

# Building Résumés

## Chapter Outline

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### Evaluating Your Strengths and Interests

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## Changing Channels



Channels for job documents are changing so rapidly that newspapers and business magazines are running articles on the subject. In 2010, *Fortune* ran an eight-page story on LinkedIn, “How LinkedIn Will Fire Up Your Career.” Calling it Facebook for grownups, *Fortune* says that LinkedIn is the only social site that matters for careers.

The numbers for LinkedIn are impressive. The site has over 60 million profiles and more than a half million groups—based on companies, schools, and

affinities—you can join to help you make connections. You can attach your résumé, pack your profile with key words that make you easy to find, connect to your

blog and Twitter account, and invite colleagues to comment on your work (and approve all comments before they appear on your profile).

Your profile will be in good company. The average member is college-educated and makes \$107,000. Every *Fortune* 500 company is represented.

You do have your profile there, right?

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*“Fortune says that LinkedIn is the only social site that matters for careers.”*

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Source: Jessi Hempel, “How LinkedIn Will Fire Up Your Career,” *Fortune*, April 2010, 74–82.

## Learning Objectives

After studying this chapter, you will know how to

**LO 12-1** Prepare a detailed time line for your job search.

**LO 12-2** Prepare a résumé that makes you look attractive to employers.

**LO 12-3** Deal with common difficulties that arise during job searches.

**LO 12-4** Handle the online portion of job searches.

**LO 12-5** Keep your résumé honest.

You will probably change jobs many times during your career. Although no longitudinal study has ever been completed, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics has started one, the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth. It shows that the average person born in the latter years of the baby boom held an average of 11 jobs from age 18 to age 44. In fact, 25% of them have held 15 jobs or more. Even in middle age, when job changing slows down, 68% of jobs ended in fewer than five years. This means that you should keep your résumé up to date.<sup>1</sup>

A **résumé** is a persuasive summary of your qualifications for a job with a specific employer. If you're on the job market, having a résumé is a basic step in the job hunt. When you're employed, having an up-to-date résumé makes it easier to take advantage of opportunities that may come up for even better jobs. If you're several years away from job hunting, preparing a résumé now will help you become more conscious of what to do in the next two or three years to make yourself an attractive candidate.

This chapter covers paper and electronic résumés. Job application letters (sometimes called cover letters) are discussed in Chapter 13. Chapter 14 discusses interviews and communications after the interview. All three chapters focus on job hunting in the United States. Conventions, expectations, and criteria differ from culture to culture: different norms apply in different countries.

All job communications should be tailored to your unique qualifications and the specifications of the job you want. Adopt the wording or layout of an example if it's relevant to your own situation, but don't be locked into the forms in this book. You've got different strengths; your résumé will be different, too.

### A TIME LINE FOR JOB HUNTING **LO 12-1**

Many employers consider the way you do your job hunt to be evidence of the way you will work for them. Therefore, you should start preparing yourself several years ahead of your formal applications.

Informal preparation for job hunting should start soon after you arrive on campus. Check out the services of your college placement and advising offices. Join extracurricular organizations on campus and in the community to increase your knowledge and provide a network for learning about jobs. Find a job that gives you experience. Note which courses you like—and why you like them. If you like thinking and learning about a subject, you're more likely to enjoy a job in that field. Select course projects and paper topics that will help you prepare for a job—and look good on your résumé.

Once you have selected a major, start reading job ads, particularly those posted on your professional organization's website. What kinds of jobs are

available? Do you need to change your course selections to better fit them? What kinds of extras are employers seeking? Do they want communication skills? Extra statistics courses? International experience? Learn this information early while you still have time to add to the knowledge and skill sets you are acquiring. Attend job seminars and job fairs. Join your professional association and its listserv.

Formal preparation for job hunting should begin a full year *before you begin interviewing*. Enroll for the services of your campus placement office. Ask friends who are on the job market about their experiences in interviews; find out what kinds of job offers they get. Check into the possibility of getting an internship or a co-op job that will give you relevant experience before you interview.

The year you interview, register with your Placement Office early. An active job search takes significant chunks of time, so plan accordingly. If you plan to graduate in the spring, prepare your résumé and plan your interview strategy early in the fall. Initial campus interviews occur from October to February for May or June graduation. In January or February, write to any organization you'd like to work for that hasn't interviewed on campus. From February to April, you're likely to visit one or more offices for a second interview.

Try to have a job offer lined up *before* you get the degree. People who don't need jobs immediately are more confident in interviews and usually get better job offers. If you have to job-hunt after graduation, plan to spend at least 30 hours a week on your job search. The time will pay off in a better job that you find more quickly.

## EVALUATING YOUR STRENGTHS AND INTERESTS

A self-assessment is the first step in producing a good résumé. Each person could do several jobs happily. Richard Bolles, a nationally recognized expert in career advising for over a third of a century and author of the *What Color Is Your Parachute* books, says most people who don't find a job they like fail because they lack information about themselves.<sup>2</sup> Personality and aptitude tests can tell you some of your strengths, but you should still answer for yourself questions like these:

- What skills and strengths do you have?
- What achievements have given you the most satisfaction? *Why* did you enjoy them? What jobs would offer these kinds of satisfactions?
- What work conditions do you like? Would you rather have firm deadlines or a flexible schedule? Do you prefer working independently or with other people? Do you prefer specific instructions and standards for evaluation or freedom and uncertainty? How comfortable are you with pressure? How much challenge do you want?
- What kind of work/life balance do you want? Are you willing to take work home? To work weekends? To travel? How important is money to you? Prestige? Time to spend with family and friends?
- How fast do you want to move up? Are you willing to pay your dues for several years before you are promoted?
- Where do you want to live? What features in terms of weather, geography, cultural and social life do you see as ideal?
- Is it important to you that your work achieve certain purposes or values, or do you see work as just a way to make a living? Are an organization's culture and ethical standards important to you? If so, what values will you look for?



### What Employers Want, I

You can increase your odds of getting an interview by understanding what hiring managers are thinking while they evaluate your résumé. The following are questions managers ask themselves:

**Can this applicant fill the needs of the company?** Your résumé should stress all of your most relevant skills and experience which match the position opening. Rather than submitting a generic résumé for every position you apply for, create a customized résumé based on your review of the job opening.

**Will this applicant stay with the company long term?** Managers seek employees who are most likely to stay with a company long term because the hiring process is long, difficult, and costly. The cost of replacing an employee averages \$13,355 according to a study conducted by the Employment Policy Foundation. To avoid costly turnover, managers look at your résumé to see if you have a stable work history.

**Will this applicant be professional?** Your résumé represents your ability to communicate. Unfortunately, managers will eliminate résumés for the slightest problems since they may receive hundreds of résumés for one position. Make sure your résumé is easy to follow and does not contain typos or grammatical mistakes.

Adapted from Robert Half International, "What Employers Think When They Read Your Résumé," CareerBuilder, September, 23, 2008, <http://www.careerbuilder.com/Article/CB-427-Resumes-Cover-Letters-What-Employers-Think-When-They-Read-Your-R%C3%A9sum%C3%A9/>.



### What Employers Want, II

Careerbuilder.com asked hiring managers what the top five attributes are when they hire new graduates.

1. **Relevant experience:** Managers look for a candidate's ability to make his/her job experience relevant to the company—and find this ability lacking. Most managers say they view volunteer activities as relevant experience.
2. **Professionalism during the interview:** Managers want to see candidates who dress professionally, who have researched the company, and who are prepared to answer standard interview questions.
3. **Fit within the company culture:** Managers want candidates whose personalities and work styles fit well.
4. **Education:** Managers consider the school, degree, major, GPA, and relevant courses.
5. **Enthusiasm:** Managers want candidates who are clearly interested in the job and show the energy they would bring to their work.

Adapted from Laura Morsch, "Five Must-Haves for New Grads," Experience, Inc., accessed April 3, 2011, [http://tribe.experience.com/alumnus/article?channel\\_id=career\\_management&source\\_page=additional\\_articles&article\\_id=article\\_1156346148348](http://tribe.experience.com/alumnus/article?channel_id=career_management&source_page=additional_articles&article_id=article_1156346148348).

Once you know what is most important to you, check to see what businesses are looking for (see Figure 12.4). Then analyze the job market to see where you could find what you want. Each possibility will require somewhat different training and course selection, underscoring the need for you to begin considering your job search process early in your college career.

## USING THE INTERNET IN YOUR JOB SEARCH

The Internet is a crucial tool for job seekers as well as employers.

Probably the most common use of the Internet for job candidates is to search for openings (see Figure 12.1). In addition to popular job boards like Monster and CareerBuilder job candidates typically search for jobs posted on organizations' Facebook pages, LinkedIn sites, and Twitter (TwitJobSearch.com). They also check electronic listings in local newspapers and professional societies. However, you do need to be careful when responding to online ads. Some of them turn out to be pitches from career or financial services firms, or even phishing ads—ploys from identity thieves seeking your personal information.

**Phishing** ads often look like real postings; many have company names and logos nearly identical to those of real employers. People behind phishing ads may even e-mail job candidates to build up trust. Privacy experts caution job candidates to be particularly careful with job postings that lack details about the hiring company or job description, and ads that list a large salary range.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to searching for ads, every job candidate should check the Internet for information about writing résumés and application letters, researching specific companies and jobs, and preparing for interviews. Many comprehensive sites give detailed information that will help you produce more effective documents and be a better-prepared job candidate.

As you search the Web, remember that not all sites are current and accurate. In particular, be careful of .com sites: some are good, others are not. Check your school's career site for help. Check the sites of other schools: Stanford, Berkeley, and Columbia have particularly excellent career sites. And even good sources can have advice that is bad for you. Figure 12.2 lists some of the best sites.

A relatively new use of the Internet for job searchers is online job fairs. At online fairs, you can browse through virtual booths, leave your résumé at promising ones, and sometimes even apply on the spot, all without leaving your home. Other advantages of online job fairs are their wide geographic and 24-hour access.

**Figure 12.1** Job Listings on the Web

Job Sites	
<b>America's Job Bank</b> www.jobbankinfo.org	<b>Monster.com</b> www.monster.com
<b>CareerBuilder.com</b> www.careerbuilder.com	<b>MonsterTrak</b> http://college.monster.com
<b>Careers.org</b> www.careers.org	Job listings from the <i>Chicago Tribune</i> , <i>Detroit News</i> , <i>Los Angeles Times</i> , <i>Miami Herald</i> , <i>Philadelphia Inquirer</i> , <i>San Jose Mercury News</i> , and other city newspaper's websites.
<b>EmploymentGuide.com</b> www.employmentguide.com	
<b>Federal Jobs Career Central</b> www.fedjobs.com	
<b>Indeed.com</b> www.indeed.com	

**Figure 12.2** Comprehensive Web Job Sites Covering the Entire Job Search Process

About.com (Part of New York Times Company) http://jobsearch.about.com	Monster.com www.monster.com
Campus Career Center www.campuscareercenter.com	MonsterCollege http://college.monster.com/?wtime_n=monstertrak
CareerBuilder www.careerbuilder.com	OWL (Purdue Online Writing Lab) http://owl.english.purdue.edu
Career Rookie www.careerrookie.com	Quintessential Careers www.quintcareers.com
College Central www.collegecentral.com	The Riley Guide www.rileyguide.com
College Grad Job Hunter www.collegegrad.com	Spherion Career Center www.spherion.com/corporate/ret-registered.jsp
The Five O'Clock Club www.fiveoclockclub.com	wetfeet www.wetfeet.com/undergrad
JobHuntersBible.com (Dick Bolles) www.jobhuntersbible.com	Vault www.vault.com

As you do all this research for your job hunt, you will probably begin to find conflicting advice. When evaluating suggestions, consider the age of the advice; what was true five years ago may not be true today, because the job search process is changing so. Also consider your industry; general advice that works for most may not work for your industry. Above all, consider what advice helps you present yourself as favorably as possible.

## PERSONAL BRANDING

A specialized use of the Internet is for **personal branding**, a popular term for marketing yourself, including job searching. It covers an expectation that you will use various options, from the traditional résumé and cover letter to social media, to market your expertise. According to one recent survey, 83% of employers use social media to find new employees. Of those, 89% use LinkedIn, 28% use Facebook, and 14% use Twitter.<sup>4</sup> As has always been true of job searches, you will use these tools to show your value (what do you offer employers?) and quality (why should they hire you instead of other candidates?). These are some of the most popular tools:

- **LinkedIn:** This site allows you to include useful information beyond your résumé, and, unlike your web page, it has a powerful search engine behind it.
- **Personal web page:** Your web page allows you to connect to examples of your professional work.
- **Blogs:** A blog in particular can contribute to your professional image if it focuses on your professional specialty and current issues in your field. However, keeping a blog up to date is time-consuming work during an already stressful period.



### Rebranding Yourself

Whether you are looking to advance in your career or to change careers entirely, you may need to do some personal rebranding. *Rebranding* is the effort you make to change other people's perceptions about who you are and what you do well. But it is not always an easy process. Here are five tips to help you with your rebranding:

1. **Set your goals.** Who do you want to be? What skills will you need to get there?
2. **Define your points of difference.** What makes you special? How can your differences help you be noticed and connected with your new brand?
3. **Develop a narrative.** How do your past experiences and skills strengthen your new career?
4. **Reintroduce yourself.** How will you tell your friends and co-workers about your new brand?
5. **Prove your worth.** How can you show that you will be a contributing member of your new field?

These five steps will help you on your path to a new personal brand.

Adapted from Dorie Clark, "Reinventing Your Personal Brand," *Harvard Business Review*, 89, no. 3 (2011): 78–81.



### Digital Dirt

Do you wonder if your employer can find out if you committed a crime, experienced financial difficulties, really attended college, or received a driving ticket? According to a survey of executive recruiters by ExecuNet, an executive job-search and networking organization, 75% of recruiters use search engines to uncover information about job candidates.

Prospective employers can use employment screening services to obtain records from private, state and federal agencies. Employers also check social networking sites such as Facebook, and Google names to find blogs and personal websites.

Remember that nothing on the Web is private. Do not post or write anything on the Internet that you do not want a prospective employer to see—starting today.

How can you clean up your reputation online?

- Google yourself. If you find something you would rather your prospective employer did not see, contact the website and ask for it to be removed.
- Clean up your Facebook or personal website. Remove any pictures that may not present a professional image or may be misunderstood by an outsider, especially pictures showing you drinking or dressed inappropriately.
- Cover negative information by increasing your positive online presence, including creating a professional web page with many links to your accomplishments.

Adapted from Jared Flesher, “How to Clean up Your Digital Dirt before It Trashes Your Job Search,” *Wall Street Journal*, January 12, 2006, <http://online.wsj.com/article/C60112FLESHER.html>.

- **Facebook:** Keep content professional. Avoid inappropriate language and all content involving alcohol, other drugs, and incomplete attire. Remember that Facebook has a history of making personal information public.
- **Twitter:** Share useful information such as thoughtful comments about news in your field as you work to build up your Twitter network. Aim for quality, not numbers. Also, follow companies you would like to work for.
- **Professional forums:** Participate thoughtfully: doing so enables people to recognize your name favorably when your application arrives.
- **Cover letter:** Still an excellent tool for personal branding. It gives you more room to provide supporting details about your value and quality.



**WARNING:** Select your tools carefully; you probably do not have time to use successfully all the tools on this list. Stay professional in all venues; avoid negative comments about people, your school, and your employers. In addition to content, writing (grammar, coherence, style, logic, spelling) will be judged by potential employers. The list of candidates rejected after a basic web search grows daily.

## NETWORKING

Many experts now consider networking to be THE most important factor in finding a job. It is important for entry-level work, and becomes even more crucial as you advance in your career.

Networking starts with people you know—friends, family, friends of your parents, classmates, teammates, gym mates, colleagues—and quickly expands to electronic contacts in the social media noted above. Let people know you are looking for a job, and what your job assets are. Use social media to emphasize your field knowledge and accomplishments. Join your school’s alumni association to find alumni in businesses that interest you.

The secret to successful networking is reciprocity. Too many people network just for themselves, and they quickly gain a “one-way” reputation that hurts further networking. Good networkers work for a “two-way” reputation; to earn it, they look for ways to reciprocate. They help their contacts make fruitful connections. They share useful information and tips. Successful networks are not just for finding jobs: they are vital for career success.

## A CAUTION ABOUT BLOGS, SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES, AND INTERNET TRACKING

Most employers routinely Google job candidates, and many report they are totally turned off by what they find—especially on personal blogs and web pages and social networking sites such as Facebook. If you have a personal blog, web page, or other electronic presence, check sites carefully before you go on the job market.

- Remove any unprofessional material such as pictures of you at your computer with a beer in your hand or descriptions of your last party.
- Remove negative comments about current or past employers and teachers. People who spread dirt in one context will probably do so in others, and no one wants to hire such people.

- Remove political and social rants. While thoughtful, supported opinions can show both education and logic, emotional or extreme statements will turn off most employers.
- Remove any personal information that will embarrass you on the job. If you blog about romance novels, but don't want to be teased about your choice in literature on your new job, make ruthless cuts on your blog.
- Remove inappropriate material posted by friends, relatives, and colleagues.
- Check your blog for writing aptitude. Many employers will consider your blog an extended writing sample. If yours is full of grammatical and spelling errors, obviously you are not a good writer.

Even if you take your blog off-line while you are job searching, employers may still find it in cached data on search engines. The best advice is to plan ahead and post nothing unprofessional on the web.



**WARNING:** According to a 2010 report on research commissioned by Microsoft, a quarter or more of recruiters also check photo- and video-sharing sites, gaming sites, virtual world sites, and classifieds and auction sites such as Craigslist, Amazon, and eBay.<sup>5</sup>

## USING AN INTERNSHIP AS A JOB HUNTING TOOL

Internships are becoming increasingly important as ways to find out about professions, employers, and jobs. Many companies use their internships to find full-time employees. GE, for example, makes about 80% of its new-graduate hires from students who held summer internships with the company; in 2010 PricewaterhouseCoopers offered a full-time job to 90% of its eligible summer interns. A *Wall Street Journal* survey of college recruiters found 25% reporting that more than 50% of their new-graduate hires came from their intern pools. The National Association of Colleges and Employers found in its 2010 survey of internships that 57% of interns became full-time hires (see Figure 12.3). In fact, some industry experts are predicting that within the next few years intern recruiting will largely replace entry-level recruiting.<sup>6</sup>

**Figure 12.3** Percentage of Interns Offered Full-Time Jobs

Industry	Percentage
Entertainment/media	85
Oil and gas extraction	81
Construction	80
Accounting	75
Food and beverage	71
Retail	70
Finance/insurance/real estate	67
Engineering	67
Computer and electronics	64
Chemical/pharmaceutical	61

Source: Joe Walker, "Getting Creative to Land an Internship," *Wall Street Journal*, June 8, 2010, D7.



Even if your internship does not lead to a full-time job, it can still give you valuable insight into the profession, as well as contacts you can use in your job search. An increasingly important side benefit is the work you do in your internship, which can become some of the best items in your professional portfolio.

