

UNIT

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# Employment Communication

## **CHAPTER 13**

The Job Search, Résumés, and Cover Letters

## **CHAPTER 14**

Interviewing and Following Up



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### OBJECTIVES

**After studying this chapter, you should be able to**

- Prepare for a successful job search by identifying your interests, evaluating your assets, recognizing employment trends, and choosing a career path.
- Apply both electronic and traditional job-search techniques.
- Appreciate the need to customize your résumé, and know whether to choose a chronological or a functional résumé format.
- Organize your qualifications and information into effective résumé categories.
- Describe techniques that optimize a résumé for today's technologies, including preparing a scannable résumé and an e-portfolio.
- Write a customized cover letter to accompany your résumé.

## Preparing for a Successful Job Search

Today's graduates face a tough job market and a recessionary economy. Competition for employment is keener than ever in recent history. In addition, the Web has changed the way we look for jobs. Workplace experts point out that the Web has made job searching easier but also more challenging.<sup>1</sup> Because hundreds and perhaps thousands of candidates may be applying for an advertised position, you must work hard to be noticed and to outshine the competition. You must also look beyond the Web.

The better prepared you are, the more confident you will feel during your search. This chapter provides expert current advice in preparing for a job search, scouring the job market, writing a customized résumé, and developing a persuasive cover letter. What you learn here can lead to a successful job search and maybe even your dream job.

You may think that the first step in finding a job is writing a résumé. Wrong! The job-search process actually begins long before you are ready to prepare your résumé. Regardless of the kind of employment you seek, you must invest time and effort getting ready. You can't hope to find the position of your dreams without (a) knowing yourself, (b) knowing the job market, and (c) knowing the employment process.

Finding a satisfying career  
requires learning about  
yourself, the job market, and  
the employment process.

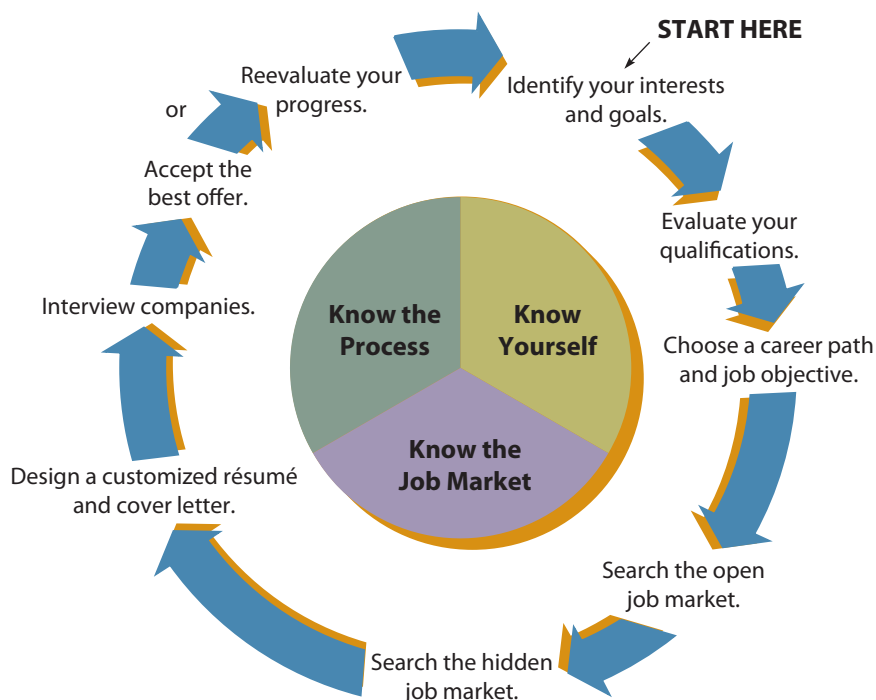


## WORKPLACE IN FOCUS

**G**iven the box-office success of comic book heroes such as Batman and Spider Man, it is not surprising that the hottest career hero of the new generation is also a fictional character—Johnny Bunko. In the Japanese magna book *The Adventures of Johnny Bunko: The Last Career Guide You'll Ever Need*, anime character Johnny Bunko is a disillusioned office worker who longs to escape his dead-end job and find true occupational happiness. Aided by the spellbinding avatar Diana and a pair of magic chopsticks, Bunko embarks on an action-packed career journey that gives readers valuable insights into their own career paths. *Why should job seekers consult career guides when preparing for employment?*

Begin the job-search process by identifying your interests and goals and evaluating your qualifications. This self-evaluation will help you choose a suitable career path and job objective. At the same time, you should be studying the job market and becoming aware of substantial changes in the workplace and hiring techniques. You will want to understand how to use the latest Web tools along with traditional resources in your job search. Both the Web and traditional approaches are necessary to help you effectively search the open and hidden job markets. Once you know what jobs are available in your field, you will need to design a résumé and cover letter that you can customize for small businesses as well as for larger organizations. Following these steps, summarized in Figure 13.1 and described in this chapter, gives you a master plan for securing a job you really want.

**FIGURE 13.1** The Employment Search



Analyzing your likes and dislikes helps you make wise employment decisions.

Answering specific questions can help you choose a career.

Decide what qualifications you possess and how you can prove them.

People feel less job security after downsizing, outsourcing, and offshoring of jobs.

## Identifying Your Interests and Goals

Buddha is believed to have said, “Your work is to discover your work and then with all your heart to give yourself to it.” Following this ancient wisdom, you should begin the employment process with introspection. This means looking inside yourself to analyze what you like and dislike so that you can make good employment choices. Career counselors charge large sums for helping individuals learn about themselves. You can do the same kind of self-examination—without spending a dime. For guidance in choosing a career that eventually proves to be satisfying, answer the following questions. If you have already chosen a career path, think carefully about how your answers relate to that choice.

- What are you passionate about? Can you turn this passion into a career?
- Do you enjoy working with people, data, or things?
- Would you like to work for someone else or be your own boss?
- How important are salary, benefits, technology support, and job stability?
- How important are working environment, colleagues, and job stimulation?
- Would you rather work for a large or small company?
- Must you work in a specific city, geographical area, or climate?
- Are you looking for security, travel opportunities, money, power, or prestige?
- How would you describe the perfect job, boss, and coworkers?

To aid you with appraising your abilities, many college career centers offer skills assessment and personality type testing. Be sure to explore resources available on campus, including one-on-one sessions with career counselors, job-search and etiquette workshops, local employer job postings, internships, and more.

## Evaluating Your Qualifications

In addition to your interests, assess your qualifications. Employers today want to know what assets you have to offer them. Your responses to the following questions will target your thinking as well as prepare a foundation for your résumé. Remember, though, that employers seek more than empty assurances; they will want proof of your qualifications.

- *What technology skills can you offer?* Employers are often interested in specific computer software programs, Web experience, and social media skills.
- *What other skills have you acquired in school, on the job, or through activities?* How can you demonstrate these skills?
- *Do you work well with people? Do you enjoy teamwork?* What proof can you offer? Consider extracurricular activities, clubs, class projects, and jobs.
- *Are you a leader, self-starter, or manager?* What evidence can you offer? What leadership roles have you held?
- *Do you speak, write, or understand another language?* In today’s global economy, being able to communicate in more than one language is an asset.
- *Do you learn quickly? Are you creative?* How can you demonstrate these characteristics?
- *Do you communicate well in speech and in writing?* How can you verify these talents?
- *What are the unique qualifications you can offer that will make you stand out among other candidates?* Think about what you offer that will make you memorable during your job search.

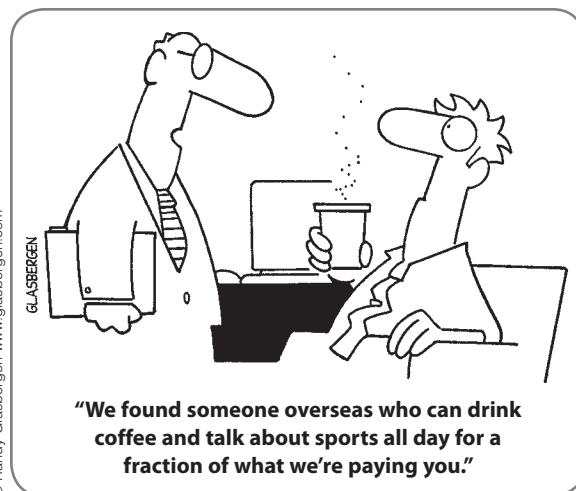
## Recognizing Employment Trends in Today’s Workplace

As you learned in Chapter 1, the workplace is changing. One of the most significant changes involves the concept of the job. Following the downsizing of corporations and the outsourcing and offshoring of jobs in recent years, companies are employing fewer people in permanent positions.



Other forms of employment are replacing traditional jobs. In many companies teams complete special projects and then disband. Work may also be outsourced to a group that is not even part of the organization. Because new technologies can spring up overnight making today's skills obsolete, employers are less willing to hire people into jobs with narrow descriptions. Instead, they are hiring contingency employees who work temporarily and then leave. What's more, big companies are no longer the main employers. People work for smaller companies, or they are starting their own businesses. According to the Small Business Administration, small companies employ over half of all private sector employees, and that number is expected to grow over the next decade.<sup>2</sup>

What do these changes mean for you? For one thing, you should probably forget about a lifelong career with a single company. Don't count on regular pay raises, promotions, and a comfortable retirement income. You should also become keenly aware that a career that relies on yesterday's skills is headed for trouble. You are going to need updated, marketable skills that serve you well as you move from job to job. Technology skills will become increasingly important over the next decade as more than 2 million jobs are expected to be created by 2018, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.<sup>3</sup> This means that upgrading your skills and retraining yourself constantly are the best career strategies for the twenty-first century. People who learn quickly and adapt to change will always be in demand even in a climate of surging change.



Jobs are becoming more flexible and less permanent.

## Choosing a Career Path

The job picture in the United States is extraordinarily dynamic and flexible. On average, workers between ages eighteen and thirty-eight in the United States will have ten different employers; the median job tenure of wage earners and salaried workers with the current employer is 4.4 years.<sup>4</sup> Although you may be frequently changing jobs in the future (especially before you reach forty), you still need to train for a specific career now. In choosing an area, you will make the best decisions when you can match your interests and qualifications with the requirements and rewards in specific careers. Where can you find the best career data? Here are some suggestions:

- **Visit your campus career center.** Most campus career centers have literature, inventories, career-related software programs, and employment or internship databases that allow you to explore such fields as accounting, finance, office technology, information systems, hotel management, and so forth. Some have well-trained job counselors who can tailor their resources to your needs. They may also offer career exploration workshops, job skills seminars, career days with visiting companies, assistance with résumé preparation, and mock interviews.
- **Search the Web.** Many job-search sites on the Web offer career-planning information and resources. You will learn about some of the best career sites in the next section.
- **Use your library.** Print and online resources in your library are especially helpful. Consult *O\*NET Occupational Information Network*, *Dictionary of Occupational Titles*, *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, and *Jobs Rated Almanac* for information about job requirements, qualifications, salaries, and employment trends.
- **Take a summer job, internship, or part-time position in your field.** Nothing is better than trying out a career by actually working in it or in a related area. Many companies offer internships and temporary or part-time jobs to begin

Career information can be obtained at campus career centers and libraries, from the Web, in classified ads, and from professional organizations.

Summer jobs, part-time employment, and internships are good opportunities to learn about various careers and to establish a professional network.

training college students and to develop relationships with them. Experts commonly believe that at least 60 percent of these relationships blossom into permanent positions. Recent polls suggest that as many as 90 percent of employers offer full-time job positions to their interns.<sup>5</sup>

- **Interview someone in your chosen field.** People are usually flattered when asked to describe their careers. Inquire about needed skills, required courses, financial and other rewards, benefits, working conditions, future trends, and entry requirements.
- **Volunteer with a nonprofit organization.** Many colleges and universities encourage service learning. In volunteering their services, students gain valuable experience, and nonprofits appreciate the expertise and fresh ideas that students bring.
- **Monitor the classified ads.** Early in your college career, begin monitoring want ads and Web sites of companies in your career area. Check job availability, qualifications sought, duties, and salary range. Don't wait until you are about to graduate to see how the job market looks.
- **Join professional organizations in your field.** Frequently, professional organizations offer student membership status and reduced rates. You will receive inside information on issues, career news, and possibly jobs. Student business clubs and organization such as Phi Beta Lambda can also provide leadership development trainings, career tips, and networking opportunities.

## Conducting a Successful Job Search

Employment Web sites list many jobs, but finding a job electronically requires more work than simply clicking a mouse.

Searching for a job today is vastly different than it used to be as a result of the Web. Until fairly recently a job seeker browsed the local classified ads, found a likely-sounding job listing, prepared an elegant résumé on bond paper, and sent it out by U.S. mail. All that has changed because of the Web. The challenge today is knowing how to use the Web to your advantage, while realizing that traditional job-search techniques can still be effective. Like other smart job seekers, you can combine both online and traditional job-search tactics to land the job of your dreams.

