets? Liaise with the parent/teacher organization? Write newsletters? Serve on a board committee? Serve as an officer with a regional group of schools? Meet with prospective parents?

Detail your primary duties in as many of the six areas as possible. If a search committee reads that you only have experience in the areas of *Mission for Learning* and *Human and Organizational Development*, they will rightfully wonder if you can provide leadership for the "business side of the house." Think about the background that you have with facilities, risk management, fund-raising, host country regulations, data systems, admissions, and strategically aligning resources to fully portray the range of your actions that support the mission and vision of the school.

### **3. Emphasize your achievements in those areas that have made a difference.**

What are your specific accomplishments that are linked to your responsibilities? What challenges have you seized or problems have you solved? What were the results of your efforts and how might they be quantified or verified?

Might you find a quotation from an accreditation report? Use a statistic from a community perception survey? Offer data from a chart indicating an increase in enrollment? Calculate the retention rate of teachers in your division for the last five year?

Your goal is for the search committee to see alignment between you and the desired qualifications and experiences for their head of school. Demonstrate the match by capturing results that you have achieved in the various areas.

To provide examples of how powerful it can be to detail accomplishments rather than listing responsibilities, contrast the difference between the two columns:

Responsibility	Accomplishment
Member of Senior Leadership Team	Regularly facilitated Senior Leadership Team meetings to ensure progression of the strategic action plan and enhance collaborative practices K-12
Created a positive community for all stakeholders	Built connections between home and school through the implementation of parent education events, achieving 90% agreement on survey for leadership responsiveness
Facilitated board discussions related to issues in my division	Provided leadership for board discussions related to emerging trends in teaching and learning
Collaborated on all facility projects	Supervised \$1.75M facility improvements to accommodate growth and change of program and to provide for an optimal learning environment
Observed and evaluated faculty each year	Utilized performance standards for 50 staff with ongoing coaching, mentoring, and feedback to build a school of empowered leaders
Educational leadership of IB and AP program	Benchmarked and monitored performance of diverse academic programs including IB, AP, and Career-related Programmes
Led online learning during COVID-19	Maintained full continuity of classroom operations at the onset of COVID-19 lockdown including communication strategy to inform all staff, parents, and students

A résumé for a headship needs to be more than bullet points that indicate tasks. Think of your résumé as capturing the highlights of your leadership story. It should be a document that encourages the reader to want to know more about your influence on your school community.

You have more control over how you will be judged than you may believe! Quantifying your achievements in ways that show what you have actually accomplished will speak volumes to a thoughtful reader who is trying to understand whether you will be a good match for what a school really needs. Don't distract their attention with logos, arrows, or emojis. You're not boasting to document what you have accomplished; instead you are showing what you have done and what they will get if they choose you. Such a résumé has a far greater likelihood of capturing the eye of the reader and will persuade them to interview you for the headship.

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