## HOW EMPLOYERS USE RÉSUMÉS LO 12-2

Understanding how employers use résumés will help you create a résumé that works for you.

1. **Employers use résumés to decide whom to interview.** See Figure 12.4. (The major exceptions are on-campus interviews, where the campus placement office has policies that determine who meets with the interviewer.) Since résumés are used to screen out applicants, omit anything that may create a negative impression.
2. **Résumés are scanned or skimmed.** At many companies, résumés are scanned electronically. Only résumés that match key words are skimmed by a human being. A human may give a résumé 10 to 30 seconds before deciding to keep or toss it. You must design your résumé to pass both the “scan test” and the “skim test” by emphasizing crucial qualifications.
3. **Employers assume that your letter and résumé represent your best work.** Neatness, accuracy, and freedom from typographical errors are essential. Spelling errors will probably cost you your chance at a job, so proofread carefully.
4. **After an employer has chosen an applicant, he or she submits the applicant’s résumé to people in the organization who must approve the appointment.** These people may have different backgrounds and areas of expertise. Spell out acronyms. Explain awards, Greek-letter honor societies, unusual job titles, or organizations that may be unfamiliar to the reader.

**Figure 12.4** Employers Want Colleges to Place More Emphasis on These Skills

Skill	Percent
Effective communication, both oral and written	89
Critical thinking and analytical reasoning	81
Application of knowledge to the work world, through internships and other hands-on experiences	79
Ability to analyze and solve complex problems	75
Teamwork	71
Innovation and creativity	70
Understanding of basic concepts and new developments in science and technology	70
Ability to locate, organize, and evaluate information from multiple sources	68
Understanding of global contexts and developments	67
Ability to work with numbers and understand statistics	63

Source: Hart Research Associates, *Raising the Bar: Employers' Views on College Learning in the Wake of the Economic Downturn: A Survey among Employers Conducted on Behalf of the Association of American Colleges and Universities*, January 20, 2010, [http://www.aacu.org/leap/documents/2009\\_EmployerSurvey.pdf](http://www.aacu.org/leap/documents/2009_EmployerSurvey.pdf).

## GUIDELINES FOR RÉSUMÉS

Writing a résumé is not an exact science. What makes your friend look good does not necessarily help you. If your skills are in great demand, you can violate every guideline here and still get a good job. But when you must compete against many applicants, these guidelines will help you look as good on paper as you are in person.

### Length

A one-page résumé is sufficient, but do fill the page. Less than a full page suggests that you do not have very much to say for yourself.

If you have more good material than will fit on one page, use a second page. A common myth is that all résumés must fit on one page. According to surveys conducted by international staffing firm Accountemps of executives at the 1,000 largest companies in this country, approval of the two-page résumé is increasing *if* candidates have sufficient good material that relates to the posted job.<sup>7</sup> An experiment that mailed one- or two-page résumés to recruiters at major accounting firms showed that even readers who said they preferred short résumés were more likely to want to interview the candidate with the longer résumé.<sup>8</sup> The longer résumé gives managers a better picture of how you will fit in.

If you do use more than one page, the second page should have at least 10 to 12 lines. Use a second sheet of paper; do not print on the back of the first page. Leave less important information for the second page. Put your name and “Page 2” on the page. If the pages are separated, you want the reader to know whom the qualifications belong to and that the second page is not your whole résumé.

### Emphasis

Emphasize the things you’ve done that (a) are most relevant to the position for which you’re applying, (b) show your superiority to other applicants, and (c) are recent (in the last three to five years). Whatever your age at the time you write a résumé, you want to suggest that you are now the best you’ve ever been.

Show that you’re qualified by giving relevant details on course projects, activities, and jobs where you’ve done similar work. Be brief about low-level jobs that simply show dependability. To prove that you’re the best candidate for the job, emphasize items that set you apart from other applicants: promotions, honors, achievements, experience with computers or other relevant equipment, foreign languages, and so on.

You can emphasize material by putting it at the top or the bottom of a page, by giving it more space, and by setting it off with white space. The beginning and end—of a document, a page, a list—are positions of emphasis. When you have a choice (e.g., in a list of job duties), put less important material in the middle, not at the end, to avoid the impression of “fading out.” You can also emphasize material by presenting it in a vertical list, by using informative headings, and by providing details. Headings that name skills listed in the job ad, or skills important for the job (e.g., Managerial Experience) also provide emphasis and help set you apart from the crowd.

### Details

Details provide evidence to support your claims, convince the reader, and separate you from other applicants. Numbers make good details. Tell how many people you trained or supervised, how much money you budgeted or saved. Describe the interesting aspects of the job you did.



### Increasing Expectations for Employees

A survey conducted for the Association of American Colleges and Universities found that employers really are expecting more of their employees. You are not just imagining the change. Compared to past expectations, 88% to 91% expected employees to

- Take on more responsibilities.
- Use a broader skills set.
- Coordinate more with other departments.
- Acquire more learning and skills.
- Deal with more complex challenges.

How does your résumé reflect these new realities?

Adapted from Hart Research Associates, *Raising the Bar: Employers' Views on College Learning in the Wake of the Economic Downturn: A Survey among Employers Conducted on Behalf of the Association of American Colleges and Universities*, January 20, 2010, [http://www.aacu.org/leap/documents/2009\\_EmployerSurvey.pdf](http://www.aacu.org/leap/documents/2009_EmployerSurvey.pdf).

Too vague: Sales Manager, *The Daily Collegian*, University Park, PA, 2010–2012. Supervised staff; promoted ad sales.

Good details: Sales Manager, *The Daily Collegian*, University Park, PA, 2010–2012. Supervised 22-member sales staff; helped recruit, interview, and select staff; assigned duties and scheduled work; recommended best performers for promotion. Motivated staff to increase paid ad inches 10% over previous year's sales.

Omit details that add nothing to a title, that are less impressive than the title alone, or that suggest a faulty sense of priorities (e.g., listing hours per week spent filing). Either use strong details or just give the office or job title without any details.

## Writing Style

Without sacrificing content, be as concise as possible.

Wordy: Member, Meat Judging Team, 2008–09

Member, Meat Judging Team, 2009–10

Member, Meat Judging Team, 2010–11

Captain, Meat Judging Team, 2011–12

Tight: Meat Judging Team, 2008–12; Captain 2011–12

Wordy: Performed foundation load calculations

Tight: Calculated foundation loads

Résumés normally use phrases and sentence fragments. Complete sentences are acceptable if they are the briefest way to present information. To save space and to avoid sounding arrogant, never use *I* in a résumé. *Me* and *my* are acceptable if they are unavoidable or if using them reduces wordiness.

Verbs or gerunds (the *ing* form of verbs) create a more dynamic image of you than do nouns, so use them on résumés that will be read by people instead of scanning programs. In the following revisions of job responsibilities, nouns, verbs, and gerunds are in bold type:

Nouns: Chair, Income Tax Assistance Committee, Winnipeg, MB, 2011–2012. Responsibilities: **recruitment** of volunteers; flyer **design, writing, and distribution for promotion** of program; **speeches** to various community groups and nursing homes to advertise the service.

Verbs: Chair, Income Tax Assistance Committee, Winnipeg, MB, 2011–2012. **Recruited** volunteers for the program. **Designed, wrote, and distributed** a flyer to promote the program; **spoke** to various community groups and nursing homes to advertise the service.

Gerunds: Chair, Income Tax Assistance Committee, Winnipeg, MB, 2011–2012. Responsibilities included **recruiting** volunteers for the program; **designing, writing, and distributing** a flyer to promote the program; and **speaking** to various community groups and nursing homes to advertise the service.

Note that the items in the list must be in parallel structure (p. 135).



**WARNING:** All spelling and grammar should be perfect. If they are not your strong suits, pay an editor. In these days of massive responses to job postings, don't give recruiters an easy elimination of your résumé through careless errors. Remember that spell checks will not catch all errors, as all those store "mangers" will tell you.

## Key Words

Now that electronic résumé scans are common, all résumés, but particularly electronic résumés, need to use **key words**—words and phrases the employer will have the computer seek. Key words are frequently nouns or noun phrases: database management, product upgrades, cost compilation/analysis. However, they can also be adjectives such as *responsible*. Key words are frequently the objects of all those action verbs you are using in your résumé; conducted *publicity campaigns*, wrote weekly division *newsletter*.

Key words may include

- Software program names such as Excel.
- Job titles.
- Types of degrees.
- College or company names.
- Job-specific skills, buzzwords, and jargon.
- Professional organizations (spell out the name and then follow it with its abbreviation in parentheses to increase the number of matches).
- Honor societies (spell out Greek letters).
- Personality traits, such as creativity, dependability, team player.
- Area codes (for geographic narrowing of searches).

To find the key words you need in your job search, look through job ads and employer job sites for common terminology. If many ads mention “communication skills,” your résumé should too.

Some key words are widely popular. A survey of over 3,000 hirers conducted for CareerBuilder reported these key words as ones searched for most often:<sup>9</sup>

- Problem-solving and decision-making skills (50%)
- Oral and written communications (44%)
- Customer service or retention (34%)
- Performance and productivity improvement (32%)
- Leadership (30%)
- Technology (27%)
- Team-building (26%)
- Project management (20%)
- Bilingual (14%)

In addition to using popular key words, you should double-check to make certain your résumé uses the language of the particular job ad to which you are responding. If the ad uses “software engineers” instead of “computer programmers,” then your résumé should also use “software engineers.” If the ad talks about “collaboration,” you will use that word instead of “teamwork” when you discuss your group work experience.

Use key words liberally in your Summary of Qualifications section. However, to get an interview, your résumé will usually need to put key words into a context proving you have the skills or knowledge. This means that key words will also have to appear in the rest of your résumé, too. Since you will not know exactly what key words are desired, it makes sense to use some synonyms and similar terms: *manager* and *management*, *Excel* and *spreadsheets*, *creative* and *creativity*.

## Layout and Design

The layout and design of your résumé will be vital to catch the eye of the employer who is spending only 10 seconds on each document.



**WARNING:** Do not use résumé templates that come with word-processing software. Many employers see so many résumés from these templates that they learn to recognize—and discount—them.

Almost certainly, you can create a better résumé by adapting a basic style you like to your own unique qualifications. Experiment with layout, fonts, and spacing to get an attractive résumé. Consider creating a letterhead that you use for both your résumé and your application letter.

Decide what are your best selling points and promote them early. Since most résumés will be put into electronic formats (discussed later in chapter), make sure the first screen of information about you is strong, tempting readers to look further.

One of the major decisions you will make is how to treat your **headings**. Do you want them on the left margin, with text immediately below them, as in Figure 12.5? Do you want them alone in the left column, with text in a column to the right, as in Figure 12.7? Generally, people with more text on their résumés use the first option. Putting headings in their own column on the left takes space and thus helps spread a thinner list of accomplishments over the page. But be careful not to make the heading column too wide, or it will make your résumé look unbalanced and empty.

Work with **fonts**, bullets, and spacing to highlight your information. Do be careful, however, not to make your résumé look “busy” by using too many fonts. Generally three fonts should be the top limit, and you should avoid unusual fonts. Keep fonts readable by using at least 10-point type for large fonts such as Arial and 11-point for smaller fonts such as Times New Roman. Use enough white space to group items and make your résumé easy to read, but not so much that you look as if you’re padding.

Use **color** sparingly, if at all. Colored text and shaded boxes can prevent accurate scanning. Similarly, white 8½- by 11-inch paper is standard, but do use a good-quality paper.

All of these guidelines are much more flexible for people in creative fields such as advertising and design.

## KINDS OF RÉSUMÉS

Two basic categories of résumés are chronological and skills. A **chronological résumé** summarizes what you did in a time line (starting with the most recent events, and going backward in **reverse chronology**). It emphasizes degrees, job titles, and dates. It is the traditional résumé format. Figures 12.5 and 12.8 show chronological résumés.

Use a chronological résumé when

- Your education and experience are a logical preparation for the position for which you’re applying.
- You have impressive job titles, offices, or honors.

A **skills résumé**, also called a functional résumé, emphasizes the skills you’ve used, rather than the job in which you used them or the date of the experience. Figure 12.7 shows a skills résumé. Use a skills résumé when

**Figure 12.5** A Community College Chronological Résumé to Use for Career Fairs and Internships

## Lee Cheng

chengl@eccc.edu

*Vary font sizes. Use larger size for name and main headings.*

**Campus Address**  
1524 Main Street  
New Brunswick, NJ 08901  
732-403-5718

*Using both addresses ensures continuous contact information.*

**Permanent Address**  
2526 Prairie Lane  
Middlesex, NJ 00846  
732-404-7793

**Education**  
East Coast Community College  
AA in Financial Management, June 2012  
GPA: 3.0/4.0 *Give your grade average if it's 3.0 or higher.*

**Summary of Qualifications** *List 3–7 qualifications.*

*Use key words employers might seek.*

- Self-motivated, detail-minded, results-oriented
- Consistently successful track record in sales
- Effectively developed and operated entrepreneurial business

**Sales Experience**

**Financial Sales Representative**, ABC Inc., New Brunswick, NJ, February 2011–present

- Establish client base
- Develop investment strategy plans for clients
- Research and recommend specific investments

**Other Experience**

**Entrepreneur**, A-Plus T-Shirt Company, Middlesex, NJ, September 2008–January 2011

*One way to handle self-employment.*

- Created a saleable product (graphic T-shirts)
- Secured financial support
- Located a manufacturer
- Supervised production
- Sold T-shirts to high school students
- Realized a substantial profit to pay for college expenses

**Cook**, Hamburger Shack, Seaside Heights, NJ, Summers 2007–2008

- Learned sales strategies
- Ensured customer satisfaction
- Collaborated with a team of 25

**Collector and Repair Worker**, ACN, Inc., Middlesex, NJ, Summer 2005–2006

- Collected and counted approximately \$10,000 a day *Specify large sums of money.*
- Assisted technicians with troubleshooting and repairing coin mechanisms

**Other Skills**

Computer: Word, Excel, InDesign, WordPress, Outlook  
Language: Fluent in Spanish *Many employers appreciate a second language.*



### What Happens to Your Résumé?

Each year, technology giant Siemens Global hires more than 10,000 employees out of over 780,000 applicants. One civil engineering position had 187 applications, but only three made it through to the face-to-face interview. How does Siemens find the right people? CNNMoney found four key steps:

1. Hire internally. Like many corporations, Siemens advertises positions both internally and externally, but hires 40% of open positions from inside the company.
2. Use the web. Siemens posts jobs on Monster and CareerBuilder. Recruiters also use LinkedIn both to eliminate candidates and to recruit people who may not be looking for a job.
3. Use computers to scan applications and find applicants who match job requirements.
4. Conduct initial interviews by phone. Only after applicants pass this step can they be sent on to the hiring manager.

For large corporations, using technology and recruiters to screen applicants is vital to finding the right people for jobs.

Adapted from Tami Luhby, "The Secret Life of a Résumé," CNNMoney, May 18, 2011, <http://money.cnn.com/fdcp?unique=1305728467379>.

- Your education and experience are not the usual route to the position for which you're applying.
- You're changing fields.
- You want to combine experience from paid jobs, activities, volunteer work, and courses to show the extent of your experience in administration, finance, public speaking, and so on.

The two kinds differ in what information is included and how that information is organized. You may assume that the advice in this chapter applies to both kinds of résumés unless there is an explicit statement that the two kinds of résumés would handle a category differently.

## WHAT TO INCLUDE IN A RÉSUMÉ

Although the résumé is a factual document, its purpose is to persuade. In a job application form or an application for graduate or professional school, you answer every question even if the answer is not to your credit. In a résumé, you cannot lie, but you can omit some information that does not work in your favor.

Résumés commonly contain the following information. The categories marked with an asterisk are essential.

- Name and Contact Information\*
- Career Objective
- Summary of Qualifications
- Education\*
- Honors and Awards
- Experience\*
- Other skills
- Activities
- Portfolio

You may choose other titles for these categories and add categories that are relevant for your qualifications, such as computer skills or foreign languages.

Education and Experience always stand as separate categories, even if you have only one item under each head. Combine other headings so that you have at least two long or three short items under each heading. For example, if you're in one honor society and two social clubs, and on one athletic team, combine them all under Activities and Honors.

If you have more than seven items under a heading, consider using sub-headings. For example, a student who had a great many activities might divide them into Campus Activities and Community Service.

Put your strongest categories near the top and at the bottom of the first page. If you have impressive work experience, you might want to put that category first and Education second.

### Name and Contact Information

Use your full **name**, even if everyone calls you by a nickname. You may use an initial rather than spelling out your first or middle name. Put your name in big type.

If you use only one **address**, consider centering it under your name. If you use two addresses (office and home, campus and permanent, until \_\_\_\_\_ / after \_\_\_\_\_) set them up side by side to balance the page visually. Use either



A résumé is your most important document at career fairs.

post office (two-letter, full caps, no period) abbreviations for the state or spell out the state name, but do be consistent throughout your résumé.

Urbana, IL 61801

Wheaton, Illinois 60187

Give a complete **phone number**, including the area code. Some job candidates give both home and cellphone numbers. Do provide a phone number where you can be reached during the day. Employers usually call during business hours to schedule interviews and make job offers. Do not give lab or dorm phone numbers unless you are sure someone there will take an accurate message for you at all times. Also, be sure that all answering machines have a professional-sounding message.

If you have a **web page**, and you are sure it looks professional (both content and writing), you may wish to include its URL. Be sure your web page does not reveal personal information—such as marital status, ethnicity, religious beliefs, or political stance—that could work against you. Be particularly careful of photographs.

Provide an **e-mail address**. Some job candidates set up a new e-mail address just for job hunting. Your e-mail address should look professional; avoid sexy, childish, or illicit addresses. List your **LinkedIn** site, if you have one.

## Career Objective

Career objective statements should sound like the job descriptions an employer might use in a job listing. Keep your statement brief—two lines at most. Tell what you want to do, what level of responsibility you want to hold. The best career objectives are targeted to a specific job at a specific company.

Ineffective career objective: *To offer a company my excellent academic foundation in hospital technology and my outstanding skills in oral and written communication*



### Résumé Blunders

CareerBuilder.com's survey of hiring managers found these résumé howlers:

- Candidate listed God as a reference. (Alas, the candidate didn't include a phone number.)
- Candidate's e-mail address had "lovesbeer" in it.
- Candidate listed "Master of Time and Universe" under his experience.
- Candidate's condition for accepting the position was being allowed to bring his pet monkey to the workplace.
- Candidate sent a 24-page résumé for a five-year career.
- Candidate put a picture of her cat on top of her résumé.

Bullets quoted from Mary Lorenz, "The Candidate Tried to Hypnotize Me!" and More: Hiring Managers Share Their Strangest Resume Stories," CareerBuilder: The Hiring Site, September 15, 2010, <http://thehiringsite.careerbuilder.com/2010/09/15/hiring-managers-share-strangest-resumes/>.