### Searching for a Job Online

Searching for a job electronically has become a common, but not always fruitful, approach. With all the publicity given to Web-based job boards and career sites, you might think that online job searching has totally replaced traditional methods. Not so! Although Web sites such as CareerBuilder.com and Monster.com list millions of jobs, actually landing a job is much harder than just clicking a mouse. In addition, these job boards now face competition from social networking sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter.<sup>6</sup>

Both recruiters and job seekers complain about online job boards. Corporate recruiters say that the big job boards bring a flood of candidates, many of whom are not suited for the listed jobs. Workplace experts estimate that the average Fortune 500 company is inundated with 2,000 résumés a day.<sup>7</sup> Job candidates grumble that listings are frequently outdated and fail to produce leads. Some career advisors call these sites black holes,<sup>8</sup> into which résumés vanish without a trace. Applicants worry about the privacy of information posted at big boards. Most important, a recent study has shown that the percentage of external hires resulting from job boards is astonishingly low—3.14 percent at Monster.com, 3.95 percent at CareerBuilder.com, and 1.35 percent at HotJobs.com, before Yahoo sold HotJobs to Monster.<sup>9</sup> Workplace expert Liz Ryan advises job seekers not to count on finding a job by devoting all their energy to searching online job boards.<sup>10</sup>

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*"The recruiting game has become an arms race of sorts. Recruiters, job boards, and Web sites like ResumeBomber.com have built technological systems to store and ship unprecedented numbers of [résumés]. . . . Companies have developed equally sophisticated programs to sort, select, and scrap all of those resumes."*

—Kyle Stock,  
business journalist,  
*The Wall Street Journal*

**FIGURE 13.2** Searching the Big Boards



Monster.com is one of several popular Web sites that allow you to search for jobs but also provides excellent tips for conducting job searches, writing résumés, organizing cover letters, preparing for job interviews, and planning careers.

**Using the Big Job Boards.** Despite these gloomy prospects, many job seekers use job boards to gather job-search information, such as résumé, interviewing, and salary tips. Job boards also serve as a jumping-off point in most searches. They can inform you about the kinds of jobs that are available and the skill sets required. With tens of thousands of job boards and employment Web sites deluging the Internet, it is hard to know where to start. We have listed a few of the best-known online job sites here:

- **CareerBuilder** claims to be the nation's largest employment network. Users can search for millions of jobs by job category, keywords, geographic location, industry, or type of job (full-time, part-time, internship, and so on).
- **Monster**, shown in Figure 12.3, offers access to information on millions of jobs worldwide. With the acquisition of Yahoo HotJobs, this volume will grow even larger. Monster.com uses a search technology called 6Sense to match applicants with the best job opportunities. Because of this cutting-edge search system, many consider Monster.com to be the Web's premier job site.
- **CollegeGrad** describes itself as the "number one entry-level job site" for students and graduates. In addition to searching for entry-level jobs, users can also search for undergraduate and graduate degree programs to help them become more marketable.
- **CareerJournal**, which is part of *The Wall Street Journal*, focuses on listing high-level executive and finance positions.

Forbes media reporter Elaine Wong sums up the relative strengths of LinkedIn and job boards as follows: "LinkedIn offers a targeted, easy to home in approach, but Monster and CareerBuilder still offer scale and reach."<sup>11</sup>

**Beyond the Big Online Job Boards.** Disillusioned job seekers may turn their backs on job boards but not on online job-searching tactics. Savvy candidates

Many job seekers start searching by visiting the big online job boards.

know how to use their computers to search for jobs at Web sites such as the following:

Job prospects may be more promising at the Web sites of corporations, professional organizations, employers' organizations, niche fields, and, most recently, professional networking sites.

- **Company Web sites.** Probably the best way to find a job online is at a company's own Web site. Many companies now post job openings only on their own Web sites to avoid being inundated by the volume of applicants that respond to postings on online job boards. Job seekers also find that they are more likely to obtain an interview if they post their résumés on company sites. In addition to finding a more direct route to decision makers, job hunters find that they can keep their job searches more private than at big board sites.
- **Professional organization Web sites.** Online job listings have proved to be the single-most popular feature of many professional organizations such as the International Association of Administrative Professionals, the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, the National Association of Sales Professionals, the National Association of Legal Assistants, and the Association of Information Technology Professionals. Although you pay a fee, the benefits of joining a professional association in your career field are enormous. Remember that it is never too early to start networking. If you join a professional organization while you are still in college, you will jump-start your professional connections.
- **JobCentral National Labor Exchange.** JobCentral is a public service Web site provided by the DirectEmployers Association, a nonprofit consortium of Fortune 500 and other leading U.S. corporations. Many companies now use JobCentral as a gateway to job listing at their own Web sites, advertising millions of jobs. Best of all, this service is free, bypassing the big commercial job boards. You can enter a job description or job title, and a list of openings pops up. When you click one, you are taken straight to the company's Web site, where you can apply.
- **Local employment Web sites.** Although many of the big job boards allow you to search for jobs geographically, frequently job seekers have more luck using local employment Web sites such as Craigslist, Cumulus Jobs, and JobStar.
- **Niche Web sites.** If you want a job in a specialized field, look for a niche Web site, such as Dice for technology jobs, Advance for Health Care Careers for medical occupations, and Accountemps for accounting positions. Niche Web sites also exist for job seekers with special backgrounds or needs, such as the disabled (GettingHired), and older workers (Workforce50). New Grad Life, an aggregate job-search site, offers free resources for recent college gradu-

ates such as a list of 100 top niche job sites. However, don't rely on any single search strategy. A recent poll suggests that less than 20 percent of job seekers find a position with the help of such specialized job market sites.<sup>12</sup> Your prospects are brighter with social media such as LinkedIn and Twitter.

- **Social media sites.** Perhaps you use Facebook or Google+ to communicate with friends and family. However, users are increasingly tapping into social media sites to prospect for jobs; and recruiters also use these sites to find potential employees. LinkedIn is currently the top site for job seekers, with over 42 million users, both job seekers and recruiters. Other popular sites include Facebook, Plaxo, TheLadders, BlueSteps, and Jobster.<sup>13</sup> Twitter has created a job-search engine called TwitJobSearch, and many companies now post recruitment videos on YouTube. Smart job seekers use these tools to network and to search for available positions. Of course, the most successful job seekers understand that they must maintain a professional online appearance at all times.





**Safe Online Job Hunting.** You need to be aware of the dangers associated with using online job boards and other employment sites. Your current boss might see your résumé posted online, or a fraudster could use the information in your résumé to steal your identity. The following tips can help you conduct a safe, effective Web job search:

- **Use reputable sites.** Stick to the well-known, reputable job boards. Never use a site that makes you pay to post your résumé.
- **Be selective.** Limit the number of sites on which you post your résumé. Employers dislike “résumé spammers.”
- **Use a dedicated e-mail address.** Set up a separate e-mail account with a professional-sounding e-mail address for your job search.
- **Limit personal information.** Never include your social security or other identification numbers on your résumé. Consider omitting your home address and home phone number to protect your privacy.
- **Post privately.** If given an option, choose to post your résumé privately. Doing so means that you can control who has access to your e-mail address and other contact information.
- **Count the days.** Renew your résumé posting every 14 days. If you keep it up longer, it will look as if employers have no interest in you. If you haven’t received a response in 45 days, pull your résumé from the site and post it somewhere else.
- **Keep careful records.** Keep a record of every site on which you post your résumé. At the end of your job search, remove all posted résumés.
- **Protect your references.** If you post your résumé online, don’t include your references. It is unethical for job seekers to post their references’ personal contact information online without their knowledge.
- **Don’t respond to a “blind” job posting.** Respond only to job postings that include a company name and contact information. It is unfortunate that many scammers use online job boards to post fake job ads as a way to gather your personal information.

Despite these dangers, job seekers use online sites to search millions of openings. The harsh reality, however, is that landing a job still depends largely on personal contacts. One employment expert believes that overreliance on technology may have made job seekers lazy: “At the end of the day, the job hunt is largely about people and it is about networking—looking at who you know and where they work.”<sup>14</sup> Job-search consultant Debra Feldman concurs: “More important than what you know is who knows what you know. Make sure you are on the radar of people who have access to the kind of job leads you want.”<sup>15</sup>

## Searching for a Job Using Traditional Techniques

Finding the perfect job requires an early start and a determined effort. A research study of college graduates revealed that those with proactive personalities were the most successful in securing interviews and jobs. Katharine Brooks, career services director in Austin, Texas, recommends: “Look for opportunities to learn, take a risk, try things out, see what you like, and always be open to the next opportunity.”<sup>16</sup>

Whether you use traditional or online job-search techniques, you should be prepared to launch an aggressive campaign—and you can’t start too early. Some universities now require first- and second-year students to take an employment seminar called Reality 101. Students learn early on that a college degree alone does not guarantee a job. They are cautioned that grade point averages make a difference to employers.<sup>17</sup> They are also advised of the importance of experience, such as internships. Traditional job-search techniques, such as those described here, continue to be critical in landing jobs.

You can ensure a safe online search by choosing reputable sites, protecting your personal information and that of your references, keeping careful records, and renewing your posts regularly.

Many jobs are listed on the Web, but most hiring is still done through personal contact.

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*“You can’t hide in your room and wait to be discovered. Your brilliance will mean little if no one outside your immediate circle knows about it. You have to make yourself discoverable.”*

—Michael Wade,  
management  
consultant  
and blogger at  
Execupundit.com

The most successful job seekers are those who launch aggressive campaigns employing a wide array of techniques such as these.

- **Check classified ads in local and national newspapers.** You can find classified job ads in print or online versions of newspapers. Be aware, though, that classified ads are only one small source of jobs.
- **Check announcements in publications of professional organizations.** If you don't have a student membership, ask your instructors to share current copies of professional journals, newsletters, and so on. Your college library is another good source.
- **Contact companies in which you are interested, even if you know of no current opening.** Write an unsolicited letter and include your résumé. Follow up with a telephone call. Check the company's Web site for employment opportunities and procedures. To learn immediately of job openings, use Twitter to follow companies where you would like to work.
- **Sign up for campus interviews with visiting company representatives.** Campus recruiters may open your eyes to exciting jobs and locations. They may also help you prepare by offering mock interviews.
- **Attend career fairs.** Job fairs are invaluable in your quest to learn about specific companies and your future career options. Recruiters say that the more you know about the company and its representatives, the more comfortable you will be in an interview.<sup>18</sup>
- **Ask for advice from your instructors.** Your teachers often have contacts and ideas for conducting and expanding your job search.
- **Develop your own network of contacts.** Networking still accounts for most of the jobs found by candidates. Therefore, plan to spend a considerable portion of your job-search time developing a personal network. The Communication Workshop at the end of this chapter gives you step-by-step instructions for traditional networking as well as some ideas for online networking.

## Creating a Customized Résumé

A customized résumé means that you will prepare a special résumé for each position you want.

After using both traditional and online resources to learn about the employment market and to develop job leads, you will focus on writing a customized résumé. This means you will prepare a special résumé for every position you want. The competition is so stiff today that you cannot get by with a generic, all-purpose résumé. Although you can start with a basic résumé, you should customize it to fit each company and position if you want your résumé to stand out from the crowd. Include many keywords that describe the skills, traits, tasks, and job titles associated with your targeted job. You will learn more about keywords shortly.

The Internet has made it so easy to apply that recruiters are swamped with applications. As a job seeker, you have about five seconds to catch the recruiter's eye—if your résumé is even read by a person. Many companies use computer scanning technologies to weed out unqualified candidates. Your goal is to make your résumé fit the targeted position and be noticed. Such a résumé does more than merely list your qualifications. It packages your assets into a convincing advertisement that sells you for a specific job.

In the scramble to get noticed, some job seekers—particularly in creative professions—occasionally resort to unusual job-hunting tactics, for example, sending a recruiter a shoe “to get a foot in the door” or a bowling pin to suggest “I’ll bowl you over.”<sup>19</sup> The survey of hiring managers revealed that more than half of marketing and a quarter of advertising executives view such unconventional approaches as unprofessional. Whereas in advertising gimmicky applications may be acceptable to almost half of the executives polled, in most business disciplines they would be a huge gamble. Perhaps you should think twice before drawing attention to yourself the way one applicant did by putting up posters of himself in the garage where the executives parked.

The goal of a résumé is winning an interview. Even if you are not in the job market at this moment, preparing a résumé now has advantages. Having a current résumé makes you look well organized and professional should an unexpected employment opportunity arise. Moreover, preparing a résumé early can help you recognize weak areas and give you time to bolster them. Even after you have accepted a position, it is a good idea to keep your résumé up-to-date. You never know when an opportunity might come along!

Winning an interview is the goal of a customized résumé.

## Choosing a Résumé Style

Résumés usually fall into two categories: chronological and functional. In this section we present basic information as well as insider tips on how to choose an appropriate résumé style, how to determine its length, and how to arrange its parts. You will also learn about adding a summary of qualifications, which busy recruiters increasingly want to see. Models of the résumés in the following discussion are shown in our comprehensive Résumé Gallery beginning on page 421.