### Objectiousable Objectives

[These job objectives did not help their writers:]

- "A job." Any one will do.
- "To obtain a position that will allow me to utilize my strengths and reinforce my weaknesses." Are you sure that's a good idea?
- "To become a billionaire." A candidate who's not on the money.
- "I am seeking a permanent position to get out of debt." Will we get anything out of the deal?
- "To obtain a position that will enable me to utilize my professional skills and knowledge in a capacity that demonstrates me intelligence." My, oh, my.
- "To work for XYZ Company." We'll forward your résumé to them.
- "My dream job would be as a professional baseball player, but since I can't do that, I'll settle on being an accountant." Your enthusiasm is overwhelming.
- "To learn new skills and gain training which will help me develop my new business." Your dedication is touching.

From Robert Half International, "Resumania Archive," <http://www.resumania.com/arcindex.html>. Reprinted with permission of Robert Half International.

Better career objective: [Hospital and medical sales for Rand Medical requiring experience with state-of-the-art equipment](#)

Good career objectives are hard to write. If you talk about entry-level work, you won't sound ambitious; if you talk about where you hope to be in 5 or 10 years, you won't sound as though you're willing to do entry-level work. When you're applying for a job that is a natural outgrowth of your education and experience, you may omit this category and specify the job you want in your cover letter.

Often you can avoid writing a career objective statement by putting the job title or field under your name:

Joan Larson Ooyen	Terence Edward Garvey	David R. Lunde
Marketing	Technical Writer	Corporate Fitness Director

Note that you can use the field you're in even if you're a new college graduate. To use a job title, you should have some relevant work experience.

If you use a separate heading for a career objective, put it immediately after your contact information, before the first major heading (see Figure 12.7). The résumé in Figure 12.5 does not use a Career Objective because it is being used for various jobs offered at a career fair. If you were particularly interested in several jobs there, you would make targeted résumés for those companies. More and more experts are advising that objectives be clarified in the cover letter rather than wasting valuable space at the top of the résumé.

## Summary of Qualifications

A section summarizing the candidate's qualifications seems to have first appeared with scannable résumés, where its key words helped increase the number of matches a résumé produced. But the section proved useful for human readers as well and now is a standard part of many résumés. The best summaries show your knowledge of the specialized terminology of your field and offer specific, quantifiable achievements.

Weak: [Staff accountant](#)

Better: [Experience with accounts payable, accounts receivable, audits, and month end closings. Prepared monthly financial reports.](#)

Weak: [Presentation skills](#)

Better: [Gave 20 individual and 7 team presentations to groups ranging from 5 to 100 people.](#)

Some career advisers believe a summary is too repetitious of other sections on a one-page résumé. They believe the space is better used by listing your achievements that set you apart from other candidates.

## Education

Education can be your first major category if you've just earned (or are about to earn) a degree, if you have a degree that is essential or desirable for the position you're seeking, or if you can present the information briefly. Put your Education section later if you need all of page 1 for another category or if you lack a degree that other applicants may have (see Figure 12.7).

Under Education, provide information about your undergraduate and graduate degrees, including the location of institutions and the year you received or expect your degree, if these dates are within the last 10 years.

Use the same format for all schools. List your degrees in reverse chronological order (most recent first).

Master of Accounting Science, May 2012, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ  
 Bachelor of Arts in Finance, May 2010, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, NM

BS in Industrial Engineering, May 2012, Iowa State University, Ames, IA  
 AS in Business Administration, May 2010, Des Moines Area Community College,  
 Ankeny, IA

When you're getting a four-year degree, include community college only if it will interest employers, such as by showing an area of expertise different from that of your major. You may want to include your minor, emphasis, or concentration and any graduate courses you have taken. Include study abroad, even if you didn't earn college credits. If you got a certificate for international study, give the name and explain the significance of the certificate. Highlight proficiency in foreign or computer languages by using a separate category.

To punctuate your degrees, do not space between letters and periods:

A.S. in Office Administration  
 B.S. in Accounting  
 Ed.D. in Business Education

Current usage also permits you to omit the periods (BS, MBA), but be consistent with the usage you choose.

Professional certifications can be listed under Education or in a separate category.

If your GPA is good and you graduated recently, include it. If your GPA is under 3.0 on a 4.0 scale, use words rather than numbers: "B- average." If your GPA isn't impressive, calculate your average in your major and your average for your last 60 hours. If these are higher than your overall GPA, consider using them. The National Association of Colleges and Employers, in its Job Outlook 2010 survey, found that 75% of employers do screen job applicants by GPA.<sup>10</sup> If you leave your GPA off your résumé, most employers will automatically assume that it is below a 3.0. If yours is, you will need to rely on internships, work experience, and skills acquired in activities to make yourself an attractive job candidate.

After giving the basic information (degree, field of study, date, school, city, state) about your degree, you may wish to list courses, using short descriptive titles rather than course numbers. Use a subhead like "Courses Related to Major" or "Courses Related to Financial Management" that will allow you to list all the courses (including psychology, speech, and business communication) that will help you in the job for which you're applying. Don't say "Relevant Courses," as that implies your other courses were irrelevant.

Bachelor of Science in Management, May 2012, Illinois State University, Normal, IL  
 GPA: 3.8/4.0

Courses Related to Management:

Personnel Administration	Business Decision Making
Finance	International Business
Management I and II	Marketing
Accounting I and II	Legal Environment of Business
Business Report Writing	Business Speaking

Listing courses is an unobtrusive way to fill a page. You may also want to list courses or the number of hours in various subjects if you've taken an unusual combination of courses that uniquely qualify you for the position for which you're applying.



### The Value of “Soft Skills”

What are MBA programs teaching? Soft skills—lessons in teamwork, leadership, and communication. Specifically, students are working on listening, teamwork, interpersonal communication, presentations, and sensitivity to others. Why? Businesses are requesting MBA graduates with strong soft skills because they believe these students will be employees who can lead, communicate, and negotiate.

In response, schools such as the Stanford Graduate School of Business are requiring all first-year students to take personality tests, participate in teamwork exercises, and examine their people skills. At Tuck, professors designed a program which places students in teams of five to work together throughout their program.

Recruiters note that job candidates need to present their soft skills in language appropriate for the particular job they are seeking.

Adapted from Phred Dvorak, “M.B.A. Programs Hone ‘Soft Skills,’” *Wall Street Journal*, February 12, 2007, B3; and Dana Mattioli, “Hard Sell on ‘Soft’ Skills Can Primp a Résumé: Experience with Facebook, Class Project, Juggling Activities Can Impress Employers,” *Wall Street Journal*, May 15, 2007, B6.

BS in Marketing, May 2012, California State University at Northridge  
 30 hours in marketing  
 15 hours in Spanish  
 9 hours in Chicano studies

If your course list is similar to that of others in your major, you should use the space for material that better shows your uniqueness. In that case, another way to fill the page is to include a Projects section, in which you highlight some course projects relevant to the jobs you are seeking.

As you advance in your career, your education section will shrink until finally it probably will include only your degrees and educational institutions.

## Honors and Awards

It’s nice to have an Honors and Awards section, but not everyone can do so. If you have fewer than three and therefore cannot justify a separate heading, consider a heading Honors and Activities to get that important word in a position of emphasis.

Include the following kinds of entries in this category:

- Academic honor societies. Specify the nature of Greek-letter honor societies (i.e., journalism honorary) so the reader doesn’t think they’re just social clubs.
- Fellowships and scholarships, including honorary scholarships for which you received no money and fellowships you could not hold because you received another fellowship at the same time.
- Awards given by professional societies.
- Major awards given by civic groups.
- Varsity letters; selection to all-state or all-America teams; finishes in state, national, or Olympic meets. (These could also go under Activities but may look more impressive under Honors. Put them under one category or the other—not both.)

Identify honor societies (“national journalism honorary,” “campus honorary for top 2% of business majors”) for readers who are not in your discipline. If your fellowships or scholarships are particularly selective or remunerative, give supporting details:

Clyde Jones Scholarship: four-year award covering tuition, fees, room, and board.

Marilyn Terpstra Scholarship: \$25,000 annually for four years.

Heemslly Fellowship: 50 awarded nationally each year to top Information Science juniors.

Be careful of listing Dean’s List for only one or two semesters. Such a listing reminds readers that in these days of grade inflation you were off the list many more times than you were on it. Omit honors like “Miss Congeniality” or “Muscle Man Star” that work against the professional image you want your résumé to create.

As a new college graduate, try to put Honors on page 1. In a skills résumé, put Honors on page 1 if they’re major (e.g., Phi Beta Kappa, Phi Kappa Phi). Otherwise, save them until page 2—Experience will probably take the whole first page.

## Experience

You may use other headings if they work better: Work Experience, Summer and Part-Time Jobs, Military Experience, Marketing Experience. In a skills résumé, headings such as “Marketing Experience” allow you to include accomplishments from activities and course projects. Headings that reflect skills mentioned in the job ad are particularly effective.

**What to include** Under this section in a chronological résumé, include the following information for each job you list: position or job title, organization, city and state (no zip code), dates of employment for jobs held during the last 10 to 15 years, and other details, such as full- or part-time status, job duties, special responsibilities, or the fact that you started at an entry-level position and were promoted. Use strong verbs such as the ones in Figure 12.6 to brainstorm what you’ve done. Try to give supporting details for highly valued attributes such as communication skills and leadership experience. Include any internships and co-ops you have had. Also, include unpaid jobs and self-employment if they provided relevant skills (e.g., supervising people, budgeting, planning, persuading). Experience information for skills résumés is discussed on page 387.

Normally, go back as far as the summer after high school. Include earlier jobs if you started working someplace before graduating from high school but continued working there after graduation, or if the job is pertinent to the one you are applying for. If you worked full-time after high school, make that clear.

The details you give about your experience are some of the most vital information on your résumé. As you provide these details, use bulleted lists (easy to read) rather than paragraphs which are harder to read and may be skipped over. Remember that items in lists need to have parallel structure; see page 135 for a refresher. Focus on results rather than duties; employers are far more interested in what you accomplished than in what you had to do. Use numbers to support your results wherever possible:

Supervised crew of 15

Managed \$120,000 budget; decreased expenses by 19%.

Wrote monthly electronic newsletter; increased hits by 12%.

Emphasize accomplishments that involve money, customers, teamwork, leadership, computer skills, and communication.

**Figure 12.6** Action Verbs for Résumés

analyzed	directed	led	reviewed
budgeted	earned	managed	revised
built	edited	motivated	saved
chaired	established	negotiated	scheduled
coached	evaluated	observed	simplified
collected	examined	organized	sold
conducted	helped	persuaded	solved
coordinated	hired	planned	spoke
counseled	improved	presented	started
created	increased	produced	supervised
demonstrated	interviewed	recruited	trained
designed	introduced	reported	translated
developed	investigated	researched	wrote



### Altruism and Jobs

Weak economies send more graduates to investigate working for social causes. And many of these grads find they like making a difference.

Teach for America, the nonprofit that trains top college grads for teaching in poverty school districts, saw applications jump 42% in 2009. The Peace Corps had 16% more applications.

All of these opportunities provide experience and leadership skills valuable on the job market. They also provide strong networks of successful alumni.

Increased competition for these positions means that applicants should highlight business experience, language skills (especially Spanish and French), and volunteer experience.

Will you make a difference?

Adapted from Kyle Stock, “Jobless Professionals Yearn to Do Good: Nonprofits See a Flood of Applications with Business and Legal Know-How,” *Wall Street Journal*, June 9, 2009, D6.



### I Do Good Work

[Create an “I Do Good Work” folder to] back up your claims of top performance with solid evidence.

Before you leave the office this Friday, write down five things you—not necessarily others—believe you did well this week, even if they represent common tasks. Perhaps you returned all phone calls, leaving no loose ends to tie at the end of the week. Or maybe the details you provide in your sales reports enabled you to find additional product fits for the client. Any letters from happy customers or e-mails thanking you for solving a problem should go right in your folder. . . .

Tuck that list away and continue this weekly exercise for the entire month. At the end of the month, narrow the four or five lists to 10 accomplishments that stand out to you. At the end of the year, review the 120 items and cull them to 25. Formalize the language that describes those 25 achievements and print them out in an organized manner . . . along with your references.

“When someone asks, ‘What do you bring to this organization?’ you won’t merely reply, ‘I’m good with people,’ you’ll hand that sales manager or HR person proof,” says professional trainer Carol Price.

Quoted from Julie Sturgeon, “All About You,” *Selling Power*, September 2000, 57.

Use past tense verbs for jobs you held in the past, and present tense verbs for jobs you still have. Do not list minor duties such as distributing mail or filing documents. If your duties were completely routine, say, at your summer job at McDonald’s, do not list them. If the jobs you held in the past were low-level ones, present them briefly or combine them:

2008–2012 Part-time and full-time jobs to finance education

If as an undergraduate you’ve earned a substantial portion of your college expenses with jobs and scholarship, say so in a separate statement under either Experience or Education. (Graduate students are expected to support themselves.)

These jobs paid 40% of my college expenses.

Paid for 65% of expenses with jobs, scholarships, and loans.

Paying for school expenses just with loans is generally not considered noteworthy.

**Formats for setting up Experience** There are two basic ways to set up the Experience section of your résumé. In **indented format**, items that are logically equivalent begin at the same space, with carryover lines indented. Indented format emphasizes job titles. It provides work information in this order:

Job title, name of organization, city, state, dates. Other information.

#### Experience

**Engineering Assistant**, Sohio Chemical Company, Lima, Ohio, Summers 2011 and 2012.

- Tested wastewater effluents for compliance with Federal EPA standards
- Helped chemists design a test to analyze groundwater quality and seepage around landfills
- Presented weekly oral and written progress reports to Director of Research and Development

**Animal Caretaker**, Animalcare, Worthington, Ohio, Summers 2008–2010.

**Two-margin or block format** frequently can be used to emphasize *when* you worked, if you’ve held only low-level jobs. Don’t use two-margin format if your work history has gaps.

#### EXPERIENCE

Summers, 2010–12	Repair worker, Bryant Heating and Cooling, Providence, RI
2010–11	Library Clerk, Boston University Library, Boston, MA. Part-time during school year
2008–10	Food Service Worker, Boston University, Boston, MA. Part-time during school year
Summer, 2009	Delivery person, Domino’s Pizza, Providence, RI

The left column can also emphasize steadily increasing job titles.

#### Experience at Gene Elton, Miami, Florida

Intern

Computer Programmer

Systems Analyst

The right column would list duties and dates.

Use a hyphen to join inclusive dates:

March–August, 2012 (or write out March to August, 2012)

2009–2012 or 2009–12

If you use numbers for dates, do not space before or after the slash:

10/10–5/11

**Skills résumés** Skills résumés stress the skills you have acquired rather than specific jobs you have held. They show employers that you do have the desired skill set even if you lack the traditional employment background. They allow you to include skills acquired from activities and course projects in addition to jobs. On the other hand, they are also a clue to employers that you do lack that traditional background, or that you have gaps in your job history, so you will need to make your skill set convincing.

In a skills résumé, the heading of your main section usually changes from “Experience” to “Skills.” Within the section, the subheadings will be replaced with the skills used in the job you are applying for, rather than the title or the dates of the jobs you’ve held (as in a chronological résumé). For entries under each skill, combine experience from paid jobs, unpaid work, classes, activities, and community service.

Use headings that reflect the jargon of the job for which you’re applying: *logistics* rather than *planning* for a technical job; *procurement* rather than *purchasing* for a job with the military. Figure 12.7 shows a skills résumé for someone who is changing fields.

A job description can give you ideas for headings. Possible headings and subheadings for skills résumés include

<b>Administration</b>	<b>Communication</b>
Budgeting	Editing
Coordinating	Fund-Raising
Evaluating	Interviewing
Implementing	Negotiating
Negotiating	Persuading
Planning	Presenting
Supervising	Writing

Many jobs require a mix of skills. Try to include the skills that you know will be needed in the job you want. You need at least three subheadings in a skills résumé; six or seven is not uncommon. Give enough detail under each subheading so the reader will know what you did. Put the most important category from the reader’s point of view first.

In a skills résumé, list your paid jobs under Work History or Employment Record near the end of the résumé (see Figure 12.7). List only job title, employer, city, state, and dates. Omit details that you have already used under Skills.

## Other Skills

You may want a brief section in a chronological résumé where you highlight skills not apparent in your work history. These skills may include items such as foreign languages or programming languages. You might want to list software you have used or training on expensive equipment (electron microscopes, NMR machines). As always on your résumé, be completely honest: “two years of high school German,” or “elementary speaking knowledge of Spanish.” Any knowledge of a foreign language is a plus. It means that a company desiring a second language in its employees would not have to start from scratch in training you. Figure 12.8 lists skills in its Qualifications section.



### Job Skills Checklist

Having trouble identifying your skills?

OWL, Purdue’s

Online Writing Lab, has an excellent list to help get you going. Connect the skills you identify to experiences in your life that demonstrate the skills; then put the best material into your résumé and cover letter. See this website: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/626/1/>.

**Figure 12.7** A Skills Résumé for Someone Changing Fields

<p><b>Molly Schooner</b> www.ukansas.edu/~Schooner88/home.htm</p>		<p><i>If you have a professional web page, include its URL.</i></p>	<p>266 Van Buren Drive Lawrence, KS 66044 schoonerm@ukansas.edu 785-897-1534 (home) 785-842-4242 (cell)</p>
<b>Objective</b>	<p>To contribute my enthusiasm for writing as a Technical Writer at PDF Productions</p>		<p><i>Job objective includes the position and name of the company.</i></p>
<b>Skills</b>	<p><b>Computer</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Designed a web page using Dreamweaver www.lawrenceanimalshelter.com</li> <li>Used a variety of Macintosh and PC platform programs and languages: Aspects(online discussion forum)      Adobe Professional Dreamweaver CS5      HTML PageMaker      Java Script XML      Photoshop CS5</li> </ul> <p><b>Design and Writing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Designed a quarterly newsletter for local animal shelter</li> <li>Developed professional brochures</li> <li>Wrote a variety of professional documents: letters, memos, and reports</li> <li>Edited internal documents and promotional materials</li> <li>Proofread seven student research papers as a tutor</li> </ul> <p><b>Organization and Administration</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinated program schedules</li> <li>Developed work schedules for five employees</li> <li>Led a 10-member team in planning and implementing sorority philanthropy program</li> <li>Created cataloging system for specimens</li> <li>Ordered and handled supplies, including live specimens</li> </ul>	<p><i>Largest section on skills résumé; allows you to combine experiences from work and class.</i></p> <p><i>Use parallel structure for bulleted lists.</i></p> <p><i>Specify computer programs you know well.</i></p>	
<b>Employment History</b>	<p>Technical Writer, Lawrence Animal Shelter, Lawrence, KS, 2010–present Undergraduate Lab Assistant, Department of Biology, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS, 2010–present Tutor, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS, 2009–2010</p>		<p><i>Condensed to make room for skills.</i></p> <p><i>Uses reverse chronology.</i></p>
<b>Education</b>	<p>Bachelor of Arts, May 2012 University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS Major: Animal Ecology Minor: Chemistry GPA: 3.4/4.0</p>		<p><i>Give minor when it can be helpful.</i></p>
<b>Honors</b>	<p>Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society Alpha Lambda Delta Honor Society, Ecology Honorary Dean's List, 2007 – present Raymond Hamilton Scholarship, 2010–2011 (\$5,000 to a top ecology student in Kansas)</p>		<p><i>End with strong items at the bottom of your page, a position of emphasis.</i></p> <p><i>Explain honors your reader may not know.</i></p>

**Figure 12.8** A One-Page Chronological Résumé

# Jeff Moeller

831.503.4692  
51 Willow Street  
San José, CA 95112  
jmoeller@csmb.edu

## Career Objective

To bring my attention to detail and love for computer/video games to Telltale Games as a Game Designer

*Use job title and company name in Career Objective.*

## Qualifications

- Experienced in JavaScript, Lua, and Python
- Intermediate proficiency with Visual Studio; high proficiency with Source Safe
- Excellent communication, interpersonal, and collaboration skills
- Advanced knowledge of computers
- Love of video games

*Highlights qualifications specific to the job.*

## Education

### California State University—Monterey Bay

August 2008–May 2012 (expected)

Bachelor of Science in Computer Science and Information Technology

*Keeps Education section simple to emphasize experience.*

## Experience

### Online Marketing Consultant—Self-Employed

October 2009–present

- Manage multiple-client Google Adwords accounts
- Install web software and implement designs for fast turnarounds
- Interface with clients using Basecamp

*Lists job titles on separate lines.*

### Editor-in-Chief—Point Network LLC

June 2007–present

- Write and edit for several LucasArts-related gaming news websites
- Design and code websites using Wordpress
- Manage and administrate the LucasForums.com community

*Use present tense verbs when you are doing the job now.*

### Online Marketing Assistant—Hayfield Group

May 2010–August 2010; May 2010–August 2011

- Managed all client Google Adwords accounts
- Assisted in or managed planning and executing PPC and SEO campaigns
- Coded the company website and integrated the Drupal CMS
- Prepared website analytics reports using Google Analytics and other analytics suites

*Use past tense for jobs that are over.*

### Community Manager—Praise Entertainment, Inc.

April 2009–September 2011

- Managed the community at AdminFusion.com, a website geared toward online forum owners
- Organized and ran a monthly contest for community members

## Honors and Activities

*Close with strong section.*

- Member of the gaming press for E3 2010 and 2011
- Member of second place team in 2011 National STEM Video Game challenge (see demo, “Parrot Villa” at [www.STEMChallenge.gov/2011\\_winners](http://www.STEMChallenge.gov/2011_winners))

*Include activities that employer might value.*





### What to Know about Job References

Many job reference myths exist that may undermine your job search:

**Myth:** I don't have to mention a job that didn't work out, especially if I worked there only a short while.

**Fact:** Employers check jobs through Social Security, and they will believe the worst of omissions.

**Myth:** Companies are not legally allowed to give damaging information about applicants.

**Fact:** Although many companies have formal policies of providing only bare-bones data, many employees within those organizations still engage in providing additional, negative information about applicants. Voice tone, or mentioning that you may not be eligible for rehire, may speak volumes.

**Myth:** References do not matter once you are hired.

**Fact:** References may still be checked after you are hired and can be used for grounds for termination.

**Myth:** References are not needed after you have a job.

**Fact:** Stay in contact with your references. You never know when you may want to change jobs.

## Activities

Employers may be interested in your activities if you're a new college graduate because they can demonstrate leadership roles, management abilities, and social skills as well as the ability to juggle a schedule. If you've worked for several years after college or have an advanced degree (MBA, JD), you can omit Activities and include Professional Activities and Affiliations or Community and Public Service. If you went straight from college to graduate school but have an unusually strong record demonstrating relevant skills, include this category even if all the entries are from your undergraduate days.

Include the following kinds of items under Activities:

- Volunteer work. Include important committees, leadership roles, communication activities, and financial and personnel responsibilities.
- Membership in organized student activities. Include important subcommittees, leadership roles. Include minor offices only if they're directly related to the job for which you're applying or if they show growing responsibility (you held a minor office one year, a bigger office the following year). Include so-called major offices (e.g., vice president) even if you did very little. Provide descriptive details if (but only if) they help the reader realize how much you did and the importance of your work, or if they demonstrate usable job skills.
- Membership in professional associations. Many of them have special low membership fees for students, so you should join one or more.
- Participation in varsity, intramural, or independent athletics. However, don't list so many sports that you appear not to have had adequate time to study.
- Social clubs, if you held a major leadership role or if social skills are important for the job for which you're applying.

As you list activities, add details that will be relevant for your job. Did you handle a six-figure budget for your Greek organization? Plan all the road trips for your soccer club? Coordinate all the publicity for the campus blood drive? Design the posters for homecoming? Major leadership, financial, and creative roles and accomplishments may look more impressive if they're listed under Experience instead of under Activities.

## Portfolio

If you have samples of your work available, you may want to end your résumé by stating "Portfolio (or writing samples) available on request." or by giving the URL for your work.

## REFERENCES

References are generally no longer included on résumés. Nor do you say "References Available on Request," since no job applicant is going to refuse to supply references. However, you will probably be asked for references at some point in your application process, so it is wise to be prepared.

You will need at least three, usually no more than five, never more than six. As a college student or a new graduate, include at least one professor and at least one employer or adviser—someone who can comment on your work habits and leadership skills. If you're changing jobs, include your current superior. For a skills résumé, choose references who can testify to your abilities in the most important skills areas. Omit personal or character references,

who cannot talk about your work. Don't use relatives, friends, or roommates, even if you've worked for them, because everyone will believe they are biased in your favor.

Always ask permission to use the person as a reference. Doing so is not only polite, but ensures the person will remember you when contacted. Instead of the vague "May I list you as a reference?" use, "Can you speak specifically about my work?" Jog the person's memory by taking along copies of work you did for him or her and a copy of your current résumé. Tell the person what qualifications a specific employer is seeking. Keep your list of references up-to-date. If it's been a year or more since you asked someone, ask again—and tell the person about your recent achievements.

On your list of references, provide name, title or position, organization, city, state, phone number, and e-mail for each of your references. If their connection to you is not clear, add an identifying line (former academic adviser; former supervisor at Careltons) so they do not look like personal references. You could also give the full mailing address if you think people are more likely to write than to call. Use courtesy titles (*Dr.*, *Mr.*, *Ms.*) for all or for none. By convention, all faculty with the rank of assistant professor or above may be called *Professor*.

References that the reader knows are by far the most impressive. In fact, employers may ask about you among people they already know: a former classmate may now work for them; a professor in your major department may consult for them. Through these routes, employers can get references about you even in companies whose formal human resources policy provides only dates of employment. Therefore, you should be well thought of by as many people as possible.

Some employers are also checking contacts on social networking sites such as LinkedIn and Facebook to find people who may know you. When you are on the job market, you may want to consider adjusting your privacy settings so that your contacts are visible to only a select few. On sites without such adjustments, you need to be careful with your contact list. Remember that Facebook has a history of making personal information public.

Include the name and address of your placement office if you have written recommendations on file there; that contact information will be all you need.

## WHAT NOT TO INCLUDE IN A RÉSUMÉ

Certain items do not belong on résumés used in the United States (standards differ in other countries). These include age, ethnicity, marital status, number of children, and health. Photographs also do not belong on résumés unless you are applying for jobs such as entertainment positions. Although interested parties can frequently find your picture on Facebook, for instance, pictures have long been excluded because of their ability to enable discrimination. For safety reasons, résumés should never include your Social Security number.

Including these kinds of information shows you have not researched the job-hunting process. Since many employers take your performance on the job hunt as an indication of the quality of work you will do for them, résumé lapses indicate that you may not be the best employee.

Since résumés are used to eliminate a large pool of job candidates down to the handful that will be interviewed, do not include controversial activities or associations. This category generally includes work for specific religious or political groups. (If the work is significant, you can include it generically: Wrote campaign publicity for state senator candidate.)

High school facts are generally omitted once you are a junior in college unless you have good reasons for keeping them. These reasons might include showing you have local connections or showing skill in a needed area not covered by college activities (perhaps you are applying for coaching jobs where a



### Résumé Checklist

Does the résumé have a good, easy-to-read layout?

Does it include your name, address, city, state, zip code, phone number, and e-mail address at the top of the page?

Does it use bullets or bold to highlight key elements?

Does it list information in order of relevance to the position?

Does it give specifics, not generalities, about your experience?

Did you double check the spelling, grammar and punctuation?

Does it use action verbs to describe your job duties?

Is your résumé truthful?

Is it tailored for a specific employer?

Does a 10-second reading reveal the basics about you?

Does the résumé warrant an interview, if you were an employer?

How does your résumé rate?

Adapted from UC Berkeley Career Center, "Résumé and Letter Writing: Résumé Checklist," in *Job and Internship Guide 2010–2011*, accessed April 3, 2011, <http://career.berkeley.edu/Guide/ResumeLetterWriting.pdf>.

variety of team sports will help you, and you played basketball in high school and volleyball in college). The fact that you have good high school activities but few if any college activities is not a good reason. In this case, listing high school activities will show you are on a downward trend at a very early age!

Do not pad your résumé with trivial items; they are easily recognized as padding and they devalue the worth of your other items. For instance, except under the most unusual circumstances, graduate students should not list grants for travel to conferences as honors, since such travel grants are ubiquitous. Some community groups, especially religious organizations, list all college graduates in their group-specific "honorary." Since everyone who graduates will belong, these are not considered honors.

As you advance in your career, you will continually cut information from earlier stages of your life, as well as from outside activities, to focus on your recent career achievements.

## DEALING WITH DIFFICULTIES LO 12-3

Some job hunters face special problems. This section gives advice for six common problems.

### "I Don't Have Any Experience."

If you have a year or more before you job hunt, you can get experience in several ways:

- Take a fast-food job—and keep it. If you do well, you'll be promoted to a supervisor within a year. Use every opportunity to learn about the management and financial aspects of the business.
- Sign on with agencies that handle temporary workers. As an added bonus, some of these jobs become permanent.
- Join a volunteer organization that interests you. If you work hard, you'll quickly get an opportunity to do more: manage a budget, write fundraising materials, and supervise other volunteers.
- Freelance. Design brochures, create web pages, do tax returns for small businesses. Use your skills—for free, if you have to at first.
- Write. Create a portfolio of ads, instructions, or whatever documents are relevant for the field you want to enter. Ask a professional—an instructor, a local business person, someone from a professional organization—to critique them.

If you're on the job market now, think carefully about what you've really done. Complete sentences using the action verbs in Figure 12.6. Think about what you've done in courses, in volunteer work, in unpaid activities. Especially focus on skills in problem solving, critical thinking, teamwork, and communication. Solving a problem for a hypothetical firm in an accounting class, thinking critically about a report problem in business communication, working with a group in a marketing class, and communicating with people at the senior center where you volunteer are experience, even if no one paid you.

### "All My Experience Is in My Family's Business."

In your résumé, simply list the company you worked for. For a reference, instead of a family member, list a supervisor, client, or vendor who can talk about your work. Since the reader may wonder whether "Jim Clarke" is any relation to the owner of

“Clarke Construction Company,” be ready to answer interview questions about why you’re looking at other companies. Prepare an answer that stresses the broader opportunities you seek but doesn’t criticize your family or the family business.

### “I Want to Change Fields.”

Have a good reason for choosing the field in which you’re looking for work. “I want a change” or “I need to get out of a bad situation” does not convince an employer that you know what you’re doing.

Think about how your experience relates to the job you want. Sam wants a new career as a pharmaceutical sales representative. He has sold woodstoves, served subpoenas, and worked on an oil rig. A chronological résumé makes his work history look directionless. But a skills résumé could focus on persuasive ability (selling stoves), initiative and persistence (serving subpoenas), and technical knowledge (courses in biology and chemistry).

Learn about the skills needed in the job you want: learn the buzzwords of the industry. Figure 12.7 shows a skills résumé of someone changing fields from animal ecology to technical writing. Her reason for changing could be that she found she enjoyed the writing duties of her jobs more than she enjoyed the ecology field work.

### “I’ve Been Out of the Job Market for a While.”

You need to prove to a potential employer that you’re up-to-date and motivated:

- Create a portfolio of your work to show what you can do for the employer.
- Do freelance work.
- Be active in professional organizations. Attend meetings.
- Look for volunteer work where you can use and expand relevant work skills.
- Attend local networking events.
- Read the journals and trade publications of your field.
- Learn the software that professionals use in your field.
- Be up-to-date with electronic skills such as IMing, text messaging, and computer searching.
- Take professional training to expand your skill set.

Employment counselors advise that you not leave a gap on your résumé; such a gap makes employers speculate about disasters such as nervous breakdowns or jail time. They suggest you matter-of-factly list an honorable title such as Parent or Caregiver; do not apologize. Better yet is to fill in the gap with substantial volunteer experience. Heading a \$75,000 fund-raising drive for a new playground looks good for almost any employer. A side benefit of volunteer work, in addition to new career skills, is networking. Boards of directors and agency executives are frequently well-connected members of the community.

### “I Was Laid Off.”

In times of large layoffs, this is not an overwhelming obstacle. You do not need to point out the layoff in your application materials; the end date of your last employment will make the point for you. Instead, use your documents to highlight your strengths.



#### Should I Create a Video Résumé?

##### What is a video résumé?

Job hunters post short videos as part of their job applications through services such as YouTube, Google video, and video résumé sites.

##### Who uses video résumés?

Anyone can. Currently, most video résumés are produced by applicants interested in entertainment and media, but job seekers in other industries are starting to use video postings.

##### What are the benefits to employers?

Employers get an opportunity to screen applicants before asking for an interview. This may save an employer from conducting an interview.

##### Are there risks?

Yes, discrimination on the basis of sex, age, and ethnicity.

If you decide to create a video posting, you may want to consider these tips for your video résumé:

1. Be brief and concise. Remember that employers generally spend less than 30 seconds per résumé. Don’t expect them to spend longer on your video.
2. Be prepared. Avoid reading a script. You should be conversational and natural in your presentation.
3. Tailor the video to the specific employer and position.
4. Be professional. Post a video that is clear, audible, and free from background noise.



### Résumé Blasting

Résumé blasting is the process of distributing your résumé to dozens, hundreds, or thousands of résumé sites and databases. Résumé blasting services will do the work for you, for a price. But don't yield to the temptation.

ResumeDoctor.com surveyed over 5,000 recruiters and hiring managers about online job postings. Top complaints were

1. Large numbers of irrelevant responses (92%). Most participants indicated that they receive hundreds of responses per online job posting.
2. Résumés not matching the job description (71%).
3. Job candidates “blasting out” résumés (63%).

Adapted from Universum WetFeet, “Looking Good on Paper,” accessed April 2, 2011, <http://www.wetfeet.com/Experienced-Hire/Resume-Cover-letter/Articles/Looking-Good-on-Paper.aspx>.

Do be prepared to be asked about the layoff in an interview. Why were you laid off when other employees were retained? It helps if you can truthfully give a neutral explanation: the accounting work was outsourced; our entire lab was closed; the company laid off everyone who had worked fewer than five years. Be sure you do not express bitterness or self-pity; neither emotion will help you get your new job. On the other hand, do not be overly grateful for an interview; such excess shows a lack of self-confidence. Be sure to show you are keeping yourself current by doing some of the items in the bulleted list in the previous section.

### “I Was Fired.”

First, deal with the emotional baggage. You need to reduce negative feelings to a manageable level before you're ready to job-hunt.

Second, take responsibility for your role in the termination.

Third, try to learn from the experience. You'll be a much more attractive job candidate if you can show that you've learned from the experience—whether your lesson is improved work habits or that you need to choose a job where you can do work you can point to with pride.

Fourth, collect evidence showing that earlier in your career you were a good worker. This evidence could include references from earlier employers, good performance evaluations, and a portfolio of good work.

Some common strategies may also give you some help for references. You should check with the Human Resources Department to understand the company's reference policy. Some companies now give no references other than verification of job title and work dates. Others do not give references for employees who worked only a short time.<sup>11</sup> Another option is to ask someone other than your former boss for a reference. Could you ask a supplier or vendor? A different department head?

A different tactic is suggested by Phil Elder, an interviewer for an insurance company. He suggests calling the person who fired you and saying something like this: “Look, I know you weren't pleased with the job I did at \_\_\_\_\_. I'm applying for a job at \_\_\_\_\_ now and the personnel director may call you to ask about me. Would you be willing to give me the chance to get this job so that I can try to do things right this time?” All but the hardest of heart, says Elder, will give you one more chance. You won't get a glowing reference, but neither will the statement be so damning that no one is willing to hire you.<sup>12</sup>

Above all, be honest. Do not lie about your termination at an interview or on a job application. The application usually requires you to sign a statement that the information you are providing is true and that false statements can be grounds for dismissal.

## ELECTRONIC RÉSUMÉS LO 12-4

In addition to a paper résumé for job fairs, interviews, and potential contacts, you will need electronic versions of your résumé. With a few exceptions noted below, these résumés will have the same content but will be formatted differently so they can be “read” by both software and humans.

### Sending Your Résumé Electronically

Many employers are asking to have résumés posted on their organizations' websites. When doing so, be sure you follow their directions exactly. You may also be asked by some employers to send your résumé by e-mail.



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Here are some basic guidelines of e-mail job-hunting etiquette:

- Don't use your current employer's e-mail system for your job search. You'll leave potential employers with the impression that you spend company time on writing résumés and other nonwork-related activities.
- Set up a free, Internet-based e-mail account using services such as Hotmail, Gmail, or Yahoo! to manage correspondence related to your job hunt.
- Avoid using silly or cryptic e-mail addresses. Instead of bubbles@aol.com, opt for something business-like: yourname@yahoo.com.
- Write a simple subject line that makes a good first impression: *Résumé—Kate Sanchez*. A good subject line will improve the chances that your résumé is actually read, since e-mail from unknown senders is often deleted without being opened. If you are responding to an ad, use the job title or job code listed.
- Before sending your résumé into cyberspace, test to see how it will look when it comes out on the other end. E-mail it to yourself and a friend, then critique and fix it.
- Send only one résumé, even if the firm has more than one position for which you qualify. Most recruiters have negative reactions to multiple résumés.
- Experts differ on whether candidates should phone to follow up. Phoning once to be sure your résumé arrived is probably fine.

It's important to heed the specific directions of employers that you are e-mailing. Many do not want attachments because of viruses. While a few may want a Microsoft Word or PDF attachment of your résumé, others may specify that you paste your résumé directly into the body of your e-mail message.

If you are sending your résumé in the text of an e-mail,

- Start all lines at the left margin.
- Do not use bold, underlining, bullets, tabs, or unusual fonts. Instead use keys such as asterisks.
- You can also put some headings in all capital letters, but use this device sparingly.
- To avoid awkward line breaks for your readers, shorten line lengths to 65 characters and spaces.