See our comprehensive Résumé Gallery beginning on page 421.

**Chronological.** The most popular résumé format is the chronological résumé, shown in Figures 13.6 through 13.9 in our Résumé Gallery. It lists work history job by job, starting with the most recent position. Recruiters favor the chronological format because it quickly reveals a candidate's education and experience. Recruiters are familiar with the chronological résumé, and one research study showed that 75 percent of employers prefer to see a candidate's résumé in this format.<sup>20</sup> The chronological style works well for candidates who have experience in their field of employment and for those who show steady career growth, but it is less appropriate for people who have changed jobs frequently or who have gaps in their employment records. For college students and others who lack extensive experience, the functional résumé format may be preferable.

Chronological résumés focus on job history with the most recent positions listed first.

**Functional.** The functional résumé, shown in Figure 13.10 on page 425, focuses on a candidate's skills rather than on past employment. Like a chronological résumé, the functional résumé begins with the candidate's name, contact information, job objective, and education. Instead of listing jobs, though, the functional résumé groups skills and accomplishments in special categories, such as *Supervisory and Management Skills* or *Retailing and Marketing Experience*. This résumé style highlights accomplishments and can de-emphasize a negative employment history. People who have changed jobs frequently, who have gaps in their employment records, or who are entering an entirely different field may prefer the functional résumé. Recent graduates with little or no related employment experience often find the functional résumé useful. Older job seekers who want to downplay a long job history and job hunters who are afraid of appearing overqualified may also prefer the functional format. Be aware, though, that online job boards may insist on chronological format. In addition, some recruiters are suspicious of functional résumés, thinking the candidate is hiding something.

Because functional résumés focus on skills, they may be more advisable for graduates with little experience.

## Deciding on Length

Experts simply do not agree on how long a résumé should be. Conventional wisdom has always held that recruiters prefer one-page résumés. A survey of 150 senior executives, however, revealed that 52 percent of executives polled believe a single page is the ideal length for a staff-level résumé, but 44 percent said they prefer two pages. Nearly one third of those surveyed (31 percent) also said that three pages is ideal for executive positions.<sup>21</sup> Recruiters who are serious about candidates often prefer the kind of details that a two-page résumé can provide. On the other hand, many recruiters are said to be extremely busy and prefer concise résumés.

Recruiters may say they prefer one-page résumés, but many choose to interview those with longer résumés.

Perhaps the best advice is to make your résumé as long as needed to sell your skills to recruiters and hiring managers. Individuals with more experience will

naturally have longer résumés. Those with fewer than ten years of experience, those making a major career change, and those who have had only one or two employers will likely have one-page résumés. Those with ten years or more of related experience may have two-page résumés. Finally, some senior-level managers and executives with lengthy histories of major accomplishments might have résumés that are three pages or longer.<sup>22</sup>

## Organizing Your Information Into Effective Résumé Categories

The parts of résumés should be arranged with the most important qualifications first.

Although résumés have standard parts, their arrangement and content should be strategically planned. A customized résumé emphasizes skills and achievements aimed at a particular job or company. It shows a candidate's most important qualifications first, and it de-emphasizes any weaknesses. In arranging your information and qualifications, try to create as few headings as possible; more than six generally makes the résumé look cluttered. No two résumés are ever exactly alike, but most writers consider including all or some of these categories: main heading, career objective, summary of qualifications, education, experience, capabilities and skills, awards and activities, personal information, and references.

### Main Heading

Your résumé, whether it is chronological or functional, should start with a main heading that is as uncluttered and simple as possible. The first line of the main heading should always be your name; add your middle initial for an even more professional look. Format your name so that it stands out on the page. Below your name, list your contact information, including your complete address, area code and phone number, and e-mail address. Be sure to include a telephone num-

ber where you can receive messages. The outgoing message at this number should be in your voice, it should mention your full name, and it should be concise and professional. If you include your cell phone number and are expecting an important call from a recruiter, pick up only when you are in a quiet environment and can concentrate.

For your e-mail address, be sure it sounds professional instead of something like *toosexy4you@hotmail.com* or *six-packguy@yahoo.com*. Also be sure that you are using a personal e-mail address. Putting your work e-mail address on your résumé announces to prospective employers that you are using your current employer's resources to look for another job. If you have a Web site where an e-portfolio or samples of your work can be viewed, include the address in the main heading.



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### Career Objective

Career objectives are most appropriate for specific, targeted positions, but they may limit a broader job search.

Opinion is divided about the effect of including a career objective on a résumé. Recruiters think such statements indicate that a candidate has made a commitment to a career and is sure about what he or she wants to do. Career objectives, of course, make the recruiter's life easier by quickly classifying the résumé. Such declarations, however, can also disqualify a candidate if the stated objective does not match a company's job description.<sup>23</sup> A well-written objective—customized for the job opening—can add value to either a chronological or a functional résumé.

A person applying for an auditor position might include the following objective: *Seeking an auditor position in an internal corporate accounting department where my accounting skills, computer experience, knowledge of GAAP, and attention*



to detail will help the company run efficiently and ensure that its records are kept accurately.

Your objective should also focus on the employer's needs. Therefore, it should be written from the employer's perspective, not your own. Focus on how you can contribute to the organization, not on what the organization can do for you. A typical self-serving objective is *To obtain a meaningful and rewarding position that enables me to learn more about the graphic design field and allows for advancement.* Instead, show how you will add value to the organization with an objective such as *Position with advertising firm designing Web sites, publications, logos, and promotional displays for clients, where creativity, software knowledge, and proven communication skills can be used to build client base and expand operations.* As Rick Saia, a certified professional résumé writer, advises, these days, “the company is really not as interested in what they can do for you as in what you can do for them.”<sup>24</sup>

Also be careful that your career objective does not downplay your talents. For example, some consultants warn against using the words *entry-level* in your objective, as these words emphasize lack of experience or show poor self-confidence. Finally, your objective should be concise. Try to limit your objective to no more than three lines. Avoid using complete sentences and the pronoun *I*.

If you choose to omit the career objective, be sure to discuss your objectives and goals in your cover letter. Savvy job seekers are also incorporating their objectives into a summary of qualifications, which is discussed next.

## Summary of Qualifications

“The biggest change in résumés over the last decade has been a switch from an objective to a summary at the top,” says career expert Wendy Enelow.<sup>25</sup> Recruiters are busy, and smart job seekers add a summary of qualifications to their résumés to save the time of recruiters and hiring managers. Once a job is advertised, a hiring manager may get hundreds or even thousands of résumés in response. A summary at the top of your résumé makes it easier to read and ensures that your most impressive qualifications are not overlooked by a recruiter, who skims résumés quickly. Job applicants must often capture a recruiter's attention in less than ten seconds.<sup>26</sup> A well-written summary, therefore, motivates the recruiter to read further.

A summary of qualifications (also called *career profile*, *job summary*, or *professional highlights*) should include three to eight bulleted statements that prove you are the ideal candidate for the position. When formulating these statements, consider your experience in the field, your education, your unique skills, awards you have won, certifications, and any other accomplishments that you want to highlight. Include numbers wherever possible. Target the most important qualifications an employer will be looking for in the person hired for this position. Examples of summaries of qualifications appear in Figures 13.6, 13.7, 13.9, and 13.11 in the résumé models found in our Résumé Gallery.

## Education

The next component in a chronological résumé is your education—if it is more noteworthy than your work experience. In this section you should include the name and location of schools, dates of attendance, major fields of study, and degrees received. By the way, once you have attended college, you should not list high school information on your résumé.

Your grade point average and/or class ranking may be important to prospective employers. The National Association of Colleges and Employers found that 66 percent of employers screen candidates by GPA, and 58 percent of those surveyed said they would be much less likely to hire applicants with college GPAs of less than 3.0.<sup>27</sup> One way to enhance your GPA is to calculate it in your major courses only (for example, *3.6/4.0 in major*). It is not unethical to showcase your GPA in your major—as long as you clearly indicate what you are doing. Although

A summary of qualifications section lists your most impressive accomplishments and qualifications in one concise bulleted list.

### OFFICE INSIDER

“I know many days I have reviewed hundreds of resumes and most in less than 20 seconds. . . . [T]he average is probably around 5 to 7 seconds. So for the record when you hear or read about, ‘reading a resume in 20 seconds,’ that isn’t completely true. It is more than likely, ‘reviewed the resume in 20 seconds.’”

—Brad Remillard,  
executive recruiter  
and hiring expert

The education section shows degrees and GPA but does not list all courses a job applicant has taken.

some hiring managers may think that applicants are hiding something if they omit a poor record of grades, consultant Terese Corey Blanck suggests leaving out a poor GPA. Instead, she advises that students try to excel in internships, show extracurricular leadership, and target smaller, lesser-known companies to offset low grades.<sup>28</sup> Remember, however, that many employers will assume your GPA is lower than 3.0 if you omit it.<sup>29</sup>

Under *Education* you might be tempted to list all the courses you took, but such a list makes for very dull reading and uses valuable space. Refer to courses only if you can relate them to the position sought. When relevant, include certificates earned, seminars attended, workshops completed, scholarships awarded, and honors earned. If your education is incomplete, include such statements as *BS degree expected 6/14* or *80 units completed in 120-unit program*. Title this section *Education*, *Academic Preparation*, or *Professional Training*. If you are preparing a functional résumé, you will probably put the education section below your skills summaries, as Kevin Touhy has done in Figure 13.10.

## Work Experience or Employment History

If your work experience is significant and relevant to the position sought, this information should appear before your education section. List your most recent employment first and work backward, including only those jobs that you think will help you win the targeted position. A job application form may demand a full employment history, but your résumé may be selective. Be aware, though, that time gaps in your employment history will probably be questioned in the interview. For each position show the following:

- Employer's name, city, and state
- Dates of employment (month and year)
- Most important job title
- Significant duties, activities, accomplishments, and promotions

Describe your employment achievements concisely but concretely to make what résumé consultants call “a strong value proposition.”<sup>30</sup> Avoid generalities such as *Worked with customers*. Be more specific, with statements such as *Served 40 or more retail customers a day*; *Successfully resolved problems about custom stationery orders*; or *Acted as intermediary among customers, printers, and suppliers*. If possible, quantify your accomplishments, such as *Conducted study of equipment needs of 100 small businesses in Houston*; *Personally generated orders for sales of \$90,000 annually*; or *Keyed all the production models for a 250-page employee procedures manual*. One professional recruiter said, “I spend a half hour every day screening 50 résumés or more, and if I don’t spot some [quantifiable] results in the first 10 seconds, the résumé is history.”<sup>31</sup>

Your employment achievements and job duties will be easier to read if you place them in a bulleted list. When writing these bullet points, don’t try to list every single thing you have done on the job; instead, customize your information so that it relates to the target job. Make sure your list of job duties shows what you have to contribute and how you are qualified for the position you are applying for. Do not make your bullet points complete sentences, and avoid using personal pronouns (*I, me, my*). If you have performed a lot of the same duties for multiple employers, you don’t have to repeat them.

In addition to technical skills, employers seek individuals with communication, management, and interpersonal capabilities. This means you will want to select work experiences and achievements that illustrate your initiative, dependability, responsibility, resourcefulness, flexibility, and leadership. Employers also want people who can work together in teams. Therefore, include statements such as *Collaborated with interdepartmental task force in developing ten-page handbook for temporary workers* and *Headed student government team that conducted most successful voter registration in campus history*.

The work experience section of a résumé should list specifics and quantify achievements.

Statements describing your work experience can be made forceful and persuasive if you use action verbs, such as those listed in Figure 13.3 and illustrated in Figure 13.4. Starting each of your bullet points with an action verb will help ensure that your bulleted lists are parallel.

**FIGURE 13.3** Action Verbs for Powerful Résumés

The underlined words are especially good for pointing out accomplishments.

Communication Skills	assessed	evaluated	investigated	streamlined	operated
	assisted	executed	located	systematized	<u>overhauled</u>
	arbitrated	handled	measured	tabulated	performed
	arranged	headed	observed	updated	troubleshooting
	authored	<u>collaborated</u> (with)	implemented	validated	programmed
	<u>clarified</u>	communicated	<u>improved</u>	Creative Skills	remodeled
	collaborated	coordinated	<u>increased</u>		repaired
	<u>convinced</u>	counseled	led		retrieved
	corresponded	demonstrated	modeled		solved
	defined	demystified	<u>organized</u>		<u>upgraded</u>
	developed	developed	oversaw		
	directed	enabled	planned		
	drafted	encouraged	prioritized		
	edited	evaluated	produced		
	enlisted	<u>expedited</u>	recommended		
	explained	explained	<u>reorganized</u>		
	formulated	facilitated	reviewed		
	influenced	guided	scheduled		
	integrated	informed	<u>strengthened</u>		
	interpreted	instructed	supervised		
	mediated	motivated	<u>trained</u>		
	moderated	persuaded			
	negotiated	set goals	Research Skills		
	participated	stimulated			
	persuaded	<u>teamed</u> (with)			
	promoted	trained			
	publicized	Management, Leadership Skills	collected		
	reconciled		critiqued		
	recruited		diagnosed		
	resolved		evaluated		
	spoke		examined		
	specified		experimented		
	suggested		<u>attained</u>		
	summarized		authorized		
	translated		chaired		
	wrote		consolidated		
Teamwork, Supervision Skills	contracted	informed			
	coordinated	inspected			
	delegated	interpreted			
	developed	interviewed			
	directed	invented			

**FIGURE 13.4 Use Action Verbs in Statements That Quantify Achievements**

<b>Identified</b> weaknesses in internships and <b>researched</b> five alternate programs
<b>Reduced</b> delivery delays by an average of three days per order
<b>Streamlined</b> filing system, thus reducing 400-item backlog to zero
<b>Organized</b> holiday awards program for 1,200 attendees and 140 workers
<b>Designed</b> three pages in HTML for company Web site
<b>Represented</b> 2,500 students on committee involving university policies and procedures
<b>Calculated</b> shipping charges for overseas deliveries and <b>recommended</b> most economical rates
<b>Managed</b> 24-station computer network linking data in three departments
<b>Distributed</b> and <b>explained</b> voter registration forms to over 500 prospective voters
<b>Praised</b> by top management for enthusiastic teamwork and achievement
<b>Secured</b> national recognition from National Arbor Foundation for tree project

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Emphasize the skills and aptitudes that prove you are qualified for a specific position.

## Capabilities and Skills

Recruiters want to know specifically what you can do for their companies. Therefore, list your special skills, such as *Proficient in preparing federal, state, and local payroll tax returns as well as franchise and personal property tax returns*. Include your ability to use the Internet, social media, software programs, office equipment, and communication technology tools. If you speak a foreign language or use sign language, include it on your résumé. Describe proficiencies you have acquired through training and experience, such as *Certified in computer graphics and Web design through an intensive 350-hour classroom program*. Use expressions such as *competent in*, *skilled in*, *proficient with*, *experienced in*, and *ability to*; for example, *Competent in writing, editing, and proofreading reports, tables, letters, memos, manuscripts, and business forms*.

You will also want to highlight exceptional aptitudes, such as working well under stress, learning computer programs quickly, and interacting with customers. If possible, provide details and evidence that back up your assertions; for example, *Mastered PhotoShop in 25 hours with little instruction*. Include examples of your writing, speaking, management, organizational, and interpersonal skills—particularly those talents that are relevant to your targeted job. For recent graduates, this section can be used to give recruiters evidence of your potential. Instead of *Capabilities*, the section might be called *Skills and Abilities*.

Those job hunters preparing a functional résumé will place more focus on skills than on any other section. A well-written functional résumé groups skills into categories such as *Accounting/Finance Skills*, *Management/Leadership Skills*, *Communication/Teamwork Skills*, and *Computer/Technology Skills*. Each skills category includes a bulleted list of achievements and experience that demonstrate the skill, including specific numbers whenever possible. These skills categories should be placed in the beginning of the résumé, where they will be highlighted, followed by education and work experience. The action verbs shown in Figures 13.3 and 13.4 can also be used when constructing a functional résumé.

## Awards, Honors, and Activities

If you have three or more awards or honors, highlight them by listing them under a separate heading. If not, put them in the education or work experience section, whichever is appropriate. Include awards, scholarships (financial and other), fellowships, dean's list, honors, recognitions, commendations, and certificates. Be sure to identify items clearly. Your reader may be unfamiliar, for example, with

Awards, honors, and activities are appropriate for the résumé.



Greek organizations, honors, and awards; tell what they mean. Instead of saying *Recipient of Star Award*, give more details: *Recipient of Star Award given by Pepperdine University to outstanding graduates who combine academic excellence and extracurricular activities*.

It is also appropriate to include school, community, volunteer, and professional activities. Employers are interested in evidence that you are a well-rounded person. This section provides an opportunity to demonstrate leadership and interpersonal skills. Strive to use action statements. For example, instead of saying *Treasurer of business club*, explain more fully: *Collected dues, kept financial records, and paid bills while serving as treasurer of 35-member business management club*.

## Personal Data

Today's résumés omit personal data, such as birth date, marital status, height, weight, national origin, health, disabilities, and religious affiliation. Such information does not relate to genuine occupational qualifications, and recruiters are legally barred from asking for such information. Some job seekers do, however, include hobbies or interests (such as skiing or photography) that might grab the recruiter's attention or serve as conversation starters. For example, let's say you learn that your hiring manager enjoys distance running. If you have run a marathon, you may want to mention it. Many executives practice tennis or golf, two sports highly suitable for networking. You could also indicate your willingness to travel or to relocate since many companies will be interested.

Omit personal data not related to job qualifications.

## References

Listing references directly on a résumé takes up valuable space. Moreover, references are not normally instrumental in securing an interview—few companies check them before the interview. Instead, recruiters prefer that you bring to the interview a list of individuals willing to discuss your qualifications. Therefore, you should prepare a separate list, such as that in Figure 13.5, when you begin your job search. Ask three to five individuals—instructors, your current employer or previous employers, colleagues or subordinates, and other professional

References are unnecessary for the résumé, but they should be available for the interview.

**FIGURE 13.5** Sample Reference List

**References**

**Bryanna A. Engstrom**

1103 Wood Road  
Boscobel, WI 53805  
Home: (608) 375-1926      Cell: (608) 778-5195      E-mail: bengstrom@tds.net

---

**Mr. Jeff Schmitz**  
Loan Supervisor  
Community First Bank  
925 Wisconsin Avenue  
Boscobel, WI 53805  
(608) 375-4116  
jschmitz@commfirstbank.com

**Ms. Sue Winder**  
Work Study Supervisor  
Southwest Wisconsin Technical College  
1800 Bronson Boulevard  
Fennimore, WI 53809  
(608) 822-3611, Ext. 1200  
swinder@swtc.edu

**Ms. Sondra Ostheimer**  
Business/Communication Instructor  
Southwest Wisconsin Technical College  
1800 Bronson Boulevard  
Fennimore, WI 53809  
(608) 822-3622, Ext. 1266  
sostheimer@swtc.edu

Provides reference list to be left at interview

Lists professional, not personal, references

Uses parallel form for all entries

Prints reference list with heading that matches heading on résumé

Lists only people who have given permission



contacts—whether they would be willing to answer inquiries regarding your qualifications for employment. Be sure, however, to provide them with an opportunity to refuse. No reference is better than a negative one. Better yet, to avoid rejection and embarrassment, ask only those people who will give you a glowing endorsement.

Do not include personal or character references, such as friends, family, or neighbors, because recruiters rarely consult them. Companies are more interested in the opinions of objective individuals who know how you perform professionally and academically. One final note: most recruiters see little reason for including the statement *References furnished upon request*. It is unnecessary and takes up precious space.

In Figures 13.6 through 13.10 beginning on page 421, you will find our *Résumé Gallery*, which contains models of chronological and functional *résumés*. Use these models to help you organize the content and format of your own persuasive *résumé*.

## Optimizing Your *Résumé* for Today's Technologies

Because *résumés* are increasingly becoming part of searchable databases, you may need three versions.

Thus far we have aimed our *résumé* advice at human readers. However, the first reader of your *résumé* may well be a computer. Hiring organizations today use a variety of methods to process incoming *résumés*. Some organizations still welcome traditional print-based *résumés* that may include attractive formatting. Larger organizations, however, must deal with thousands of incoming *résumés*. Increasingly, they are placing those *résumés* directly into searchable databases.

To improve your chances, you will need various versions of your *résumé*. For starters, we recommend that you create a traditional print-based *résumé* in Microsoft Word. To preserve your formatting, you may opt to convert this Word document to a PDF file. Then, when pursuing a job with a large, popular company, be sure to make your *résumé* scannable so that a computer can read it. Finally, some job hunters prepare a plain-text version with minimal formatting for cutting and pasting into company application forms online. If you are very creative, you may even craft an e-portfolio or a video *résumé* to showcase your qualifications. Most job applicants, however, will focus on a print-based *résumé* first.

### Designing a Print-Based *Résumé*

Print-based *résumés* (also called *presentation résumés*) are attractively formatted to maximize readability. You can create a professional-looking *résumé* by using your word processing program to highlight your qualifications. The *Résumé Gallery* in this chapter provides ideas for simple layouts that are easily duplicated. You can also examine *résumé* templates for design and format ideas. Their inflexibility, however, may lead to frustration as you try to force your skills and experience into a predetermined template sequence. What's more, recruiters who read hundreds of *résumés* can usually spot a template-based *résumé*. Instead, create your own original *résumé* that fits your unique qualifications.

Your print-based *résumé* should be in an outline format with headings and bullet points to present information in an orderly, uncluttered, easy-to-read format. An attractive print-based *résumé* is necessary (a) when you are competing for a job that does not require electronic submission, (b) to present in addition to an electronic submission, and (c) to bring with you to job interviews. Even if a *résumé* is submitted electronically, nearly every job candidate will want to have an attractive traditional *résumé* handy for human readers.

# Résumé Gallery

**FIGURE 13.6** Chronological Résumé: Current College Student With Limited Experience

To highlight her skills and capabilities, Bryanna Engstrom placed them in the summary of qualifications at the top of her résumé. She used the tables feature of her word processing program to create neat, invisible columns and to fit more information on one page, the length favored by most recruiters.

**Omits objective to keep all options open**

**Focuses on skills and aptitudes that employers seek**

**Uses present-tense verbs for current job**

**Arranges employment by job title for easy recognition**

**Combines activities and awards to show extracurricular involvement**

**Bryanna A. Engstrom**  
 1103 Wood Road  
 Boscobel, WI 53805  
 Home: (608) 375-1926    Cell: (608) 778-5195    E-mail: bengstrom@tds.net

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**SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS**

- Over three years' experience in administrative positions, working with business documents and interacting with customers
- Ability to keyboard (65 wpm) and use ten-key calculator (150 kpm)
- Proficient with Microsoft Word, Excel, Access, PowerPoint, SharePoint, and Publisher (passed MOS certification exam)
- Competent in Web research, written and oral communication, records management, desktop publishing, computer software troubleshooting, and proofreading and editing business documents
- Trained in QuickBooks, Flash, Photoshop, Dreamweaver

**EXPERIENCE**

**Administrative Assistant, Work Study**  
 Southwest Wisconsin Technical College, Fennimore, Wisconsin, August 2011–present

- Create letters, memos, reports, and forms in Microsoft Word
- Develop customized reports and labels using Microsoft Access
- Maintain departmental Microsoft Excel budget

**Loan Support Specialist**  
 Community First Bank, Boscobel, Wisconsin, May 2010–September 2011

- Prepared loan documents for consumer, residential, mortgage, agricultural, and commercial loans
- Ensured compliance with federal, state, and bank regulations
- Originated correspondence (oral and written) with customers and insurance agencies
- Ordered and interpreted appraisals, titles, and credit reports
- Created and maintained paper and electronic files for customers

**Customer Sales Representative**  
 Lands' End, Dodgeville, Wisconsin, Winter seasons 2010–2011

- Answered phones and assisted customers with orders
- Resolved customers' merchandise questions and problems
- Entered catalog orders into computer system

**EDUCATION**

Southwest Wisconsin Technical College, Fennimore, Wisconsin  
 Major: Administrative Assistant with Help Desk certificate  
 AA degree expected May 2013. GPA in major: 3.8 (4.0 = A)

**ACTIVITIES AND AWARDS**

- Placed first in state BPA Administrative Assistant competition
- Served as SWTC Student Senate Representative for Administrative Assistant program
- Nominated for SWTC Ambassador Award (recognizes outstanding students for excellence in and out of classroom)

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## Preparing a Scannable Résumé

A scannable résumé is one that is printed on plain white paper and read by a computer. According to Pat Kendall, former president of the National Resume Writers' Association, more than 80 percent of résumés are scanned by companies using automated applicant-tracking software.<sup>32</sup> These systems scan an incoming résumé with optical character recognition (OCR) looking for keywords or keyword phrases. The most sophisticated programs enable recruiters and hiring managers to rank résumés based on the number of “hits” and generate reports. Information from your résumé is stored, usually for from six months to a year.

Applicant-tracking software scans incoming résumés searching for keywords.

**FIGURE 13.7** Chronological Résumé: Recent College Graduate With Related Experience

Jessica Fuentes used a chronological résumé to highlight her work experience, most of which was related directly to the position she seeks. Although she is a recent graduate, she has accumulated experience in two part-time jobs and one full-time job. She included a summary of qualifications to highlight her skills, experience, and interpersonal traits aimed at a specific position. Notice that Jessica designed her résumé in two columns with five major categories listed in the left column. In the right column she included bulleted items for each of the five categories. Conciseness and parallelism are important in writing an effective résumé. In the *Experience* category, she started each item with an active verb, which improved readability and parallel form.