### Beware of Spam Filters

Employers are using filters to keep out spam and damaging computer viruses. Unfortunately, legitimate e-mails, including résumés, are also getting blocked. Applicants who send résumés with an e-mail may be rejected by spam filters for various reasons such as "foul" language (B.S.) or overused phrases (*responsible for or duties included*).

What can you do to avoid spam filters?

- Avoid acronyms or titles that may be considered "foul" language.
- Watch overusing words or phrases.
- Avoid words like *free*, *extend*, *unbelievable*, *opportunity*, *trial*, *mortgage*.
- Avoid using unusual colors.
- Be careful of using all capitals, exclamation points, or dollar amounts in subject lines.

What preventative steps can you take to avoid being caught by spam filters?

- Set your personal spam filter to high; then send your résumé to your own e-mail account
- Send your résumé to a spam checker.

Adapted from Michael Trust, "How to Stop Your Résumé from Becoming Spam," *Careerealism*, October 11, 2010, <http://www.careerealism.com/stop-resume-spam>.



### Play Safe

Before posting your job application online, you should verify the site is safe. Here are

some criteria:

1. **Have you heard of the site?** If not, be careful. Look for online reviews of the site.
2. **Does it ask you to register before you can search for jobs?** This is a big red flag. Try a different site.
3. **Does it have a comprehensive privacy policy?** Read the policy to see if they sell or rent your information. Putting up your job packet on a nonprivate forum could affect your identity in the future. Do not assume the site is protected if it has a privacy seal.
4. **Can you limit access to your personal contact information?** Identity theft is a growing problem. Good sites allow you to protect personal contact information.
5. **Does it let you delete your résumé after you get a job?** Safe websites should allow you to delete your documents or make them inactive while you are not conducting a job search. You don't want your new boss to think you are still on the job market for an even better position.

Adapted from Susan Joyce, "15 Critical Criteria for Choosing the Best Job Site for You," NETability, Inc., accessed April 3, 2011. <http://www.job-hunt.org/choosing.shtml>.

Your résumé will look plain to you, but the employers receiving it are used to the look of in-text résumés.

If you are sending your résumé as an attachment, name the document appropriately: Smith Robyn Résumé.docx. Never name it Résumé.docx; you do not want it to get lost in a long directory of documents.

With your résumé include a brief cover letter that will make the receiver want to look at your résumé. In it, mention the types of files you've included. (See Figure 13.8.) Remember, it takes only an instant for readers to delete your e-mail. Do not give them reasons to trash your résumé.

Some people confuse electronic and scannable résumés. The former are résumés you send in or attached to an e-mail. The latter are paper résumés specially formatted for older software. Software programs have greatly improved recently and most can now scan regular résumés posted on websites. However, if you are asked to send a scannable résumé, guidelines for creating one are in Appendix D.

## Posting Your Résumé on the Web

You will probably want to post your résumé online. Be selective when you do: stick with well-known sites for safety reasons. Choose one or two of the large popular sites such as Monster or CareerBuilder. Also choose one or two smaller sites, preferably ones specific to your desired occupation or location. A well-chosen niche site can show employers that you know your field. Studies are still showing that about 25% of external hires are made through job boards.<sup>13</sup>

Many responsible career sites recommend that you should not succumb to **résumé blasting**—posting your résumé widely on the web. Many employers consider such blasting to be akin to spam and they respond negatively to job candidates who do it.

If the websites you choose have you place your information into their résumé form, cut and paste from your résumé to avoid typos. Do not use résumé templates unless you are asked to do so; they will rarely present you as well as the layout you have designed for yourself.

For safety reasons, use your e-mail address as contact information instead of your address and phone number. Make sure your e-mail address looks professional; you should not be HotLips@Yahoo.com. To foil identity thieves, some web consultants also recommend that you remove all dates from your résumé, and that you replace employer names with generic descriptions (statewide information technology company). Identity thieves can take information directly from online résumés, or they can call employers and, claiming to be conducting background checks, get additional information.

Since many databases sort résumés by submission date, renew your résumé by making small changes to it at least every two weeks. If you don't get any response to your résumé after a month or two, post it on a different site.

If you post your résumé on your personal website, be sure that all the links go to professional-looking pages, such as documents you have created. Now is not the time to link to pictures of you partying. Also, make sure the first screen includes a current job objective and Summary of Qualifications. One study found that résumés on personal websites were particularly useful for self-employed workers, for whom they attracted clients.<sup>14</sup>

When you have your new job, remove your résumé from all sites. Your new employer will probably take a dim view of finding your résumé on job sites and it is virtually impossible to block your online résumé from people at your current place of employment.

## HONESTY LO 12-5

Be absolutely honest on your résumé—and in the rest of your job search. Just ask Marilee Jones, former Dean of Admissions at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). In 1979, when she applied for an admissions job at MIT, her résumé listed bachelor's and master's degrees from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. In reality, she attended there only one year as a part-time student. By 1997, when she was promoted to the deanship, she did not have the courage to correct her résumé. In April 2007, she was forced to resign, even though she was a nationally recognized leader in admissions, after an anonymous tip.<sup>15</sup>

Most businesses now conduct some kind of background check on job applicants. Even graduate schools, particularly business schools, are checking applicants.<sup>16</sup> A survey of over 3,000 hirers conducted for CareerBuilder reported that 49% had caught lies on résumés.

Background checks on job candidates can include a credit check, legal and criminal records, complete employment history, and academic credentials. Such checks turn up some incredible whoppers. Résumés have been found using someone else's photo, listing degrees from nonexistent schools, listing fake Mensa memberships, and even claiming a false connection to the Kennedy clan.<sup>17</sup>

You can omit some material on your résumé, because obviously you cannot include everything about your life to date. For instance, it's still ethical to omit a low GPA, although most employers will assume it is very low indeed to be omitted. But what you do include must be absolutely honest.

Some of the most frequent inaccuracies on résumés are inflated job titles and incorrect dates of employment. While these data are easy to fudge, they are also easy to catch in background checks. It is also possible that some of these particular inaccuracies come from careless records kept by job candidates. Do you remember the exact job title of that first job you held as a sophomore in high school? Keep careful records of your employment history!

If employers do an employment history check, and many do, they will have a complete work history for you. They will be able to spot inaccurate company names and work dates. If you left a company off your résumé, they may wonder why; some may assume your performance at that company was not satisfactory.

Other areas where résumés are commonly inaccurate are

- Degrees: many people conveniently forget they were a few hours short of a degree.
- GPAs: inflating one's grade point seems to be a big temptation.
- Honors: people list memberships in fake honoraries, or fake memberships in real honoraries.
- Fake employers.
- Job duties: many people inflate them.
- Salary increases.
- Fake addresses: people create these to have the "local" advantage.
- Fake contact information for references: this information frequently leads to family members or friends who will give fake referrals.
- Technical abilities.
- Language proficiency.

All dishonesty on a résumé is dangerous, keeping you from being hired if discovered early, and causing you to be fired if discovered later. However, the last two bullets listed above are particularly dangerous because your chances are good of being asked at an interview to demonstrate your listed proficiencies.



### Résumé Lies Lead to Termination

Listed below are high-level professionals who learned the hard way that eventually employers will discover discrepancies on résumés.

- Dave Edmondson, former chief executive of RadioShack, resigned after lying about having a college degree.
- George O'Leary, former Notre Dame football coach, resigned over inaccuracies in both his academic and athletic backgrounds.
- Jeffrey Papows, former CEO of Lotus Corporation, quit over discrepancies in his military and educational record.
- Kenneth Lonchar, CFO of Veritas software, resigned over inaccuracies in his academic background.

Have you checked your résumé to make sure you have not inflated your credentials?

Adapted from Rachel Zupek, "Infamous Résumé Lies," CareerBuilder, July 7, 2010, <http://msn.careerbuilder.com/Article/MSN-1154-Cover-Letters-Resumes-Infamous-R%C3%A9sum%C3%A9-Lies>.



## SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

**The Cost of a Typo**

Typos can cost you a job. Many employers say they will not consider résumés with spelling mistakes or typographical errors.

Why? Employers consider your job documents to be examples of your finest work. If you are careless on them, they assume you will be even more careless in the work you do for them.

Spell check is not enough. Too many “mangers” (managers) with great ability “to to” attend to detail are seeking work in the “pubic area” (public arena). You get the point. Proofread your documents carefully. Get your friends and family to proof them also, but remember, no one cares as much about your documents as you do. If English is not your first language, or your strong suit, consider paying for a professional editor. The success of your career starts with these documents.

- Informal preparation for job hunting should start soon after you arrive on campus. Formal preparation for job hunting should begin a full year before you begin interviewing. The year you interview, register with your placement office early.
- Personal branding and networking, particularly through social media such as LinkedIn, are now an important part of job searching.
- Employers skim résumés to decide whom to interview. Employers assume that the letter and résumé represent your best work.
- Emphasize information that is relevant to the job you want, is recent (last three years), and shows your superiority to other applicants.
- To emphasize key points, put them in headings, list them vertically, and provide details.
- Résumés use sentence fragments punctuated like complete sentences. Items in the résumé must be concise and parallel. Verbs and gerunds create a dynamic image of you.
- A **chronological résumé** summarizes what you did in a time line (starting with the most recent events, and going backward in **reverse chronology**). It emphasizes degrees, job titles, and dates. Use a chronological résumé when
  - Your education and experience are a logical preparation for the position for which you’re applying.
  - You have impressive job titles, offices, or honors.
- A **skills résumé** emphasizes the skills you’ve used, rather than the job in which or the date when you used them. Use a skills résumé when
  - Your education and experience are not the usual route to the position for which you’re applying.
  - You’re changing fields.
  - You want to combine experience from paid jobs, activities, volunteer work, and courses to show the extent of your experience in administration, finance, speaking, etc.
  - Your recent work history may create the wrong impression (e.g., it has gaps, shows a demotion, shows job-hopping, etc.).
- Résumés contain the applicant’s contact information, education, and experience. Career objectives, summary of qualifications, honors and awards, other skills, activities, and a portfolio reference may also be included.
- Many résumés are now sent electronically and are posted on the Internet or the organization’s website.
- Remove any unprofessional material from your personal web page, blog, and social networking sites.
- Always be completely honest in your résumé and job search.

## CHAPTER 12

## Exercises and Problems

\*Go to [www.mhhe.com/locker10e](http://www.mhhe.com/locker10e) for additional Exercises and Problems.

## 12.1 Reviewing the Chapter

1. What should you do soon after starting college to prepare for your job search? (LO 12-1)
2. What should you do a full year before your job search? (LO 12-1)
3. How can you use writing components such as emphasis and details to help set yourself apart from other candidates? (LO 12-2)

4. What are factors you should consider when preparing your contact information? (LO 12-2)
5. Why are career objectives hard to write? (LO 12-2)
6. What are key words? How do you use them in your summary of qualifications? In electronic résumés? (LO 12-2)
7. What kinds of details make your experience look most attractive to potential employers? (LO 12-2)
8. How can activities help make you look attractive to potential employers? (LO 12-2)
9. What can you do to help get the best references possible? (LO 12-2)
10. Pick one of the common problems job hunters may face and explain how you would deal with it if it happened to you during your career. (LO 12-3)
11. What are some basic guidelines of e-mail job-hunting etiquette? (LO 12-4)
12. What safety precautions do you need to take when you post your résumé online? (LO 12-4)
13. What roles are blogs and Facebook pages playing in the job search? (LO 12-4)
14. Why is it more important now than ever before to be completely honest on your résumé? (LO 12-5)

## 12.2 Reviewing Grammar

Most résumés use lists, and items in lists need to have parallel structure. Polish your knowledge of parallel

structure by revising the sentences in Exercise B.7, Appendix B.

## 12.3 Analyzing Your Accomplishments

List the 10 achievements that give you the most personal satisfaction. These could be things that other people wouldn't notice. They can be accomplishments you've achieved recently or things you did years ago.

Answer the following questions for each accomplishment:

1. What skills or knowledge did you use?
2. What personal traits did you exhibit?
3. What about this accomplishment makes it personally satisfying to you?

**As your instructor directs,**

- a. Share your answers with a small group of other students.
- b. Summarize your answers in a memo to your instructor.
- c. Present your answers orally to the class.

## 12.4 Remembering What You've Done

Use the following list to jog your memory about what you've done. For each item, give three or four details as well as a general statement.

Describe a time when you

1. Used facts and figures to gain agreement on an important point.
2. Identified a problem that a group or organization faced and developed a plan for solving the problem.
3. Made a presentation or a speech to a group.
4. Won the goodwill of people whose continued support was necessary for the success of some long-term project or activity.
5. Interested other people in something that was important to you and persuaded them to take the actions you wanted.

6. Helped a group deal constructively with conflict.
7. Demonstrated creativity.
8. Took a project from start to finish.
9. Created an opportunity for yourself in a job or volunteer position.
10. Used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.

**As your instructor directs,**

- a. Identify which job(s) each detail is relevant for.
- b. Identify which details would work well on a résumé.
- c. Identify which details, further developed, would work well in a job letter.

## 12.5 Developing Action Statements

Use 10 of the verbs from Figure 12.6 to write action statements describing what you've done in paid or volunteer

work, in classes, in extracurricular activities, or in community service.

## 12.6 Evaluating Career Objective Statements

The following career objective statements are not effective. What is wrong with each statement as it stands? Which statements could be revised to be satisfactory? Which should be dropped?

1. To use my acquired knowledge of accounting to eventually own my own business.
2. A progressively responsible position as a **MARKETING MANAGER** where education and ability would have valuable application and lead to advancement.
3. To work with people responsibly and creatively, helping them develop personal and professional skills.
4. A position in international marketing which makes use of my specialization in marketing and my knowledge of foreign markets.
5. To bring Faith, Hope, and Charity to the American workplace.
6. To succeed in sales.
7. To design and maintain web pages.

## 12.7 Deciding How Much Detail to Use

In each of the following situations, how detailed should the applicant be? Why?

1. Ron Oliver has been steadily employed for the last six years while getting his college degree, but the jobs have been low-level ones, whose prime benefit was that they paid well and fit around his class schedule.
2. Adrienne Barcus was an assistant department manager at a clothing boutique. As assistant manager, she was authorized to approve checks in the absence of the manager. Her other duties were ringing up sales, cleaning the area, and helping mark items for sales.
3. Lois Heilman has been a clerk-typist in the Alumni Office. As part of her job, she developed a schedule for mailings to alumni, set up a merge system, and wrote two of the letters that go out to alumni. The merge system she set up has cut in half the time needed to produce letters.
4. As a co-op student, Stanley Greene spends every other term in a paid job. He now has six semesters of job experience in television broadcasting. During his last co-op he was the assistant producer for a daily "morning magazine" show.

## 12.8 Evaluating Web Résumés

Evaluate five résumés you find on the web. Many schools of business have places where students can post résumés online. You may find other résumés on job boards (see the list in Figure 12.2).

**As your instructor directs,**

- a. Share your results with a small group of students.
- b. Write an e-mail message analyzing what works and what doesn't. Provide URLs or links to the pages you discuss.
- c. Write a memo analyzing what works and what doesn't. Attach printouts of each page you discuss.
- d. Join with a small group of students to analyze the pages.
- e. Make a short oral presentation to the class discussing the best (or worst) page you found.

## 12.9 Writing Job Search Goals

Write a list of goals and tasks you need to accomplish for a successful job search. Which ones are crucial? What

steps do you need to start taking now to accomplish these goals and tasks? Make a tentative time line for the steps.

## 12.10 Writing a Job Description

Write a job description for your “dream position.” Include the following:

- Position title
- Position description including tasks, special requirements
- Location
- Work hours
- Working conditions (for example, office space, scheduling, amount of supervision)
- Company culture
- Pay
- Experience and education requirements
- Personal competencies (for example, ability to communicate, work in teams, problem solve, etc.).
- Amount of travel
- Social, political, and ethical issues that may be involved

In small groups, share your descriptions. Did you get some ideas from the dream jobs of other students?

## 12.11 Performing a Needs Analysis

Identify a specific job posting you are interested in and list its requirements. Analyze the needs of the job and identify your personal strengths and qualifications to obtain it.

**As your instructor directs,**

- a. Work on incorporating your list into a résumé.
- b. Compose bullet entries for each qualification using action verbs.
- c. Identify areas in which you still need to improve. Brainstorm a list of ways in which you can achieve what you need.

## 12.12 Researching a Job Ad

For a specific job ad online, list job requirements and key words. Search online for the corporation that has posted the job. Look up the corporation’s mission and objectives pages and look for repeating keywords and hot buttons. Find correlations between the job posting and the company’s objectives.

**As your instructor directs,**

- a. Share your findings with a group and discuss how the given job posting correlates to the company’s overall mission and needs.
- b. Identify one such case from your group and present it to the class.

## 12.13 Editing a Résumé

Below are a job ad and a résumé applying for that job. Using the information you have about Jennifer’s two jobs (given below the résumé), critique Jennifer’s résumé. Her job letter is Exercise 13.18, if you wish to

look at it, too. Redo her résumé to improve it. Then write a memo to your instructor discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the résumé and explaining why you made the changes you did.

### **Account Manager**

Location: Aurora, IL

Job Category: Business/Strategic Management

Career Level: Entry-Level Manager (Manager/Supervisor of Staff)

Quantum National is the market leader in providing research, sales and marketing, health care policy consulting, and health information management services to the health care industry. Quantum has more than 20,000 employees worldwide and offices in 15 countries in Central and South America. Medical Innovation Communications, a division of Quantum National, currently has an opportunity for an Account Manager in our Aurora, IL, office. Medical Innovation Communications provides

comprehensive product commercialization at all stages of product development: from phase 2, through national and international product launches to ongoing support.

The Account Manager has global responsibility for managing the client's marketing communications programs, assuring that the client's objectives are met in terms of program quality and on-time delivery.

## Responsibilities include:

- Day-to-day client contact to identify and translate marketing objectives into strategic medical communications/education programs.
- Develop proposals, budgets, estimates of job cost, and profitability.
- Lead a team of Project Managers and Marketing Associates through guidance, delegation, and follow-up; and significant interaction with the client.
- Work with New Business Development Teams to develop proposals, budgets, and presenting company capabilities/business pitches to clients.
- Schedule the workflow of a 30-person demonstration and marketing team.

## Requirements:

- Bachelors degree.
- Ability to define and respond to client needs, working effectively under tight deadlines.
- Proven client management experience.
- Proven team management experience.
- Superior written and spoken communication skills.

E-mail applications and résumés to [pattersj@micquant.com](mailto:pattersj@micquant.com), and direct inquiries to J. Pattersen.

### Jennifer Stanton

wildechilde@gmail.com

cell: 515-668-9011

8523 8th Street

Ames, IA 50011

515-311-8243

125 A S. 27th Ave

Omaha, NE 68101

402-772-5106

## Objective

To get a job as an account manager.