**Jessica A. Fuentes**  
2403 Mira Loma Drive, Costa Mesa, CA 90415  
(714) 455-9231  
jfuentes@aol.com

**OBJECTIVE**  
Position with financial services organization installing accounting software and providing user support, where computer experience and proven communication and interpersonal skills can be used to improve operations.

**SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS**

- Over five years' experience in the accounting field
- Experienced in designing, installing, and providing technical support for accounting software, including SAP Great Plains, Peachtree, and Oracle
- Proficient in Word, Access, PowerPoint, Excel, and QuickBooks
- Skilled in technical writing, including proposals, user manuals, and documentation
- Commended for tactful and professional communication skills
- Fluent in speaking and writing Spanish

**EXPERIENCE**

**Accounting software consultant.** South Coast Software, Huntington Beach, CA  
June 2011 to present

- Design and install accounting systems for businesses such as Century 21 Butler Realty, Capital Financial Services, Pacific Lumber, and others
- Provide ongoing technical support and consultation for clients
- Help write proposals such as successful \$400,000 government contract

**Office manager (part-time).** Coastal Productions, Fountain Valley, CA  
June 2010 to May 2011

- Conceived and implemented improved order processing and filing system
- Designed and integrated module code pieces to export and convert data from an inhouse SQL database to QuickBooks format for automated check printing and invoice billing
- Trained three employees to operate QuickBooks software

**Bookkeeper (part-time).** Home Roofing, Santa Ana, CA  
August 2006 to May 2010

- Kept books for roofing company with \$240,000 gross income
- Performed all bookkeeping tasks including quarterly internal audit and payroll

**EDUCATION**

**Orange Coast College,** Costa Mesa, CA  
Associate of Arts degree in business administration, June 2010  
GPA in major 3.6 (4.0 = A)

**Oracle University**—currently enrolled in database training seminars leading to Oracle certification

**HONORS AND ACTIVITIES**

- Dean's list, three semesters
- Elected to Alpha Beta Sigma business student honorary

**Annotations:**

- Lists most impressive qualifications** (points to Summary of Qualifications)
- Arranges jobs in reverse chronological order** (points to Experience section)
- Uses bulleted lists to make résumé easier to read** (points to bulleted lists in Experience and Summary of Qualifications)
- Shows job titles in bold for readability** (points to bolded job titles in Experience)
- Includes detailed objective in response to advertisement** (points to Objective)
- Uses present-tense verbs for current job and past-tense verbs for previous jobs** (points to Experience section)
- Specifies relevant activities for targeted position** (points to bulleted lists in Experience)
- Provides white space around headings to create open look** (points to section headings)

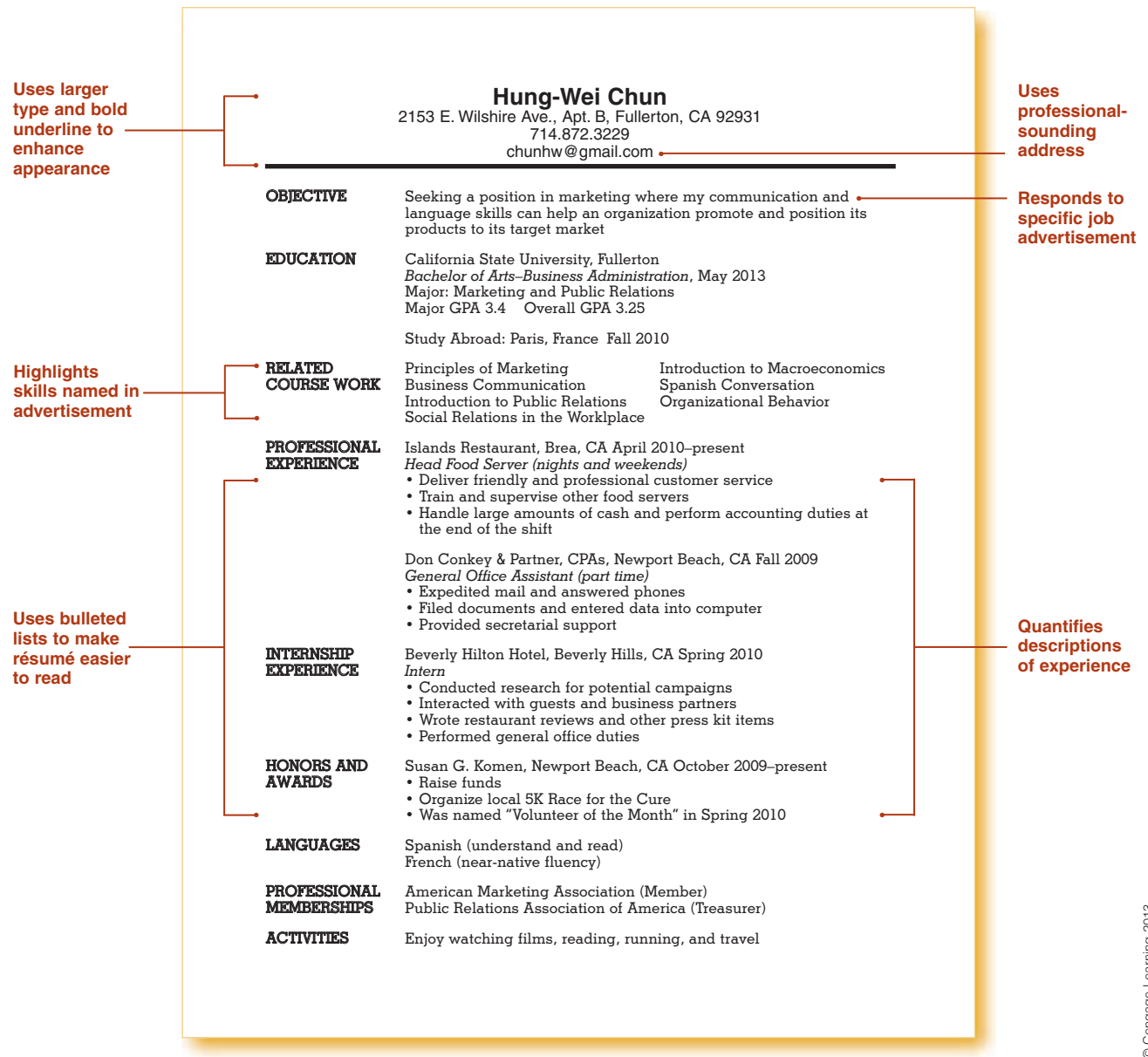
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Before sending your résumé, find out whether the recipient uses scanning software. If you can't tell from the job announcement, call the company to ask whether it scans résumés electronically. If you have even the slightest suspicion that your résumé might be read electronically, you will be smart to prepare a plain, scannable version as shown in Figure 13.11. Although current scanning software can read a résumé in any format, many companies still use older versions that have difficulty with complex fonts and formatting. Therefore, it pays to follow these tips for maximizing scannability and “hits.”



**FIGURE 13.8** Chronological Résumé: Current University Student With Limited Relevant Experience

Hung-Wei Chun used MS Word to design a traditional chronological print-based résumé that he plans to give to recruiters at the campus job fair or during an interview. Although Hung-Wei has work experience not related to his future employment, his résumé looks impressive because he has transferable skills. His internship is related to his future career, and his language skills and study abroad experience will help him score points in competition with applicants. Hung-Wei's volunteer experience is also attractive because it shows him as a well-rounded, compassionate individual. Because his experience in his future field is limited, he omitted a summary of qualifications.



**Tips for Maximizing Scannability.** A scannable résumé must sacrifice many of the graphic enhancements you might have used to make your traditional print résumé attractive. To maximize scannability, follow these steps:

- **Use 10- to 14-point type.** Use a well-known font such as Times New Roman or Arial. The font size in the body of your résumé should be 10-, 11-, or 12-point, and headings should be no larger than 14-point.
- **Avoid fancy formatting.** Do not use underlining, italics, borders, shading, or other graphics to highlight text. These features don't scan well. Most

Scannable résumés use plain formatting, large fonts, quality printing, and white space.

**FIGURE 13.9** Chronological Résumé: University Graduate With Substantial Experience

Because Rachel Chowdhry has many years of experience and seeks executive-level employment, she highlighted her experience by placing it before her education. Her summary of qualifications highlighted her most impressive experience and skills. This chronological two-page résumé shows the steady progression of her career to executive positions, a movement that impresses and reassures recruiters.

**RACHEL M. CHOWDHRY**  
374 Cabot Drive  
Thousand Oaks, CA 91359  
E-Mail: rchowdhry@west.net  
(805) 490-3310

**OBJECTIVE** Senior Financial Management Position

**SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS**

- Over 12 years' comprehensive experience in the accounting industry, including over 8 years as a controller
- Certified Public Accountant (CPA)
- Demonstrated ability to handle all accounting functions for large, midsized, and small firms
- Ability to isolate problems, reduce expenses, and improve the bottom line, resulting in substantial cost savings
- Proven talent for interacting professionally with individuals at all levels, as demonstrated by performance review comments
- Experienced in P&L, audits, taxation, internal control, inventory management, A/P, A/R, and cash management

**PROFESSIONAL HISTORY AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

**11/10 to present CONTROLLER**  
United Plastics, Inc., Newbury Park, California (extruder of polyethylene film for plastic aprons and gloves)

- Direct all facets of accounting and cash management for 160-employee, \$3 billion business
- Supervise inventory and production operations for tax compliance
- Talked owner into reducing sales prices, resulting in doubling first quarter 2012 sales
- Created cost accounting by product and pricing based on gross margin
- Increased line of credit with 12 major suppliers

**1/08 to 10/10 CONTROLLER**  
Burgess Inc., Freeport, Illinois (major manufacturer of flashlight and lantern batteries)

- Managed all accounting, cash, payroll, credit, and collection operations for 175-employee business
- Implemented a new system for cost accounting, inventory control, and accounts payable, resulting in a \$100,000 annual savings
- Reduced staff from 11 persons to 5 with no loss in productivity
- Successfully reduced inventory levels from \$1.1 million to \$600,000

**8/06 to 11/07 TREASURER/CONTROLLER**  
The Builders of Winter, Winter, Wisconsin (manufacturer of modular housing)

- Supervised accounts receivable/payable, cash management, payroll, insurance
- Directed monthly and year-end closings, banking relations, and product costing
- Refinanced company with long-term loan, ensuring stability

**Rachel M. Chowdhry** **Page 2**

**4/02 to 6/06 SUPERVISOR OF GENERAL ACCOUNTING**  
Levin National Batteries, St. Paul, Minnesota (local manufacturer of flashlight batteries)

- Completed monthly and year-end closing of ledgers for \$2 million business
- Audited freight bills, acted as interdepartmental liaison, prepared financial reports

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

**Education:** BBA degree, University of Minnesota, major: Accounting, 2001  
**Certification:** Certified Public Accountant (CPA), 2003  
**Personal:** Will travel and/or relocate

**Annotations:**

- Lists most impressive credentials** (points to Summary of Qualifications)
- Explains nature of employer's business because it is not immediately recognizable** (points to United Plastics, Inc.)
- Uses action verbs but includes many good nouns for possible computer scanning** (points to Summary of Qualifications)
- Emphasizes steady employment history by listing dates FIRST** (points to 11/10 to present)
- Describes and quantifies specific achievements** (points to 1/08 to 10/10 CONTROLLER)
- De-emphasizes education because work history is more important for mature candidates** (points to Education section)

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applicant-tracking programs, however, can accurately read bold print, solid bullets, and asterisks.

- **Place your name on the first line.** Reports generated by applicant-tracking software usually assume that the first line of a résumé contains the applicant's name.

**FIGURE 13.10** Functional Résumé: Recent College Graduate With Unrelated Part-Time Experience

Recent graduate Kevin Touhy chose this functional format to de-emphasize his meager work experience and emphasize his potential in sales and marketing. This version of his résumé is more generic than one targeted for a specific position. Nevertheless, it emphasizes his strong points with specific achievements and includes an employment section to satisfy recruiters. The functional format presents ability-focused topics. It illustrates what the job seeker can do for the employer instead of narrating a history of previous jobs. Although recruiters prefer chronological résumés, the functional format is a good choice for new graduates, career changers, and those with employment gaps.

**Uses functional headings that emphasize necessary skills for sales and e-marketing position**

**Employs action verbs and bullet points to describe skills**

**Highlights recent education and contemporary training while de-emphasizing employment**

**KEVIN M. TOUHY**  
 Phone: (412) 359-2493  
 Cell: (412) 555-3201  
 E-mail: ktouhy@aol.com

P. O. Box 341  
Monroeville, PA 15146

**OBJECTIVE** Position in sales, marketing, or e-marketing in which my marketing, communication, and technology skills can help an organization achieve its goals.