## Education

*Iowa State University, Ames, IA—Business*

May 2012, maybe December 2012

Minor: Botany

Cumulative GPA: 2.63 / 4.0

*Mid-Plains Community College, North Platte, NE—Associate of Arts*

May 2008

*Bryan High School, Omaha, NE*

May 2005

## Work Experience

May 2011–August 2011—Summer Internship at FirstWest Insurance, Des Moines, IA

- Worked with a senior account manager to oversee some medical and EAP accounts.
- Made her phone calls to customers.

- Organized meetings with customers.
- I had to write some training “how-to’s” for the new billing database.

1998–2010—*Worked in family business*

Worked weekends and summers in my parents’ used-book store.

### Skills

Microsoft Office

Fluent in Spanish

When you ask, Jennifer tells you about her two jobs:

At her internship this summer, the person she worked with was pretty much an absentee supervisor: Jennifer had to do all the work alone (and she’s still a little bitter about that). Her department managed five Employee Assistance Provider accounts with a total of about 36,000 individual policy holders in five midwestern states. She had to set up and maintain work schedules for 12 employees, and manage the expense reports for the entire group. Four of those employees traveled a lot, so there were lots of expense reports to manage; there were so many that Jennifer had to revise the department’s budget twice. She spent about four hours of every day returning customer phone calls and linking customers up on conference calls with her department’s employees. And those training how-to’s? That turned into a 20-page how-to manual, which she wrote up and then had FirstWest’s IT department turn into a website for the department to use.

Her parents’ family bookstore in Omaha is actually a franchise of a national chain of aftermarket bookstores: Booktopia. The store generates about \$450,000 in gross sales per year, and stocks about 100,000 titles (not counting Internet sales and special orders); it employs 5 full-time and 17 part-time employees. In addition to filling in as a floor clerk, stocker, and cashier—all jobs that put her customer-service, cash-handling, and “people skills” to the test—Jennifer has been handling all of the paperwork between the store and the Booktopia corporate office. (Her parents are great salespeople but they’re not good at paying attention to details. That’s created friction between them and the corporate office.) That paperwork includes all of the store’s quarterly and yearly budget, staffing, and marketing reports since 1999.

Note: This exercise was written by Matthew Search.

## 12.14 Analyzing Job Applicants Based on Their Résumés

Based on your reading of Chapter 12, the following job description and the two résumés below, analyze the two applicants for the position. What are their strengths and

weaknesses as highlighted by their résumés? Which of the two candidates would you select? Why?

### Job description for Cost Accountant

The position of Cost Accountant is responsible for budgeting, reviewing, analyzing, controlling, and forecasting costs involving different cost centers throughout the production process, including raw material procurement, inventory management, manufacturing, warehousing, and shipping. Other responsibilities include analyzing

G/L reports; ensuring compliance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) and Cost Accounting Standards (CAS); conducting breakeven (BE), contribution margin, and variance analyses; and preparing periodic reports for upper management. The position requires a bachelor's degree in accounting. A certification in management accounting from the Institute of Management Accountants (IMA) will be a plus. The position also requires a minimum of two years of work experience in cost accounting at a manufacturing company.

## STAN GOLDBERG

1010, Buck St., Fairfax, VA  
Stanberg@bestwebsite.com

### OBJECTIVE

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Cost Accountant position in which I can effectively utilize my skills in budgeting, accounting, costing, forecasting, reporting, and teamworking

### EXPERIENCE

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2005–2006                      Abacus Engineering                      Portland, OR.

#### *Cost Accounting Trainee*

- Calculated cost variance for different cost centers.
- Prepared quarterly budget reports
- Coordinated with employees at different levels for data collection

2007–till date                      Bourke Winodws                      Fairfax, VA

#### **Costing Manager**

- Monitored 12 cost centers
- Implemented policies that reduced costs by 25%
- Supervised a staff of three, including one cost accountant.
- I also produced multiple G/L reports for the production department as well as upper management

### EDUCATION

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2001–2005    Edward Young University, Perry, OH

- B.A., accounting.
- Currently pursuing CMA of Institute of Management Accounting

### INTERESTS

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Country music, computers, fishing, golf

## Jamal Robinson

1212 S. E. Avenue, Earl, PA  
(111) 112-1121-jr8@pearlnews.com

### **Qualification Summary**

Skills in **controlling** and reucing costs, experience with GAAP and CAS, skills in cost analyses, project management, CMA (IMA), member of the Financial Management Association International, well-versd with ERP software

**Education**

- Certification in Management Accounting  
Graduation—2007  
Institute of Management Accountants
- True Blue University, Roald, PA  
Graduation—2006  
Degree—Bachelor of Sciences (BS)  
Major—Accounting, G.P.A. 3.55

**Experience**

Silverstein Windows and Doors, Earl, PA 2007-Till date

Cost Accountant

- Estimate, review, budget, analyze, and forecast direct / indirect and variable and fixed costs for all stages of production
- Work on the ERP system to generate reports and data sheets giving cost analyses
- Suggested a procedure in a contract that saved the company \$35,000
- Worked with the Marketing Department on the costing / pricing of lower-priced vinyl casement windows

**Achievements**

- Volunteered more than 100 hours for the Habitat for Humnity Award 2005–2006
- Visted door and widow manufacturing plants in Argentina, Belgium, and Japan
- Received the best employee of the month award at Silverstein Windows and Doors
- Wrote articles for *Financial Control Weekly*, a publication of Costing Professionals Association

**References**

Available upon request

Note: This exercise was written by Anish Dave.

## 12.15 Preparing a Résumé

Write a résumé that you could use in your job search.

**As your instructor directs,**

- a. Write a résumé for the field in which you hope to find a job.
- b. Write two different résumés for two different job paths you are interested in pursuing. Write a memo to your instructor explaining the differences.
- c. Adapt your résumé to a specific company you hope to work for. Write a memo to your instructor explaining the specific adaptations you make and why.
- d. Write a résumé for the dream job you developed in Exercise 12.10.

## 12.16 Critiquing Your Résumé, I

Answer the following overview questions for your résumé:

1. Exactly what position are you applying for? How did you choose the position?
2. What are your concerns with applying for this position?
3. What could the concerns of your audience be with your application? How did you try to address these concerns?



4. How do you think the audience will perceive your résumé? Explain.
5. Does your résumé target your employer and position specifically?

Answer the following questions on your design choices:

1. Does the page look balanced?
2. Does the résumé look original or based on a template?
3. Does the length of your résumé fit your situation and position?
4. Does your résumé include clear headings, bullets, and white space?
5. Do you use fonts appropriate for the career level and industry?
6. Do you use consistent font sizes and spacing throughout the document?
7. Does the design reflect your personality and your career ambitions?

Answer the following questions on the content of your résumé.

1. Are the résumé sections clearly, correctly, and consistently labeled?

2. Does the order of the headings highlight your strongest qualifications?
3. Is the work history listed from most recent to past positions?
4. Do you omit high school information? If not, explain your choice.
5. Do you provide details for your best qualifications?
6. Do you use numbers to support your accomplishments?
7. Is the information provided relevant to the position?
8. Does the information support your claim that you are qualified and the best person for this position?
9. Does the information flow logically and easily?
10. Do your bulleted lists use parallel structure?
11. Do you avoid grammar, punctuation, and spelling errors?

Variation: Review a class member's résumé using the same questions.

## 12.17 Critiquing Your Résumé, II

Rate your résumé using the résumé checklist in the page 392 sidebar. Write a one-page memo to your instructor

stating how you believe your résumé rates. Explain and support your position.

## 12.18 Creating a Web or Paper Portfolio

Create a web or paper portfolio highlighting your professional and academic accomplishments. Include course

projects, workplace samples, and other documents that support your professional accomplishments and goals.

## 12.19 Evaluating Visual Résumés

Working individually, in pairs, or in small groups, as your instructor directs,

- a. Look at five of the example student résumés on VisualCV.com. What features do you like? Why? What features would you change or omit? Why? What

are the advantages of VisualCV over your own web page? Disadvantages?

- b. Discuss strengths and weaknesses of two résumés in a memo to your teacher, a posting on the class website, or an oral presentation.

## 12.20 Evaluating LinkedIn Profiles

Working individually, in pairs, or in small groups, as your instructor directs, look at six profiles on LinkedIn. You could use those of your classmates, family members, or local businesspeople.

- Which one has the best résumé? Why?
- How do the profiles and résumés differ?

- Which one has the best recommendations? Why?

- Overall, which one has the best profile? Why?

Discuss your conclusions in a memo to your teacher, a posting on the class website, or an oral presentation.



# Writing Job Application Letters

## Chapter Outline

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### How Content Differs in Job Letters and Résumés

### How to Find Out about Employers and Jobs

### Tapping into the Hidden Job Market

- Information interviews
- Referral interviews

### Content and Organization for Job Application Letters

- How to Organize Solicited Letters
- How to Organize Prospecting Letters
- First Paragraphs of Solicited Letters
- First Paragraphs of Prospecting Letters
- Showing a Knowledge of the Position and the Company

- Showing What Separates You from Other Applicants
- The Last Paragraph

### E-Mail Application Letters

### Creating a Professional Image

- Writing Style
- Positive Emphasis
- You-Attitude
- Paragraph Length and Unity
- Letter Length
- Editing and Proofreading
- Follow-Up

### Application Essays

### Summary of Key Points

## Unconventional Job Tactics



With high U.S. unemployment rates, even the best-qualified candidates may struggle to make an impression in a sea of other job seekers. Some may turn to unconventional methods to get noticed by hiring directors and recruiters.

Nathan Schwagler, for example, chose an innovative way to get past the traditional hiring process at Ingram Micro. He dressed up as a deliveryman, complete with a clipboard, a bouquet of flowers, and a Candygram. He got through security and to the office of Jessica, the company's recruiter. When he finally met her, Schwagler stripped off his coveralls to reveal his business suit underneath and presented Jessica with his résumé, in addition to the flowers and candy.

These kinds of innovative methods to get noticed are on the rise in the United States. One survey of hiring managers conducted by CareerBuilder.com showed that unconventional methods are rising, with 22% of the managers seeing unusual tactics.

But do these unusual tactics work? In some cases. Only 9% of the hiring managers surveyed reported having hired someone who used an unconventional tactic to get noticed. However, most of the unusual tactics they list benefit the hiring company in some way: one candidate submitted a business plan for one of the company's products; another presented a solution to one of the company's problems. As you ponder your tactics, keep in mind that the other 91% of the people hired used standard techniques, including a strong application letter and a well-designed résumé.

Remember that most innovative methods backfire. Take Nathan Schwagler. After delivering his résumé, he followed up a week later, only to find himself talking with the head of security: Schwagler had been barred from entering the premises or calling again. As one of his professors told him later, "The world is not ready for that type of creativity."

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*"Remember that most innovative methods backfire."*

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Sources: Rachel Zupek, "Unusual Job Search Tactics," CareerBuilder, accessed April 9, 2011, <http://www.careerbuilder.com/article/cb-1076-job-search-unusual-job-search-tactics/>; and "More Employers Seeing Unusual Tactics from Job Seekers in 2010, Finds New CareerBuilder Survey," CareerBuilder, June 9, 2010, [http://www.careerbuilder.com/share/aboutus/pressreleasesdetail.aspx?id=pr574&sd=6/9/2010&ed=12/31/2010&siteid=cbpr&sc\\_cmp1=cb\\_pr574\\_](http://www.careerbuilder.com/share/aboutus/pressreleasesdetail.aspx?id=pr574&sd=6/9/2010&ed=12/31/2010&siteid=cbpr&sc_cmp1=cb_pr574_).

## Learning Objectives

After studying this chapter, you will know how to

**LO 13-1** Find the information you need to write a good job letter to a specific employer.

**LO 13-2** Write a job letter that makes you look attractive to employers.



### Multiple Career Changes

You will probably need a cover letter as you change careers during your lifetime. One widely touted figure you may have heard many times is that U.S. workers average seven career changes during their working years.

Unfortunately, that number is a myth. It has been attributed to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics so many times that the bureau now posts a disclaimer on its website.

The bureau does not estimate lifetime career changes for a simple reason: no consensus exists for the definition of a career change. If a worker takes a company promotion to move from being an active engineer to becoming a manager, is that a career change? Just a promotion? The work being done will certainly change. If someone laid off from her financial career takes a landscaping job for six months to pay bills before her next financial job comes along, is that a career change? Will it count as a double career change when she returns to finance?

Adapted from "National Longitudinal Surveys Frequently Asked Questions: Does BLS Have Information on the Number of Times People Change Careers in their Lives?" Bureau of Labor Statistics, last modified September 23, 2010, <http://www.bls.gov/nls/nlsfaqs.htm>.

The purpose of a job application letter is to get an interview. If you get a job through interviews arranged by your campus placement office or through contacts, you may not need to write a letter. Similarly, if you apply electronically through a company's website, a letter may not be part of the materials you submit. However, if you want to work for an organization that isn't interviewing on campus, or later when you change jobs, you may need a letter. A survey conducted by Robert Half International, the world's largest specialized staffing firm, found 86% of executives said cover letters were still valuable components of job applications in the electronic age.<sup>1</sup>

The co-founder of one software firm says,

We ignore résumés. . . . Résumés reduce people to bullet points, and most people look pretty good as bullet points.

What we do look at are cover letters. Cover letters say it all. They immediately tell you if someone wants this job or just any job. And cover letters make something else very clear: They tell you who can and who can't write. . . . When in doubt, always hire the better writer.<sup>2</sup>

Job letters can play an important role in your personal branding (p. 371). They can show your personality and, through careful reference to well-chosen details about the organization, interest in a particular job.

Job letters are frequently seen as evidence of your written communication skills, so you want to do your best work in them. Flaws in your letter may well be seen as predicting shoddy job performance in the future.

## HOW CONTENT DIFFERS IN JOB LETTERS AND RÉSUMÉS

The job application letter accompanies your résumé and serves as its cover letter. Make the most of your letter; it is your chance to showcase the features that set you apart from the crowd. Here you bring to life the facts presented in your vita; here you can show some personality (don't overdo it). The cover letter is your opportunity to "sell" yourself into an interview.

Although résumés and job letters overlap somewhat, they differ in three important ways:

- The résumé summarizes *all* your qualifications. The letter expands your *best* qualifications to show how you can help the organization meet its needs, how you differ from other applicants, and how much knowledge of the organization you possess.
- The résumé avoids controversial material. The job letter can explain in a positive way situations such as career changes or gaps in employment history.
- The résumé uses short, parallel phrases and sentence fragments. The letter uses complete sentences in well-written paragraphs.

## HOW TO FIND OUT ABOUT EMPLOYERS AND JOBS LO 13-1

To adapt your letter to a specific organization, you need information both about the employer and about the job itself. You'll need to know

- **The name and address of the person who should receive the letter.** To get this information, check the ad, call the organization, check its website, or check with your job search contacts. An advantage of calling is that you can find out what courtesy title (p. 69) the individual prefers and get current information.
- **What the organization does, and some facts about it.** Knowing the organization's larger goals enables you to show how your specific work will help the company meet its goals. Useful facts can include market share, new products or promotions, the kind of computer or manufacturing equipment it uses, plans for growth or downsizing, competitive position, challenges the organization faces, and the corporate culture (p. 91).
- **What the job itself involves.** Campus placement offices and web listings often have fuller job descriptions than appear in ads. Talk to friends who have graduated recently to learn what their jobs involve. Conduct information interviews to learn more about opportunities that interest you.

The websites listed in Figure 13.1 provide a wide range of information. For instance, the Forbes and Money sites have good financial news stories; prars.com is a good source for annual reports. As a consumer, you have probably already used the Better Business Bureau (bbb.org) site.

More specific information about companies can be found on their websites. To get specific financial data (and to see how the organization presents itself to the public), get the company's annual report from your library or the web. (Note: Only companies whose stock is publicly traded are required to issue annual reports. In this day of mergers and buyouts, many companies are owned by other companies. The parent company may be the only one to issue an annual report.) Recruiting notebooks at your campus placement office may provide information about training programs and career paths for new hires. To learn about new products, plans for growth, or solutions to industry challenges, read business newspapers such as the *Wall Street Journal*, business magazines such as *Fortune* or *Bloomberg BusinessWeek*, and trade journals.

**Figure 13.1** Web Sources for Facts about Companies

<b>Company Facts</b>	<a href="http://www.bbb.org/">http://www.bbb.org/</a>
<a href="http://www.jobbankinfo.org/">http://www.jobbankinfo.org/</a>	<a href="http://legacy.www.nypl.org/research/sibl/company/c2index.htm">http://legacy.www.nypl.org/research/sibl/company/c2index.htm</a>
<a href="http://www.wetfeet.com/">http://www.wetfeet.com/</a>	<a href="http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/BUSI/">http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/BUSI/</a>
<a href="http://www.forbes.com/">http://www.forbes.com/</a>	<a href="http://online.wsj.com/public/page/news-career-jobs.html">http://online.wsj.com/public/page/news-career-jobs.html</a>
<a href="http://www.irin.com/tf/IRIN/home?path=/&amp;host=irin.com&amp;">http://www.irin.com/tf/IRIN/home?path=/&amp;host=irin.com&amp;</a>	<b>Salary Calculators</b>
<a href="http://www.corporateinformation.com/">http://www.corporateinformation.com/</a>	<a href="http://salaryexpert.com/">http://salaryexpert.com/</a>
<a href="http://www.vault.com/">http://www.vault.com/</a>	<a href="http://www.indeed.com/salary">http://www.indeed.com/salary</a>
<a href="http://www.stockmarketyellowpages.com/">http://www.stockmarketyellowpages.com/</a>	<a href="http://www.payscale.com/">http://www.payscale.com/</a>
<a href="http://www.prars.com/">http://www.prars.com/</a>	<a href="http://www.salary.com/mysalary.asp">http://www.salary.com/mysalary.asp</a>
<a href="http://money.cnn.com/">http://money.cnn.com/</a>	
<a href="http://www.inc.com/inc5000/">http://www.inc.com/inc5000/</a>	



### Dream Jobs

A survey of over 6,000 employees found that nearly 85% said they were not in their dream jobs. According to survey results, having fun at work was the most important characteristic of a dream job (39%); making a difference in the world was second (17%).

Among the professionals, police and firefighters were the most likely to believe they held dream jobs (35%), followed by teachers (32%), real estate professionals (28%), and engineers (25%). Those least likely to believe they held dream jobs were workers in hotel and food services (9%), manufacturing (9%), and retail (10%).

What is your dream job?

Adapted from CareerBuilder.com, "National 'Dream Jobs' Survey Reveals Four out of Five U.S. Workers Are Still Searching for Their Dream Job," press release, January 25, 2007, <http://www.careerbuilder.com/share/aboutus/pressreleasesdetail.aspx?id=pr347&sd=1/25/2007&ed=12/31/2007>.

## TAPPING INTO THE HIDDEN JOB MARKET

Many jobs are never advertised—and the number rises the higher on the job ladder you go. In fact, some authorities put the percentage of jobs that are not advertised as high as 80%.<sup>3</sup> Many new jobs come not from responding to an ad but from networking with personal contacts. Some of these jobs are created especially for a specific person. These unadvertised jobs are called the **hidden job market**. Information and referral interviews are two organized methods of networking.