**SALES AND MARKETING SKILLS**

- Developed people and sales skills by demonstrating lawn-care equipment in central and western Pennsylvania
- Achieved sales amounting to 120 percent of forecast in competitive field
- Personally generated over \$30,000 in telephone subscriptions as part of the President's Task Force for the Northeastern University Foundation
- Conducted telephone survey of selected businesses in two counties to discover potential users of farm equipment and to promote company services
- Successfully served 40 or more retail customers daily as clerk in electrical appliance department of national home hardware store

**COMMUNICATION AND COMPUTER SKILLS**

- Conducted research, analyzed findings, drew conclusions, and helped write 20-page report contending that responsible e-marketing is not spam
- Learned teamwork skills such as cooperation and compromise in team projects
- Delivered PowerPoint talks before selected campus classes and organizations encouraging students to participate in campus voter registration drive
- Earned A's in Interpersonal Communication and Business Communication
- Developed Word, Outlook, Excel, PowerPoint, and Internet Explorer skills
- Commended for ability to learn computer programs quickly

**ORGANIZATIONAL AND MANAGEMENT SKILLS**

- Helped conceptualize, organize, and conduct highly effective campus campaign to register student voters
- Scheduled events and arranged weekend student retreat for Marketing Club
- Trained and supervised two counter employees at Pizza Planet
- Organized courses, extracurricular activities, and part-time employment to graduate in seven semesters

**EDUCATION**

Bachelor of Business Administration, Northeastern University, June 2011  
**Major:** Business Administration with e-marketing emphasis  
**GPA:** Major, 3.7; overall 3.3 (A=4.0)  
**Related Courses:** Marketing Research; Internet Advertising, Sales, and Promotion; and Competitive Strategies for the Information Age

Associate of Arts, Community College of Allegheny County, 2010  
**Major:** Business Administration with marketing emphasis  
**GPA: 3.7**

**EMPLOYMENT**

Sept. 2009–May 2011, Pizza Planet, Pittsburgh  
 Summer 2009, Bellefonte Manufacturers Representatives, Pittsburgh  
 Summers 2006–2009, Home Depot, Inc., Pittsburgh

**Includes objective that focuses on employer's needs**

**Quantifies achievements with specifics instead of generalities**

**Calls attention to computer skills**

**Avoids dense look and improves readability by "chunking" information**

- **List each phone number on its own line.** Your landline and cell phone numbers should appear on separate lines to improve recognition.
- **Avoid double columns.** When listing job duties, skills, computer programs, and so forth, don't tabulate items into two- or three-column lists. Scanners read across and may convert tables into nonsensical output.
- **Take care when printing and mailing.** When printing your scannable résumé for mailing, use smooth white paper and black ink and print it on a quality printer. Mail your résumé in a large envelope to avoid folding it. If your résumé is longer than one page, don't staple it.

**FIGURE 13.11** Scannable Résumé

Letitia P. Lopez prepared this “plain Jane” résumé free of graphics and fancy formatting so that it would scan well if read by a computer. With the résumé, she included many job titles, skills, traits, and other descriptive keywords that scanners are programmed to recognize. To improve accurate scanning, she avoided bullets, italics, underlining, and columns. If she had more information to include, she could have gone to a second page because a résumé to be scanned need not be restricted to one page.

Uses asterisks to list most impressive qualifications; includes many keywords for target position

Prevents inaccurate scanning by using Arial type font in which letters do not touch

Places name alone at top of résumé where scanner expects to find it

Uses typical headings for easy recognition

Provides ample white space for accurate scanning

**LETICIA P. LOPEZ**  
2967 Ocean Breeze Drive  
Clearwater, FL 33704  
813 742-5839  
LLopez@scoast.net

**OBJECTIVE**  
Customer-oriented, fast-learning, detail-oriented individual seeks teller position with financial institution.

**SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS**

- \* Over three years' experience as a bank teller
- \* Proven ability to interact professionally, efficiently, and pleasantly with customers
- \* Reputation for accuracy and ability to work well under pressure
- \* Speak Spanish fluently
- \* Experience using Excel, Word, PowerPoint, accounting software, banking CRT, and the Internet
- \* Member of First Federal Bank's Diversity Committee
- \* Received First Federal Bank Certificate of Merit as an outstanding new employee

**EXPERIENCE**

First Federal Bank, Pinellas Park, Florida  
July 2010 to present  
Teller

Cheerfully greet customers, make deposits and withdrawals, accurately enter on computer. Balance up to \$10,000 in cash with computer journal tape daily within 15-minute time period. Solve customer problems and answer questions patiently. Issue cashier's checks, savings bonds, and traveler's checks. Complete tasks under pressure with speed, accuracy, and special attention to positive customer service. Communicate well with customers who speak English or Spanish.

Bay Aviation Maintenance Company, St. Petersburg, Florida  
June 2008 to June 2010  
Bookkeeper

Managed all bookkeeping functions, including accounts payable, accounts receivable, payroll, and tax reports for a small business. Demonstrated ability to work independently, took responsibility for establishing and meeting deadlines, and learned new computer programs without instruction. Commended for honesty as well as for being a self-starter who could handle multiple priorities and deadlines.

**EDUCATION**

University of South Florida, Tampa, FL  
Bachelor of Science in Business Management expected in 2013

Hillsborough Community College, Tampa, FL  
Associate of Arts Degree, 2010  
Majors: Business Administration and Accounting

Scanners produce “hits” when they recognize targeted keywords such as nouns describing skills, traits, tasks, and job titles.

**Tips for Maximizing “Hits.”** In addition to paying attention to the physical appearance of your résumé, you must also be concerned with keywords or keyword phrases that produce “hits,” or recognition by the scanner. The following tips will help you to maximize hits:

- **Focus on specific keywords or keyword phrases.** Study carefully any advertisements and job descriptions for the position you want. Describe your experience, education, and qualifications in terms associated with the job advertisement or job description for this position. Select keywords or phrases that describe specific skills, traits, expertise, tasks, and job titles.



- **Use accurate names.** Spell out complete names of schools, degrees, and dates. Include specific names of companies, products, and services, as appropriate.
- **Be careful of abbreviations and acronyms.** Spell out unfamiliar abbreviations and acronyms, but maximize easily recognized abbreviations and acronyms—especially those within your field, such as CAD, JPG, or JIT.
- **Describe interpersonal traits and attitudes.** Hiring managers look for keywords and phrases that describe interpersonal traits and attitudes that are related to the specific position; for example, *time management skills*, *dependability*, *high energy*, *leadership*, *sense of responsibility*, and *team player*.

## Showcasing Your Qualifications in an E-Portfolio or a Video Résumé

As the workplace becomes increasingly digital, you have new ways to display your qualifications to prospective employers—in digitized e-portfolios and video résumés. Resourceful job candidates in certain fields—writers, models, artists, and graphic artists—have been creating print portfolios to illustrate their qualifications and achievements for some time. Now business and professional job candidates are using electronic portfolios to show off their talents.

**Understanding the E-Portfolio.** An e-portfolio is a collection of digital files that can be navigated with the help of menus and hyperlinks much like a personal Web site. An e-portfolio provides viewers with a snapshot of a candidate's performance, talents, and accomplishments. A digital portfolio may include a copy of your résumé, reference letters, commendations for special achievements, awards, certificates, work samples, a complete list of your courses, thank-you letters, and anything else that touts your accomplishments. An e-portfolio might include links to electronic copies of your artwork, film projects, videos, blueprints, documents, photographs, multimedia files, and blog entries that might otherwise be difficult to share with potential employers.

E-portfolios are generally accessed at Web sites, where they are available around-the-clock to employers. Some colleges and universities not only make Web site space available for student e-portfolios, but also provide instruction and resources for scanning photos, digitizing images, and preparing graphics. E-portfolios may also be burned onto CDs and DVDs to be mailed to prospective employers. Whichever medium you choose, respect the intellectual property of your employers before sharing professional work samples online. Don't post them without permission.<sup>33</sup>

E-portfolios have many advantages. On Web sites they can be viewed at employers' convenience. Let's say you are talking on the phone with an employer in another city who wants to see a copy of your résumé. You can simply refer the employer to the Web address where your résumé resides. E-portfolios can also be seen by many individuals in an organization without circulating a paper copy. But the real reason for preparing an e-portfolio is that it shows off your talents and qualifications more thoroughly than a print résumé does.

**Understanding the Video Résumé.** Tech-savvy applicants even use videos to profile their skills. A professional-grade video résumé may open doors and secure an interview when other techniques have failed.<sup>34</sup> However, some recruiters are skeptical about digital or video portfolios because they fear that such applications take more time to view than paper-based résumés do. One time-strapped recruiter clearly favors traditional applications: "If I have a stack of resumes and a good highlighter, I can do that much faster."<sup>35</sup> Nontraditional applications may end up at the bottom of the pile or be ignored.

An e-portfolio offers links to examples of a job candidate's performance, talents, and accomplishments in digital form.



Job candidates generally offer e-portfolios at Web sites, but they may also burn them onto CDs or DVDs.

## OFFICE INSIDER

*"I think the video résumé debate is going to be hot for the next few years. Typically, they are frowned upon because of [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission] regulation. Companies are scared to death of getting sued."*

—Joel Cheesman,  
blogger and expert on  
online recruiting

Moreover, humiliation looms if the applicant produces an amateurish result with low-quality video, poor sound, and inappropriate lighting. Finally, video résumés are most appropriate for positions requiring creativity, salesmanship, and presentation skills in the visual and performing arts, advertising, and public relations fields. Video résumés are much less suitable for more traditional positions—for example, in banking or accounting.<sup>36</sup>

A truly weighty reason to exercise caution when creating and sharing video résumés is the risk of discrimination lawsuits. Employment decisions must be based on objective criteria related to the position, not on subjective factors such as appearance. Corporate lawyers advise their clients to refuse to view online video résumés or traditional résumés with pictures. New Jersey attorney Steven Harz warns: "Video resumes lend themselves to making decisions based on race, gender, national origin and other protected classifications plus other subjective issues. Subjective decisions are difficult to defend in court."<sup>37</sup>

Not long ago, fewer than a quarter of senior executives in the United States accepted video résumés, but multimedia resources are growing. Within a few years, video résumé sites, such as BriteTab.com, OptimalResume.com, InterviewStudio.com, and Resumebook.tv, were launched.<sup>38</sup> They propose to make creating e-video résumés an easy task with customizable templates. Experts agree that the new medium will need to mature before smart use guidelines can emerge. You can learn more about video résumés by searching the Web.

## Ensuring Integrity and Polishing Your Résumé

Because your résumé is probably the most important message you will ever write, you will revise it many times. With so much information in concentrated form and with so much riding on its outcome, your résumé demands careful polishing, proofreading, and critiquing.

As you revise, be certain to verify all the facts, particularly those involving your previous employment and education. Don't be caught in a mistake, or worse, a distortion of previous jobs and dates of employment. These items likely will be checked, and the consequences of puffing up a résumé with deception or flat-out lies are simply not worth the risk.

### Being Honest and Ethical

A résumé is expected to showcase a candidate's strengths and minimize weaknesses. For this reason, recruiters expect a certain degree of self-promotion. Some résumé writers, however, step over the line that separates honest self-marketing from deceptive half-truths and flat-out lies. Distorting facts on a résumé is unethical; lying is illegal. Most important, either practice can destroy a career.

Given the competitive job market, it might be tempting to puff up your résumé. What's more, you would not be alone in telling fibs or outright whoppers. A survey of 8,700 workers found that only 8 percent admitted to lying on their résumés; however, the same study found that of the 3,100 hiring managers surveyed, 49 percent caught a job applicant lying on some part of his or her résumé. And 57 percent of employers will automatically dismiss applicants who lie on any part of their résumés. According to Rosemary Haefner, vice president of Human Resources for CareerBuilder.com, "Even the slightest embellishment can come back to haunt you and ruin your credibility. If you're concerned about gaps in employment, your academic background or skill sets, invention is not the answer."<sup>39</sup> Although recruiters can't check all information, most will verify previous employment and education before hiring candidates. Over half will require official transcripts.

After hiring, the checking process may continue. If hiring officials find a discrepancy in GPA or prior experience and the error is an honest mistake, they meet with the new-hire to hear an explanation. If the discrepancy wasn't a mistake,

Lying on a résumé is illegal and fudging the facts is unethical. Either can destroy a career.