### Information Interviews

In an **information interview** you talk to someone who works in the area you hope to enter to find out what the day-to-day work involves and how you can best prepare to enter that field. An information interview can let you know whether or not you'd like the job, give you specific information that you can use to present yourself effectively in your résumé and application letter, and create a good image of you in the mind of the interviewer. If you present yourself positively, the interviewer may remember you when openings arise.

In an information interview, you might ask the following questions:

- How did you get started in this field?
- What have you been working on today?
- How do you spend your typical day?
- Have your duties changed a lot since you first started working here?
- What do you like best about your job? What do you like least?
- What do you think the future holds for this kind of work?
- What courses, activities, or jobs would you recommend as preparation for this kind of work?

To set up an information interview, you can phone or write an e-mail like the one in Figure 13.2. If you do e-mail, phone the following week to set up a specific time.

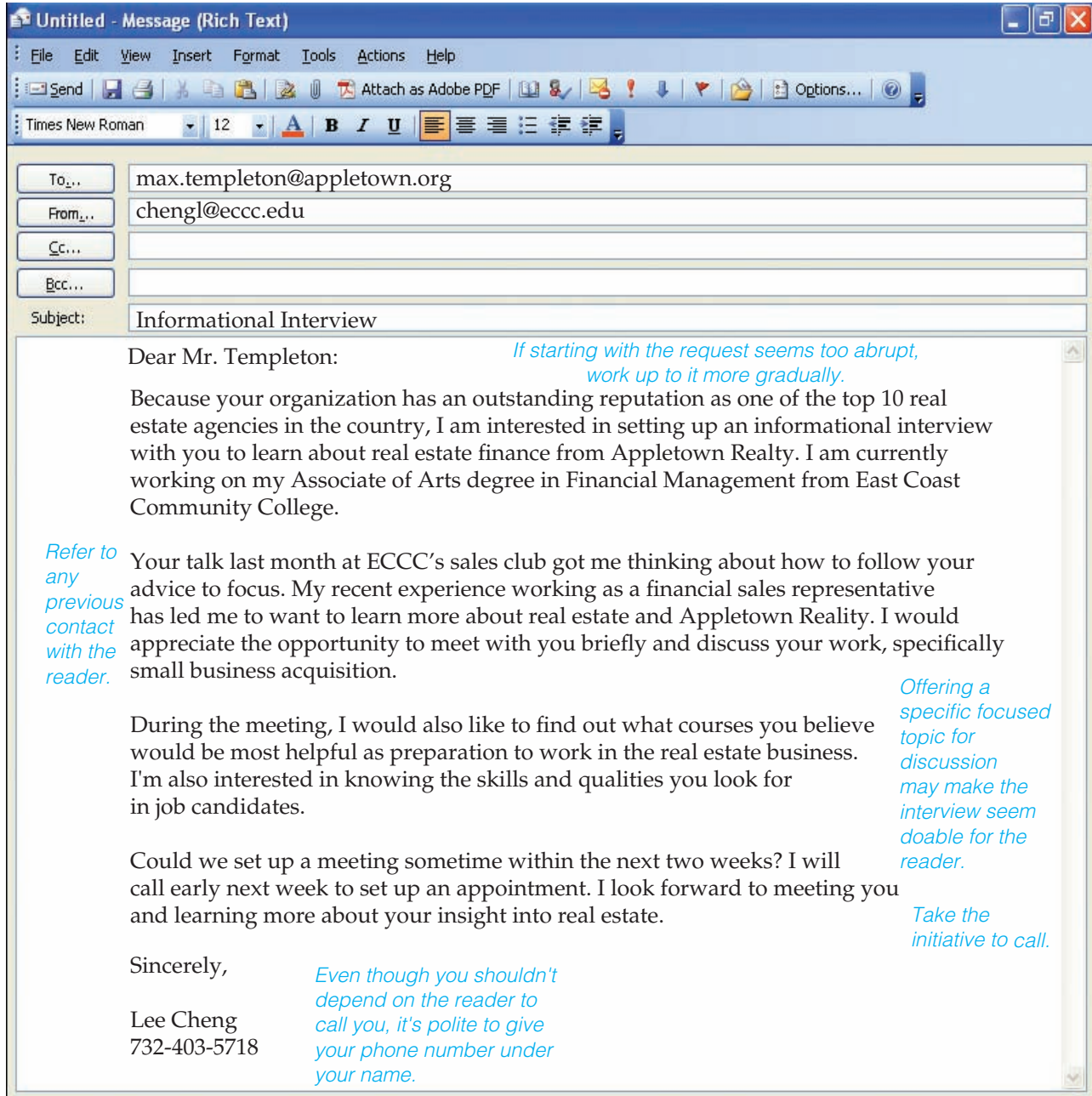
### Referral Interviews

**Referral interviews** are interviews you schedule to learn about current job opportunities in your field. Sometimes an interview that starts out as an information interview turns into a referral interview.

A referral interview should give you information about the opportunities currently available in the area you're interested in, refer you to other people who can tell you about job opportunities, and enable the interviewer to see that you could make a contribution to his or her organization. Therefore, the goal of a referral interview is to put you face-to-face with someone who has the power to hire you: the president of a small company, the division vice president or branch manager of a big company, the director of the local office of a state or federal agency.

Start by scheduling interviews with people you know who may know something about that field—professors, co-workers, neighbors, friends, former classmates. Use your alumni website to get the names and phone numbers of alumni who now work where you would like to work. Talk to them to get advice about improving your résumé and about general job-hunting strategy, but also to get referrals to other people. In fact, go into the interview with the names of people you'd like to talk to. If the interviewer doesn't suggest anyone, say, "Do you think it would be a good idea for me to talk to——?"

Armed with a referral from someone you both know, you can call people with hiring power, and say, "So-and-so suggested I talk with you about

**Figure 13.2** E-mail Requesting an Information Interview

job-hunting strategy." Even when you talk to the person who could create a job for you, you *do not ask for a job*. But to give you advice about your résumé, the person has to look at it. If there's a match between what you can do and what the organization needs, that person has the power to create a position for you.



**WARNING:** Many businesspeople are cynical about information and referral interviewing; they know the real purpose of such interviews, and they resent the time needed. Therefore you need to prepare carefully for these interviews. Prepare a list of good questions; know something about the general field or industry; research the specific company.





<http://www.google.com/about/corporate>

Many websites give you all the information you need to write a good job letter. Google's Corporate Information page under Everything Google has links to jobs, news, company information and investor relations, where you will find financial information and annual reports. Follow the "Company" link to learn about topics such as Google's history, initiatives, and philosophy.

Always follow up information and referral interviews with personal thank-you letters. Use specifics to show that you paid attention during the interview, and enclose a copy of your revised résumé.

## CONTENT AND ORGANIZATION FOR JOB APPLICATION LETTERS LO 13-2

Job letters help show employers why they should interview you instead of other—sometimes hundreds of others—qualified applicants. In your letter, focus on

- Your qualifications to meet major requirements of the job.
- Points that separate you from other applicants.
- Points that show your knowledge of the organization.
- Qualities that every employer is likely to value: the ability to write and speak effectively, to solve problems, to work well with people.

Two different hiring situations call for two different kinds of application letters. Write a **solicited letter** when you know that the company is hiring; you've seen an ad, you've been advised to apply by a professor or friend, you've read in a trade publication that the company is expanding. This situation is similar to a direct request in persuasion (p. 321): you can indicate immediately that you are applying for the position. Sometimes, however, the advertised positions may not be what you want, or you may want to work for an organization that has not announced openings in your area. Then you write a **prospecting letter**. (The metaphor is drawn from prospecting for gold.) The prospecting letter is like a problem-solving persuasive message (p. 323).

Prospecting letters help you tap into the hidden job market. In some cases, your prospecting letter may arrive at a company that has decided to hire but has not yet announced the job. In other cases, companies create positions to get a good person who is on the market. Even in a hiring freeze, jobs are sometimes created for specific individuals.

In both solicited and prospecting letters you should

- Address the letter to a specific person (a must for a prospecting letter).
- Indicate the specific position for which you're applying.
- Be specific about your qualifications.
- Show what separates you from other applicants.
- Show a knowledge of the company and the position.
- Refer to your résumé (which you would enclose with the letter).
- Ask for an interview.

The following discussion follows the job letter from beginning to end. The two kinds of letters are discussed separately where they differ and together where they are the same. Letters for internships follow the same patterns: use a solicited letter to apply for an internship that has been advertised and a prospecting letter to create an internship with a company that has not announced one.

### How to Organize Solicited Letters

When you know the company is hiring, use the pattern of organization in Figure 13.3. A sample solicited letter for a graduating senior is shown in Figure 13.4. A solicited letter following up from a career fair and requesting an internship is shown in Figure 13.7. The job ad for the letter in Figure 13.4 is printed in Exercise 13.20.

### Figure 13.3 How to Organize a Solicited Job Application Letter

1. State that you're applying for the job (phrase the job title as your source phrased it). Tell where you learned about the job (ad, referral, etc.). Include any reference number mentioned in the ad. Briefly show that you have the major qualifications required by the ad: a college degree, professional certification, job experience, etc. Summarize your other qualifications briefly in the same order in which you plan to discuss them in the letter.
2. Develop your major qualifications in detail. Be specific about what you've done; relate your achievements to the work you'd be doing in this new job.
3. Develop your other qualifications, even if the ad doesn't ask for them. Show what separates you from the other applicants who will also answer the ad. Demonstrate your knowledge of the organization.
4. Ask for an interview; tell when you'll be available to be interviewed and to begin work. Thank them for considering your application. End on a positive, forward-looking note.



#### Passion

[Lucinda B. Watson, career counselor and author of *How They Achieved: Stories of Personal Achievement and Business Success*, transcribes in her book an interview with Ted Bell, the former Vice Chairman and Worldwide Creative Director of Young and Rubicam. An excerpt:]

"My advice to young people is to just be passionate about whatever it is you do. Be the most passionate person in the room. Not the smartest or the cleverest, but the most passionate. Total passion. Say thank you. Say please. Don't take credit, take the blame. Do all that stuff, that's good. But if you are the most passionate person, you'll probably win. Care more about it than anybody and you'll be the one that wins. People love that. People gravitate toward that."

Quoted from Lucinda Watson, *How They Achieved: Stories of Personal Achievement and Business Success* (New York: John Wiley, 2001), 66.

### How to Organize Prospecting Letters

When you don't have any evidence that the company is hiring, you cannot use the pattern for solicited letters. Instead, use the pattern of organization in Figure 13.5. A sample prospecting letter for a student desiring to change fields is shown in Figure 13.6.

### First Paragraphs of Solicited Letters

When you know that the firm is hiring, announcing that you are applying for a specific position enables the firm to route your letter to the appropriate person, thus speeding consideration of your application. Identify where you learned about the job: "the position of junior accountant announced in *Sunday's Dispatch*," "William Paquette, our placement director, told me that you are looking for. . . ."

Note how the following paragraph picks up several of the characteristics of the ad:

Ad: Business Education Instructor at Shelby Adult Education. Candidate must possess a Bachelor's degree in Business Education. Will be responsible for providing in-house training to business and government leaders. . . . Candidate should have at least one year teaching experience.

Letter: I am applying for your position in Business Education that is posted on your school website. In December, I will receive a Bachelor of Science degree from North Carolina A & T University in Business Education. My work has given me two years' experience teaching word processing and computer accounting courses to adults plus leadership skills developed in the North Carolina National Guard.

Your **summary sentence** or **paragraph** covers everything you will talk about and serves as an organizing device for your letter.

Through my education, I have a good background in standard accounting principles and procedures and a working knowledge of some of the special accounting practices of the oil industry. This working knowledge is enhanced by practical experience in the oil fields: I have pumped, tailed rods, and worked as a roustabout.

My business experience, familiarity with DeVilbiss equipment, and communication skills qualify me to be an effective part of the sales staff at DeVilbiss.

**Figure 13.4** A Solicited Letter from a Graduating Senior

**Jeff Moeller**

831.503.4692  
51 Willow Street  
San José, CA 95112  
jmoeller@csm.edu

April 4, 2012

Mr. Richard Grove  
Telltale Games  
P.O. Box 9737  
San Rafael, CA 94912

Dear Mr. Grove:

*Tell where you learned about the job.*

*If the job has a reference number, provide it.*

*In paragraph 1, show you have the qualifications the ad lists.*

I am applying for your Game Designer position posted on your website. As an avid player of Telltale games, I believe that I have all the qualifications to do a great job. With my degree in Computer Science and Information Technology and my experience creating game content, I will be able to apply many skills to the Game Designer position. My passion for becoming part of the gaming industry, combined with my oral and written communication skills, makes me a great fit for the Telltale team.

*This summary sentence forecasts the structure of the rest of the letter.*

*Shows enthusiasm for the profession and picks up on the programming experience emphasis in the job ad.*

Since I was five, I have had a strong interest in computers and video games, and my interest and knowledge have only increased in recent years. Not only do I play video games, I discuss them with others, read news articles about them online, and consider ways to improve or change a specific game. I have also used game editors to create my own content in games. When it comes to computers, I have a keen interest in staying current with the latest technology, and I apply my knowledge hands-on by building systems. These experiences give me an understanding of how modern computers and video game systems function. I also have experience with several programming languages, from both taking courses and learning them on my own. This has increased my eye for detail, a necessary ability for any game designer.

*Provides evidence for his achievements in the profession.*

My passion for creating video games was recognized this year in President Obama's National STEM video game challenge. With a team of students in Professor Kent Olberath's game development class at California State University, I produced "Parrot Villa," the first level of an immersive game where players solve mysteries on a unique jungle world. The programming quality and detailed story line helped my team earn second place in the nationwide competition. You can see a demo of "Parrot Villa" at [www.STEMChallenge.gov/2011\\_Winners](http://www.STEMChallenge.gov/2011_Winners).

*Relates what he has done to what he could do for the company.*

*Evidence of communication skills is a plus for almost any job.*

Along with my enthusiasm for games, I have strong oral and written communication skills. I am a confident public speaker, and I have an ability to relay information in a clear and concise manner. More importantly, though, I have developed the ability in my creative writing courses to create engaging and coherent narratives, which will be a large component of developing new games. In addition to my coursework and experience, I have honed my skills online by writing articles about games. In covering the video game industry for Point Network, I have reviewed Telltale's own *Tales of Monkey Island*.

*Shows familiarity with company's products.*

Working in the video game industry is my goal, and I would be a great asset to Telltale Games. I would love to come in for an interview to discuss the position and the contributions I can make. I have always enjoyed playing Telltale's games, and I look forward to the possibility of working on them one day soon.

Sincerely,

*Jeff Moeller*

Jeff Moeller

## Figure 13.5 How to Organize a Prospecting Letter

1. Catch the reader's interest.
2. Create a bridge between the attention-getter and your qualifications. Focus on what you know and can do. Since the employer is not planning to hire, he or she won't be impressed with the fact that you're graduating. Summarize your qualifications briefly in the same order in which you plan to discuss them in the letter. This summary sentence or paragraph then covers everything you will talk about and serves as an organizing device for your letter.
3. Develop your strong points in detail. Be specific. Relate what you've done in the past to what you could do for this company. Show that you know something about the company. Identify the specific niche you want to fill.
4. Ask for an interview and tell when you'll be available for interviews. (Don't tell when you can begin work.) Thank them for considering your application. End on a positive, forward-looking note.



### Jocks Rock in the Workplace

Some employers are seeking athletes to fill jobs because athletes possess qualities which lead to success in the workplace. For example Gretchen Tonnesen, former flying halfback captain for the Princeton University women's rugby team, now works at JP Morgan Chase & Co. where she examines technology, media, and telecommunications companies for the investment bank. JP Morgan chose her because of her passionate involvement in sports.

Recruiters and employers recognize that college athletes provide leadership, competitiveness, and a sharp focus on goals. Athletes also understand team responsibility, time management, and dedication. In addition, athletes from top schools typically have the drive and stamina that matches the 80-hour high pressure workweeks found in many Wall Street jobs.

By the way, Tonnesen got her through the Alumni Athlete Network, founded by a Harvard basketball captain. The carefully selected students in the Network's program have average GPAs of 3.6 and average SAT scores of 1320.

How can you capitalize on your extracurricular activities to help your job search?

Adapted from John DeBruicker, "If You're A Jock, You Rock," *Business-Week*, September 18, 2006, 67.

## First Paragraphs of Prospecting Letters

In a prospecting letter, asking for a job in the first paragraph is dangerous: unless the company plans to hire but has not yet announced openings, the reader is likely to throw the letter away. Instead, catch the reader's interest. Then in the second paragraph you can shift the focus to your skills and experience, showing how they can be useful to the employer and specifying the job you are seeking.

Here are some effective first and second paragraphs that provide a transition to the writer's discussion of his or her qualifications.

First two paragraphs of a letter to the director of publications at an oil company:

If scarcity of resources makes us use them more carefully, perhaps it would be a good idea to ration words. If people used them more carefully, internal communications specialists like you would have fewer headaches because communications jobs would be done right the first time.

For the last six years I have worked on improving my communications skills, learning to use words more carefully and effectively. I have taught business communication at a major university, worked for two newspapers, completed a Master's degree in English, and would like to contribute my skills to your internal communications staff.

First two paragraphs of a letter applying to be a computer programmer for an insurance company:

As you know, merging a poorly written letter with a database of customers just sends out bad letters more quickly. But you also know how hard it is to find people who can both program computers and write well.

My education and training have given me this useful combination. I'd like to put my associate's degree in computer technology and my business experience writing to customers to work in State Farm's service approach to insurance.

Notice how the second paragraph provides a transition to a discussion of qualifications.

Questions work well only if the answers aren't obvious. The computer programmer above should *not* ask this question:

Do you think that training competent and motivated personnel is a serious concern in the insurance industry?

**Figure 13.6** A Prospecting Letter from a Career Changer**Molly Schooner**

www.ukansas.edu/~Schoonerm88/home.htm

*Molly uses a "letterhead" that harmonizes with her résumé. (see Figure 12.7)*

266 Van Buren Drive  
Lawrence, KS 66044  
schoonerm@ukansas.edu  
785-897-1534 (home)  
785-842-4242 (cell)

March 29, 2012

Mr. Franklin Kohl  
PDF Productions  
3232 White Castle Road  
Minneapolis, MN 85434

*In a prospecting letter, open with a sentence which (1) will seem interesting and true to the reader and (2) provides a natural bridge to talking about yourself.*

Dear Mr. Kohl:

*The Wall Street Journal* says that PDF Productions is expanding operations into Kansas, Minnesota, and Nebraska. My experience in technical writing, design, and computers would be an asset to your expanding organization. *Shows knowledge of the organization.*

*Briefly shows a variety of technical writing and computer skills.*

While working at a local animal shelter, I used my technical writing skills to create a website that allows users to easily access information. To improve the website, I conducted usability tests which provided useful feedback that I incorporated to modify the overall design. In addition, I was also responsible for writing and editing the shelter's monthly newsletter, which was distributed to roughly 1,200 "Friends of the Shelter." I have extensive computer and design skills, which I am anxious to put to use for PDF Productions.