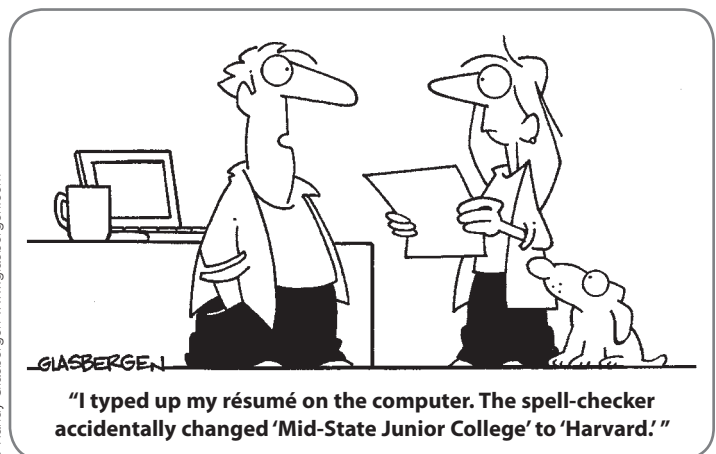
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## WORKPLACE IN FOCUS

**W**hether legally risky or merely unprofessional, sending personal photos to recruiters is a mistake, employment experts say. Hiring based on looks has triggered discrimination lawsuits for Southwest Airlines and Hooters Restaurants, and fashion brand American Apparel is under fire for requiring full-body photos for all job applicants. In one high-profile case about looks and professionalism, Citibank fired an employee for accentuating sex appeal at work. *Is it possible to keep appearance out of the employment process in the age of Facebook?*

they will likely fire the person immediately. No job seeker wants to be in the unhappy position of explaining résumé errors or defending misrepresentation. Avoiding the following common problems can keep you off the hot seat:

- **Inflated education, grades, or honors.** Some job candidates claim degrees from colleges or universities when in fact they merely attended classes. Others increase their grade point averages or claim fictitious honors. Any such dishonest reporting is grounds for dismissal when discovered.
- **Enhanced job titles.** Wishing to elevate their status, some applicants misrepresent their titles. For example, one technician called himself a programmer when he had actually programmed only one project for his boss. A mail clerk who assumed added responsibilities conferred upon herself the title of supervisor. Even when the description seems accurate, it is unethical to list any title not officially granted.
- **Puffed-up accomplishments.** Some job seekers inflate their employment experience or achievements. One clerk, eager to make her photocopying duties sound more important, said that she assisted the *vice president in communicating and distributing employee directives*. An Ivy League graduate who spent the better part of six months watching rented movies on his DVD player described the activity as *Independent Film Study*. The latter statement may have helped win an interview, but it lost him the job. In addition to avoiding puffery, guard against taking sole credit for achievements that required many people. When recruiters suspect dubious claims on résumés, they nail applicants with specific—and often embarrassing—questions during their interviews.
- **Altered employment dates.** Some candidates extend the dates of employment to hide unimpressive jobs or to cover up periods of unemployment and illness. Let's say that several years ago Cindy was unemployed for 14 months between working for Company A and being hired by Company B. To make her employment history look better, she adds seven months to her tenure with Company A and seven months to Company B. Now her



employment history has no gaps, but her résumé is dishonest and represents a potential booby trap for her.

- **Hidden keywords.** One of the latest sneaky tricks involves inserting invisible keywords in electronic résumés. To fool scanning programs into ranking their résumés higher, some job hunters use white type on a white background or they use Web coding to pack their résumés with target keywords. However, newer recruiter search tools detect such mischief, and those résumés are tossed.<sup>40</sup>

If your honest qualifications aren't good enough to get you the job you want, start working now to improve them. No job seeker should want to be hired based on lies.

## Polishing Your Résumé

While you continue revising, look for other ways to improve your résumé. For example, consider consolidating headings. By condensing your information into as few headings as possible, you will produce a clean, professional-looking document. Study other résumés for valuable formatting ideas. Ask yourself what graphic highlighting techniques you can use to improve readability: capitalization, underlining, indenting, and bulleting. Experiment with headings and styles to achieve a pleasing, easy-to-read message. Moreover, look for ways to eliminate wordiness. For example, instead of *Supervised two employees who worked at the counter*, try *Supervised two counter employees*. Review Chapter 4 for more tips on writing concisely.

In addition to making your résumé concise, make sure that you haven't included any of the following information, which does not belong on a résumé:

- Any basis for discrimination (age, marital status, gender, national origin, religion, race, number of children, disability)
- A photograph
- Reasons for leaving previous jobs
- The word *résumé*
- Social security number
- Salary history or requirements
- High school information
- References
- Full addresses of schools or employers (include city and state only)

Above all, make sure your print-based résumé look professional. Avoid anything humorous or “cute,” such as a help-wanted poster with your name or picture inside. Eliminate the personal pronoun *I* to ensure an objective style. Use high-quality paper in a professional color, such as white, off-white, or light gray. Print your résumé using a first-rate printer. Be prepared with a résumé for people to read as well as versions for computer scanning, sending by e-mail, and posting to Web sites.

## Proofreading Your Résumé

After revising, you must proofread, proofread, and proofread again for spelling, grammar, mechanics, content, and format. Then have a knowledgeable friend or relative proofread it yet again. This is one document that must be perfect. Because the job market is so competitive, one typo, misspelled word, or grammatical error could eliminate you from consideration.

By now you may be thinking that you'd like to hire someone to write your résumé. Don't! First, you know yourself better than anyone else could know you. Second, you will end up with a generic or a one-time résumé. A generic résumé in today's tight job market will lose out to a customized résumé nine times out of ten. Equally useless is a one-time résumé aimed at a single job. What if you don't get that job? Because you will need to revise your résumé many times as you seek a variety of jobs, be prepared to write (and rewrite) it yourself.

Studying models for ideas can help you improve your résumé format.

### OFFICE INSIDER

*“It sounds basic, but make sure that your résumé is free of typos and other errors. When applying by e-mail, there is more of a tendency to rush and make careless mistakes. For many employers, this shows a lack of attention to detail and is an easy way to eliminate someone from consideration.”*

—Wendy S. Enelow,  
executive director of  
Career Masters Institute

In addition to being well written, a résumé must be carefully formatted and meticulously proofread.



## Submitting Your Résumé

If you are responding to a job advertisement, be sure to read the job listing carefully to make sure you know how the employer wants you to submit your résumé. Not following the prospective employer's instructions can eliminate you from consideration before your résumé is even reviewed. Employers will probably ask you to submit your résumé as a Word, plain-text, or PDF document. You may also be asked to submit it in the company database or by fax.

Send your résumé in the format the employer requests.

- **Word document.** Recruiters may still ask candidates to send their résumés and cover letters by postal mail. They may also allow applicants to attach their résumés as Microsoft Word documents to e-mails, despite the fear of viruses.
- **Plain-text document.** Some employers expect applicants to submit résumés and cover letters as plain-text documents. This format is widely used for posting to an online job board and sometimes for sending by e-mail. Plain-text résumés may be embedded within or attached to e-mails. Convert your files to plain text in Microsoft Word with the **Save As** option. Select *Plain Text* as the file type. Because you will lose nearly all formatting after converting your file to plain text, you will have to examine the resulting document carefully in your word processor and check it again once you paste the plain-text résumé into your e-mail.
- **PDF document.** For safety reasons, many hiring managers prefer PDF (portable document format) files. A PDF résumé will look exactly like the original and cannot be altered without Adobe Acrobat or other conversion software. Most computers have Adobe Acrobat Reader installed for easy reading of PDF files. Converting your Microsoft Word and other Office documents to a PDF file, however, requires an add-in for older word processing software or Adobe Acrobat. The 2010 Office versions allow you to select **Save as** and **Print** to a PDF.
- **Company database.** Some organizations prefer that you complete an online form with your résumé information. This enables them to plug your data into their formats for rapid searching. You might be able to cut and paste your information into the online form.
- **Fax.** Although still a popular way of sending résumés, faxing presents problems such as blurry text and lost information. If you must fax your résumé, use at least 12-point font to improve readability. Thinner fonts—such as Times New Roman, Palatino, New Century Schoolbook, Arial, and Bookman—are clearer than thicker ones. Avoid underlines, which may look broken or choppy when faxed. Follow up with your polished, printed résumé.

Whether you are mailing your résumé the traditional way, submitting it by e-mail, or transmitting it by fax, don't send it on its own. Regardless of the submission format, in most cases a résumé should be accompanied by a cover letter, which will be discussed next.

## Creating a Customized, Persuasive Cover Letter

Job candidates often labor over their résumés but treat the cover letter as an afterthought. Some send out résumés without including a cover letter at all. These critical mistakes could destroy a job search. Even if an advertisement does not request one, be sure to distinguish your application with a persuasive cover letter (also called a *letter of application*). Some hiring managers won't even look at a résumé if it is not accompanied by a cover letter. A cover letter has three purposes: (a) introducing the résumé, (b) highlighting your strengths in terms of benefits to the reader, and (c) helping you gain an interview. In many ways your cover letter is a sales letter; it sells your talent and tries to beat the competition. It will, accordingly, include many of the techniques you learned for persuasive messages in Chapter 8, especially if your letter is unsolicited.

Cover letters introduce résumés, relate writer strengths to reader benefits, and seek an interview.

Recruiting professionals disagree about how long to make a cover letter. Many prefer short letters with no more than three paragraphs. Others desire longer letters that supply more information, thus giving them a better opportunity to evaluate a candidate's qualifications and writing ability. These recruiters argue that hiring and training new employees is expensive and time consuming; therefore, they welcome extra data to guide them in making the best choice the first time. Follow your judgment in writing a brief or a longer cover letter. If you think, for example, that you need space to explain in more detail what you can do for a prospective employer, do so.

Regardless of its length, a cover letter should have three primary parts: (a) an opening that captures attention, introduces the message, and identifies the position; (b) a body that sells the candidate and focuses on the employer's needs; and (c) a closing that requests an interview and motivates action. When putting your cover letter together, remember that the biggest mistake job seekers make when writing cover letters is making them sound too generic. You should, therefore, write a personalized, customized cover letter for every position you apply for.

### Gaining Attention in the Opening

Your cover letter will be more appealing, and more likely to be read, if it begins by addressing the reader by name. Rather than sending your letter to the *Hiring Manager* or *Human Resources Department*, try to identify the name of the appropriate individual. Kelly Renz, vice president for a recruiting outsourcing firm, says that resourceful job seekers “take control of their application’s destiny.” She suggests looking on the company’s Web site, doing an Internet search for a name, or calling the human resources department and asking the receptionist the name of the person in charge of hiring.

In addition, Ms. Renz suggests using professional networking sites such as LinkedIn to find someone working in the same department as the posted job. This person may know the name of the hiring manager.<sup>41</sup> If you still cannot find the name of any person to address, you might replace the salutation of your letter with a descriptive subject line such as *Application for Marketing Specialist Position*.

How you open your cover letter depends largely on whether the application is solicited or unsolicited. If an employment position has been announced and applicants are being solicited, you can use a direct approach. If you don’t know whether a position is open and you are prospecting for a job, use an indirect approach. Whether direct or indirect, the opening should attract the attention of the reader. Strive for openings that are more imaginative than *Please consider this letter an application for the position of . . .* or *I would like to apply for . . .*

**Openings for Solicited Jobs.** When applying for a job that has been announced, consider some of the following techniques to open your cover letter:

- **Refer to the name of an employee in the company.** Remember that employers always hope to hire known quantities rather than complete strangers:

*Mitchell Sims, a member of your Customer Service Department, told me that IntriPlex is seeking an experienced customer-service representative. The enclosed summary of my qualifications demonstrates my preparation for this position.*

*At the suggestion of Ms. Jennifer Larson of your Human Resources Department, I submit my qualifications for the position of staffing coordinator.*

- **Refer to the source of your information precisely.** If you are answering an advertisement, include the exact position advertised and the name and date

The opening in a cover letter gains attention by addressing the receiver by name.

Openers for solicited jobs refer to the source of the information, the job title, and qualifications for the position.

of the publication. If you are responding to a position listed on an online job board, include the Web site name and the date the position was posted:

*Your advertisement in Section C-3 of the June 1 Daily News for an accounting administrator greatly appeals to me. With my accounting training and computer experience, I am confident I could serve Quad Graphics well.*

*From your company's Web site, I learned about your need for a sales representative for the Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois regions. I am very interested in this position and am confident that my education and experience are appropriate for the opening.*

*Susan Butler, placement director at Sierra University, told me that Data-Tech has an opening for a technical writer with knowledge of Web design and graphics.*

*My talent for interacting with people, coupled with more than five years of customer-service experience, makes me an ideal candidate for the director of customer relations position you advertised on the CareerJournal.com Web site on August 3.*

- **Refer to the job title and describe how your qualifications fit the requirements.** Hiring managers are looking for a match between an applicant's credentials and the job needs:

*Will an honors graduate with a degree in recreation and two years of part-time experience organizing social activities for a convalescent hospital qualify for your position of activity director?*

*Because of my specialized training in finance and accounting at Boise State University, I am confident that I have the qualifications you described in your advertisement for a staff accountant trainee.*

**Openings for Unsolicited Jobs.** If you are unsure whether a position actually exists, you might use a more persuasive opening. Because your goal is to convince this person to read on, try one of the following techniques:

- **Demonstrate interest in and knowledge of the reader's business.** Show the hiring officer that you have done your research and that this organization is more than a mere name to you:

*Because Signa HealthNet, Inc., is organizing a new information management team for its recently established group insurance division, could you use the services of a well-trained information systems graduate who seeks to become a professional systems analyst?*

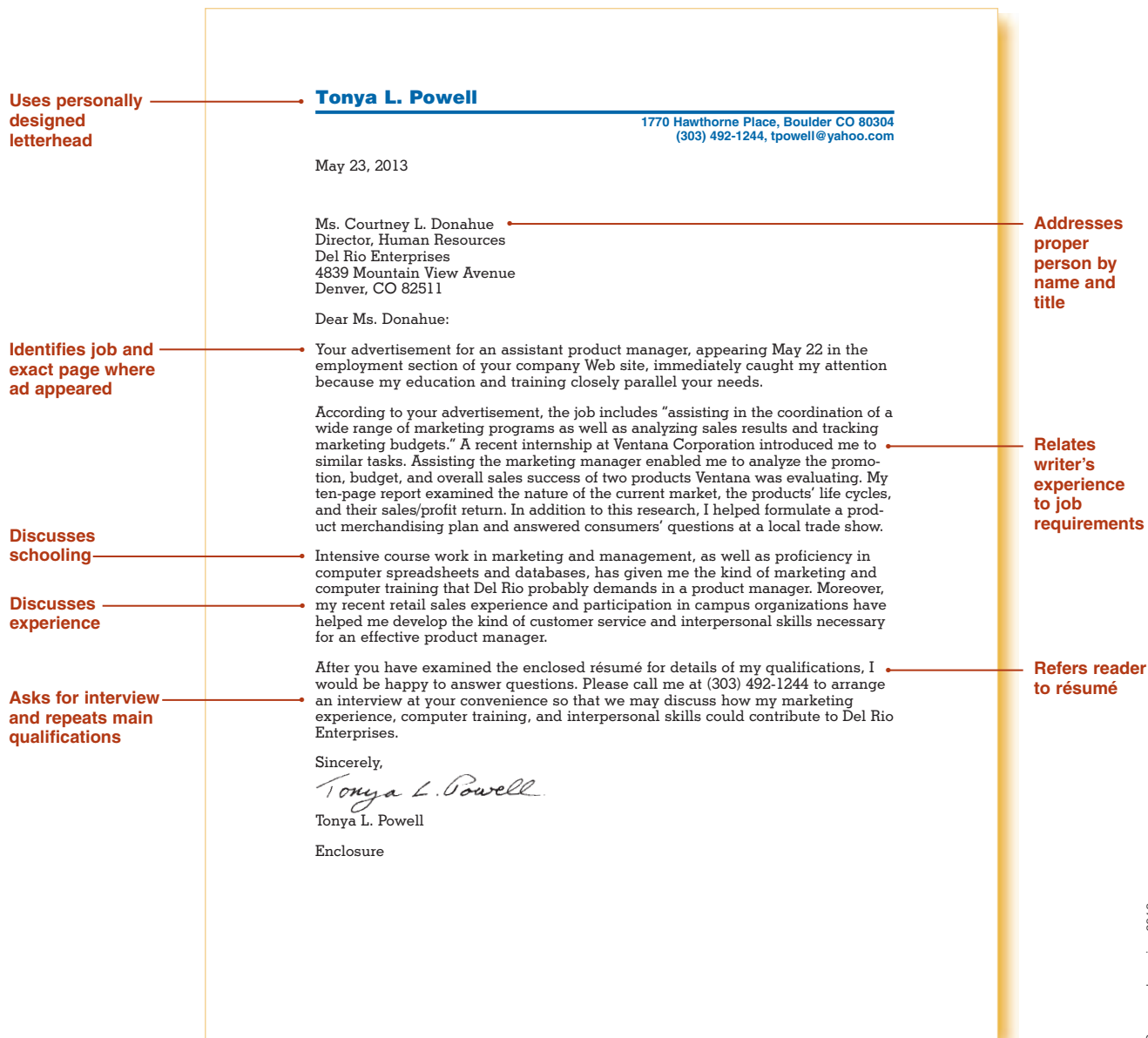
- **Show how your special talents and background will benefit the company.** Human resource managers need to be convinced that you can do something for them:

*Could your rapidly expanding publications division use the services of an editorial assistant who offers exceptional language skills, has an honors degree from the University of Maine, and has two years of experience producing a campus literary publication?*

Do recruiters really read cover letters? Although some hiring managers ignore them, others read them carefully. Given the stiff competition for jobs today, making an effort to write a cover letter and to customize it for the position makes sense. Crafting a letter specifically for a job opening enables the job seeker to stand out from all those who skip this important step.

In applying for an advertised job, Tonya Powell wrote the solicited cover letter shown in Figure 13.12. Notice that her opening identifies the position advertised on the company's Web site, so that the reader knows exactly what advertisement

Openings for unsolicited jobs show an interest in and knowledge of the company, as well as spotlight reader benefits.

**FIGURE 13.12** Solicited Cover Letter

Tonya means. Using word processing, Tonya designed her own letterhead that uses her name and looks like professionally printed letterhead paper. Notice that Tonya chose a blue color accent for her letter. When used sparingly and strategically, color can help job hunters stand out. Personal branding expert William Arruda believes, "Color is a valuable tool in your personal branding toolbox that will help express your brand attributes and create emotional connections with hiring managers and recruiters." Arruda does not promote gaudy-looking application documents but suggests the consistent use of just one color—one that is best suited to reinforce an applicant's brand message.<sup>42</sup>

More challenging are unsolicited cover letters, such as Donald Vinton's shown in Figure 13.13. Because he hopes to discover or create a job, his opening must grab the reader's attention immediately. To do that, he capitalizes on company information appearing in an online article. Donald purposely kept his cover letter short and to the point because he anticipated that a busy executive would be



**FIGURE 13.13** Unsolicited Cover Letter

Uses personal business style with return address above date

2250 Turtle Creek Drive  
Monroeville, PA 15146  
May 29, 2013

Shows resourcefulness and knowledge of company

Mr. Richard M. Jannis  
Vice President, Operations  
Sports World, Inc.  
4907 Allegheny Boulevard  
Pittsburgh, PA 16103

Dear Mr. Jannis:

Today's *Pittsburgh Examiner* online reports that your organization plans to expand its operations to include national distribution of sporting goods, and it occurs to me that you will be needing highly motivated, self-starting sales representatives and marketing managers. Here are three significant qualifications I have to offer:

Uses bulleted list to make letter easier to read

- Four years of formal training in business administration, including specialized courses in sales management, retailing, marketing promotion, and consumer behavior
- Practical experience in demonstrating and selling consumer products, as well as successful experience in telemarketing
- Excellent communication skills and a strong interest in most areas of sports (which helped me become a sportscaster at Penn State radio station WGNF)

Keeps letter brief to retain reader's attention

Refers to enclosed résumé

May we talk about how I can put these qualifications, and others summarized in the enclosed résumé, to work for Sports World as it develops its national sales force? I'll call during the week of June 5 to discuss your company's expansion plans and the opportunity for an interview.

Takes initiative for follow-up

Sincerely yours,

*Donald W. Vinton*  
Donald W. Vinton

Enclosure

unwilling to read a long, detailed letter. Donald's unsolicited letter "prospects" for a job. Some job candidates believe that such letters may be even more productive than efforts to secure advertised jobs, since prospecting candidates face less competition and show initiative. Notice that Donald's letter uses a personal business letter format with his return address above the date.

### Highlighting Your Strengths in the Body

Once you have captured the attention of the reader and identified your purpose in the letter opening, you should use the body of the letter to promote your qualifications for this position. If you are responding to an advertisement, you will want to explain how your preparation and experience fill the stated requirements. If you are prospecting for a job, you may not know the exact requirements. Your employment research and knowledge of your field, however, should give you a reasonably good idea of what is expected for this position.

The body of the cover letter promotes the candidate's qualifications for the targeted job.

It is also important to stress reader benefits. In other words, you should describe your strong points in relation to the needs of the employer. Hiring officers want you to tell them what you can do for their organizations. This is more important than telling what courses you took in college or what duties you performed in your previous jobs. Instead of *I have completed courses in business communication, report writing, and technical writing*, try this:

*Courses in business communication, report writing, and technical writing have helped me develop the research and writing skills required of your technical writers.*

Choose your strongest qualifications and show how they fit the targeted job. Remember that students with little experience are better off spotlighting their education and its practical applications, as these candidates did:

*Because you seek an architect's apprentice with proven ability, I submit a drawing of mine that won second place in the Sinclair College drafting contest last year.*

*Composing e-mails, business letters, memos, and reports in my business communication and office technology courses helped me build the writing, language, proofreading, and computer skills mentioned in your ad for an administrative assistant.*

In the body of your letter, you may choose to discuss relevant personal traits. Employers are looking for candidates who, among other things, are team players, take responsibility, show initiative, and learn easily. Do not just list several personal traits, though; instead, include documentation that proves you possess these traits. Notice how the following paragraph uses action verbs to paint a picture of a promising candidate:

*In addition to honing technical and academic skills at Mid-State University, I have gained interpersonal, leadership, and organizational skills. As vice president of the business students' organization, Gamma Alpha, I helped organize and supervise two successful fund-raising events. These activities involved conceptualizing the tasks, motivating others to help, scheduling work sessions, and coordinating the efforts of 35 diverse students in reaching our goal. I enjoyed my success with these activities and look forward to applying such experience in your management trainee program.*

Finally, in this section or the next, you should refer the reader to your résumé. Do so directly or as part of another statement, as shown here:

*As you will notice from my enclosed résumé, I will graduate in June with a bachelor's degree in business administration. Please refer to the attached résumé for additional information regarding my education, experience, and references.*

## Motivating Action in the Closing

After presenting your case, you should conclude by asking confidently for an interview. Don't ask for the job. To do so would be presumptuous and naïve. In requesting an interview, you might suggest reader benefits or review your strongest points. Sound sincere and appreciative. Remember to make it easy for the reader to agree by supplying your telephone number and the best times to call you. In addition, keep in mind that some hiring officers prefer that you take the initiative to call them. Avoid expressions such as *I hope*, which will weaken your closing. Here are possible endings:

*This brief description of my qualifications and the additional information on my résumé demonstrate my genuine desire to put my skills in accounting to work for McLellan and Associates. Please call me at (405) 488-2291 before 10 a.m. or after 3 p.m. to arrange an interview.*

Employers seek employees who are team players, take responsibility, show initiative, and learn easily.

The closing of a cover letter confidently requests an interview and makes it easy to respond.

*To add to your staff an industrious, well-trained administrative assistant with proven word processing and communication skills, call me at (350) 492-1433 to arrange an interview. I look forward to meeting with you to further discuss my qualifications.*

*Please allow me to discuss my qualifications for the financial analyst position more fully in an interview. You can reach me at (213) 458-4030. Next week, after you have examined the enclosed résumé, I will call you to discuss the possibility of arranging an interview.*

## Sending Your Cover Letter

More than 90 percent of résumés at Fortune 500 companies arrive by e-mail or are submitted through the corporate Web site.<sup>43</sup> Many applicants using technology make the mistake of not including cover letters with their résumés submitted by e-mail or by fax. A résumé that arrives without a cover letter makes the receiver wonder what it is and why it was sent. Recruiters want you to introduce yourself, and they also are eager to see some evidence that you can write. Some candidates either skip the cover letter or think they can get by with one-line cover letters such as this: *Please see attached résumé, and thanks for your consideration.*

If you are serious about landing the job, take the time to prepare a professional cover letter. If you are sending your résumé by e-mail, you may use the same cover letter you would send by postal mail but shorten it a bit. As illustrated in Figure 13.14, an inside address is unnecessary for an e-mail recipient. Also, move your return address from the top of the letter to just below your name. Include your e-mail address and phone number. Remove tabs, bullets, underlining, and italics that might be problematic in e-mail messages. If you are submitting your résumé by fax, send the same cover letter you would send by postal mail. If you are submitting your résumé as a PDF file, do the same for your cover letter.

Serious job candidates send a professional cover letter even if the résumé is submitted online, by e-mail, or by fax.

**FIGURE 13.14** E-Mail Cover Letter

**To:** Courtney L. Donahue <courtney.donahue@delrio.com>  
**From:** Tonya L. Powell <tpowell@yahoo.com>  
**Subject:** Application for Assistant Product Manager Position Advertised 5-22-13  
**Cc:**

**Addresses proper person by name** → Dear Ms. Donahue:

**Transfers traditional cover letter to e-mail** → Your advertisement for an assistant product manager, appearing May 22 in the employment section of your company Web site, immediately caught my attention because my education and training closely parallel your needs. The advertisement says the job involves coordinating marketing programs, analyzing sales results, and tracking marketing budgets.

**Provides complete subject line identifying purpose** →

**Calls attention to résumé embedded in same message** → I would like to discuss my qualifications with you and answer any questions you have about my résumé, which is embedded below. The best way to reach me is to call my cell at (713) 343-2910. I look forward to putting my skills to work for Del Rio Enterprises.

**Uses signature block for all contact information** → Sincerely,  
Tonya L. Powell  
1770 Hawthorne Place  
Boulder, CO 80304  
E-mail: tpowell@yahoo.com  
Cell: (713) 343-2910

**Reminds receiver that attractive print résumé is available** → Plain-text résumé embedded below. Attractive print résumé available on request.