*Relates what she's done to what she could do for this company.*

Course work has also prepared me well for technical writing. I have written technical material on a variety of levels ranging from publicity flyers for the animal shelter to scientific reports for upper-level science courses. My course work in statistics has shown me how to work with data and present it accurately for various audiences. Because of my scientific background, I also have a strong vocabulary in both life sciences and chemistry. This background will help me get up to speed quickly with clients such as ChemPro and Biostage. My background in science has also taught me just how important specific details can be. *Shows how her course-work is an asset. Names specific clients, showing more knowledge of company.*

In May, I will complete my degree from the University of Kansas and will be most interested in making a significant contribution to PDF Productions. I am available every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday for an interview (785-897-1534). Thank you for considering my application. I look forward to talking with you about technical writing I can do for PDF Productions.

Sincerely,

*Molly Schooner*

Molly Schooner

**Figure 13.7** Letter Following Up from a Career Fair and Requesting an Internship

**Lee Cheng**  
chengl@eccc.edu

**Campus Address**  
1524 Main Street  
New Brunswick, NJ 08901  
732-403-5718

*Letterhead  
matches his  
résumé.*

**Permanent Address**  
2526 Prairie Lane  
Middlesex, NJ 08846  
402-442-7793

January 23, 2012

Ms. Deborah Pascel, HR Department  
Prime Financial  
401 Prime Park Place  
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

Dear Ms. Pascel:

*Uses his contact immediately.* Mary Randi at the East Coastal Community College Career Fair suggested I send you my résumé for the Sales Advisor internship. My education, combined with my past work experiences, makes me a strong candidate for Prime Financial.

*Shows he has been getting full value from his schooling.* While working toward my Associate of Arts degree in Financial Management from East Coastal Community College, I have learned the value of fiscal responsibility. For example, in my social financial planning course, I developed a strategic plan to eliminate credit card debt for a one-income household with two children. Moreover, in my business communication course, I improved my oral communication ability so that I could effectively communicate my plans to potential clients. This ability will be an asset to Prime Financial as the organization works to maintain the strong relationship with the community and small business owners that Ms. Randi informed me about. *Refers to knowledge gained at career fair.*

*Paragraphs 2 and 3 show he has skills he can use immediately as an intern.* My financial education, combined with my previous work experiences in sales, will allow me to thoroughly analyze investment opportunities and establish a strong client base for Prime Financial. For example, I started the A-Plus T-Shirt Company that sold graphic T-shirts to high school students; it had a routine client base of over 150 customers. From managing this business, I know what it takes to be reliable and responsive to customer needs. I am looking forward to learning new approaches from Prime Financial's internship, particularly new ways to work with small businesses. *Provides details about his sales experience to interest his reader.*

With my education and experience, I can provide the innovative and competitive edge necessary to be part of your team. I would welcome an interview to discuss your internship and the contributions I could make at Prime Financial.

Sincerely,  
*Lee Cheng*  
Lee Cheng



### Unfortunate Cover Letter Statements

- “Please find my résumé.” Did you look under the couch?
- “I have integrity so I will not steal office supplies and take them home.” Good to know.
- “Please, please, please hire me for this job. I will be waiting by the phone.” Don’t wait too long.
- “What interested me about this job is that it’s with a prestigious company.” Glad to hear it.
- “After perusing my résumé, I am looking forward to hearing from you soon.” If you don’t mind, we’d appreciate the opportunity to peruse it ourselves before we get back to you.
- “I’m submitting the attached copy of my résumé for your consumption.” Yum.
- “I perform my job with effortless efficiency, effectiveness, efficacy, and expertise.” And an awful lot of alliteration, apparently.
- “The interview you schedule will undoubtedly reveal my unmatched talent and suitability for the position.” Uh, don’t count your chickens. . . .
- “But wait . . . there’s more. You get all this business knowledge plus a grasp of finance that is second nature.” If I act now, will you throw in a set of kitchen knives?

Quoted from “Resumania Archive,” Resumania, accessed March 20, 2011, <http://www.resumania.com/ResumaniaArchive>.

If the reader says *yes*, the question will seem dumb. If the reader says *no*, the student has destroyed his or her common ground. The computer programmer, however, could pose this question:

How often do you see a programmer with both strong programming skills and good communication skills?

This question would give him or her an easy transition into paragraphs about his/her programming and communication skills.

## Showing a Knowledge of the Position and the Company

If you could substitute another inside address and salutation and send out the letter without any further changes, it isn’t specific enough. A job application letter is basically a claim that you could do a specific job for a particular company. Use your knowledge of the position and the company to choose relevant evidence from what you’ve done to support your claims that you could help the company. (See Figures 13.4 and 13.6.)

The following paragraphs show the writer’s knowledge of the company.

A letter to PricewaterhouseCoopers’s Minneapolis office uses information the student learned in a referral interview with a partner in an accounting firm. Because the reader will know that Herr Wollner is a partner in the Berlin office, the student does not need to identify him.

While I was studying in Berlin last spring, I had the opportunity to discuss accounting methods for multinational clients of PricewaterhouseCoopers with Herr Fritz Wollner. We also talked about communication among PricewaterhouseCoopers’s international offices.

Herr Wollner mentioned that the increasing flow of accounting information between the European offices—especially those located in Germany, Switzerland, and Austria—and the U.S. offices of PricewaterhouseCoopers makes accurate translations essential. My fluency in German enables me to translate accurately; and my study of communication problems in Speech Communication, Business and Professional Speaking, and Business and Technical Writing will help me see where messages might be misunderstood and choose words which are more likely to communicate clearly.

A letter to KMPG uses information the student learned in a summer job.

As an assistant accountant for Pacific Bell during this past summer, I worked with its computerized billing and record-keeping system, BARK. I had the opportunity to help the controller revise portions of the system, particularly the procedures for handling delinquent accounts. When the KMPG audit team reviewed Pacific Bell’s transactions completed for July, I had the opportunity to observe your System 2170. Several courses in computer science allow me to appreciate the simplicity of your system and its objective of reducing audit work, time, and costs.

One or two specific details about the company usually are enough to demonstrate your knowledge. Be sure to use the knowledge, not just repeat it. Never present the information as though it will be news to the reader. After all, the reader works for the company and presumably knows much more about it than you do.

## Showing What Separates You from Other Applicants

Your knowledge of the company can separate you from other applicants. You can also use coursework, an understanding of the field, and experience in jobs and extracurricular events to show that you're unique. Stress your accomplishments, not your job responsibilities. Be specific but concise; usually three to five sentences will enable you to give enough specific supporting details.

This student uses both coursework and summer jobs to set herself apart from other applicants. Her research told her Monsanto had recently adopted new accounting methods for fluctuations in foreign currencies. Therefore, she mentions relevant simulations from her coursework.

My college courses have taught me the essential accounting skills required to contribute to the growth of Monsanto. In two courses in international accounting, I compiled simulated accounting statements of hypothetical multinational firms in countries experiencing different rates of currency devaluation. Through these classes, I acquired the skills needed to work with the daily fluctuations of exchange rates and at the same time formulate an accurate and favorable representation of Monsanto.

Both my summer jobs and my coursework prepare me to do extensive record keeping as well as numerous internal and external communications. As Office Manager for the steamboat *Julia Belle Swain*, I was in charge of most of the bookkeeping and letter writing for the company. I kept accurate records for each workday, and I often entered over 100 transactions in a single day. In business communication I learned how to write persuasive messages and how to present extensive data in reports in a simplified style that is clear and easy to understand.

In your résumé, you may list activities, offices, and courses. In your letter, give more detail about what you did and show how those experiences will help you contribute to the employer's organization more quickly.

When you discuss your strengths, don't exaggerate. No employer will believe that a new graduate has a "comprehensive" knowledge of a field. Indeed, most employers believe that six months to a year of on-the-job training is necessary before most new hires are really earning their pay. Specifics about what you've done will make your claims about what you can do more believable and ground them in reality.

## The Last Paragraph

In the last paragraph, indicate when you'd be available for an interview. If you're free anytime, you can say so. But it's likely that you have responsibilities in class and work. If you'd have to go out of town, there may be only certain days of the week or certain weeks that you could leave town for several days. Use a sentence that fits your situation.

November 5–10 I'll be attending the Oregon Forestry Association's annual meeting and will be available for interviews then.

Any Monday or Friday I could come to Memphis for an interview.



### Study Abroad and Overseas Work Programs

Have you considered a studies abroad program or international job?

If so, a variety of resources are available. These websites offer assistance for students interested in study abroad programs:

<http://www.ciee.org/>

<http://studyabroad.com/>

<http://iiepassport.org/>

For information regarding full-time overseas opportunities, visit the following websites:

<http://www.monster.com/geo/siteselection/>

<http://www.jobsabroad.com/search.cfm>

<http://transitionsabroad.com/>





### Email Horror Story

"I sent a digital resume and cover letter via email to apply for a position as a technical writer. Within a few hours, a message from the director in charge of hiring came via email. Full of anticipation, I opened the email to find a terse message: 'your resume is infected with a virus and has been quarantined.' A person cannot recover from an infected resume. I did not pursue the position further."

Quoted from "Horror Stories," ResumeEdge.com, accessed April 5, 2011, <http://www.resumeedge.com/contentpartners/interviews13.html>.

Should you wait for the employer to call you, or should you call the employer to request an interview? In a solicited letter, it's safe to wait to be contacted: you know the employer wants to hire someone, and if your letter and résumé show that you're one of the top applicants, you'll get an interview. In a prospecting letter, call the employer. Because the employer is not planning to hire, you'll get a higher percentage of interviews if you're assertive.

If you're writing a prospecting letter to a firm that's more than a few hours away by car, say that you'll be in the area the week of such-and-such and could stop by for an interview. Companies pay for follow-up visits, but not for first interviews. A company may be reluctant to ask you to make an expensive trip when it isn't yet sure it wants to hire you.

End the letter on a positive note that suggests you look forward to the interview and that you see yourself as a person who has something to contribute, not as someone who just needs a job.

I look forward to discussing with you ways in which I could contribute to The Limited's continued growth.

Do not end your letter with a variation of the negative cliché "Please do not hesitate to contact me." Why do you think they would hesitate? Also avoid this other tired cliché: "Thank you for your time." Using an overworked ending dumps you right back in the pool with all the other applicants.

Oh yes, one more thing. Don't forget to sign your letter—with blue or black ink—legibly.

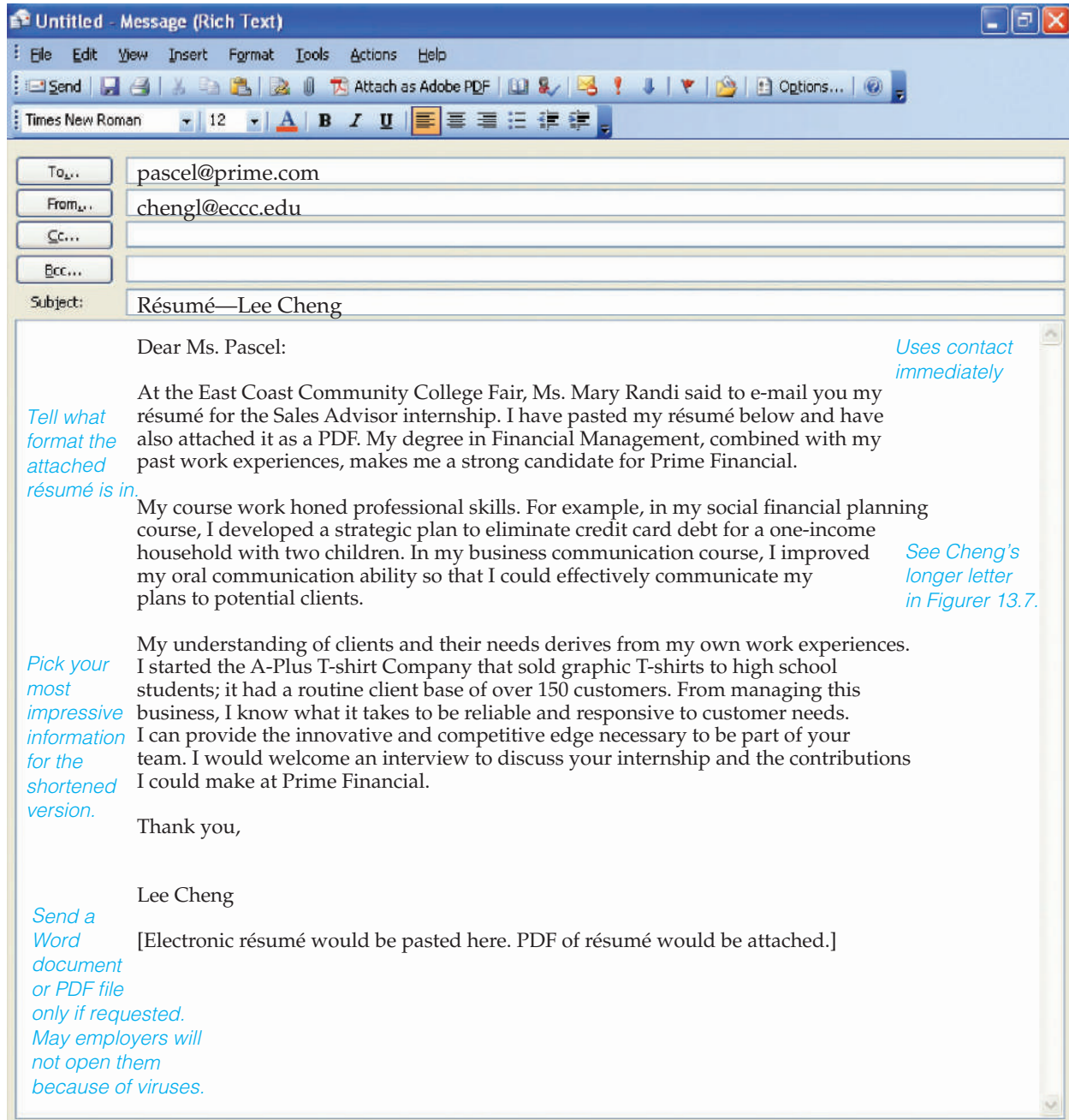
## E-MAIL APPLICATION LETTERS

You will probably e-mail most of your applications. If your application is solicited, you can paste your traditional letter into your e-mail. If your application is prospecting, you need a shorter letter that will catch the reader's attention within the first screen (see Figure 13.8). Your first paragraph is crucial; use it to hook the reader.

Some experts are starting to recommend a shorter letter for both situations, but many caution that you need to include enough information to make you, not one of the numerous other applicants, the person for the job. Frequently that is hard to do in one screen.

When you submit an e-mail letter with your résumé,

- Include your name as part of the subject line.
- Put the job number or title for which you're applying in the first paragraph.
- Prepare your letter in a word-processing program. Use a spell checker to make it easier to edit and proof the document; then paste it into the e-mail.
- Use standard business letter features: salutation, standard closing, single-spacing with double-spacing between paragraphs.
- Keep line length to a maximum of 65 characters, including spaces, so receivers won't get a strange mixture of long and short lines.
- Don't put anything in all capital letters.
- Don't use smiley faces or other emotions.
- Put your name at the end of the message.

**Figure 13.8** An E-mail with Application Letter and Résumé

Follow all guidelines posted by the company. Do not add attachments unless you know doing so is OK. Test your e-mail by sending it to a friend; have your friend recheck it for appearance and correctness.

## CREATING A PROFESSIONAL IMAGE

Every employer wants businesslike employees who understand professionalism. To make your application letter professional,



### You(r) Attitude Matters

If you find getting a job difficult, your attitude may be the reason. Here are four common career-blocking attitudes and responses to them:

Attitude: I deserve a good job because I went to school for four years.

Response: Employers are looking for who is best for a job, not who “deserves” a job.

Attitude: I am open to any job. I have no idea what I want to do.

Response: Employers want workers who are focused.

Attitude: I don’t have experience because no one will give me a chance.

Response: Employers do not employ people to give them a “chance.” Employers are concerned with what an applicant can do for them.

Attitude: I am so down on myself that it’s hard to keep looking for a job.

Response: Get professional help, because this attitude is poisonous to your life as well as your career.

Adapted from Peter Vogt, “Self-Defeating Attitudes Will Stop Your Job Search Cold,” *Monster.com*, accessed April 8, 2011, <http://career-advice.monster.com/job-search/getting-started/self-defeating-attitudes-job-search/article.aspx>.

- Create your letter in a word-processing program so you can use features such as spell check. Use a standard font such as Times New Roman, Arial, or Helvetica in 12-point type.
- Address your letter to a specific person. If the reader is a woman, call the office to find out what courtesy title she prefers.
- Don’t mention relatives’ names. It’s OK to use names of other people if the reader knows those people and thinks well of them, if they think well of you and will say good things about you, and if you have permission to use their names.
- Omit personal information not related to the job.
- Unless you’re applying for a creative job in advertising, use a conservative style: few contractions; no sentence fragments, clichés, or slang.
- Edit the letter carefully and proof it several times to make sure it’s perfect. Errors suggest that you’re careless or inept. Double-check the spelling of the receiver’s name.
- Print on the same paper (both shade and weight) you used for your résumé. Envelopes should match, too.
- Use a computer to print the envelope address.

## Writing Style

Use a smooth, concise writing style (Chapter 5). Use the technical jargon of the field to show your training, but avoid businessese and stuffy words like *utilize*, *commence*, and *transpire* (for *happen*). Use a lively, energetic style that makes you sound like a real person.

Avoid words that can be interpreted sexually. A model letter distributed by the placement office at a midwestern university included the following sentence:

I have been active in campus activities and have enjoyed good relations with my classmates and professors.

Sentences like this get shared for laughs; that’s not the kind of attention you want to get!

Be sure your letter uses the exact language of the job ad and addresses all items included in the ad. If the ad mentions teamwork, your letter should give examples of teamwork; don’t shift the vocabulary to collaboration. Many readers expect their job ad language in applicants’ letters. If the language is not there, they may judge the applicant as not fitting the position. And so may their computer, since the vocabulary of the job ad probably contains crucial key words for the computer to find.

## Positive Emphasis

Be positive. Don’t plead (“Please give me a chance”) or apologize (“I cannot promise that I am substantially different from the lot”). Most negatives should be omitted from the letter.

Avoid word choices with negative connotations (see Chapter 3). Note how the following revisions make the writer sound more confident.

Negative: I have learned an excessive amount about writing through courses in journalism and advertising.

Positive: Courses in journalism and advertising have taught me to recognize and to write good copy. My profile of a professor was published in the campus newspaper; I earned an “A +” on my direct mail campaign for the American Dental Association to persuade young adults to see their dentist more often.

*Excessive* suggests that you think the courses covered too much—hardly an opinion likely to endear you to an employer.

Negative: You can **check** with my references **to verify** what I’ve said.

Positive: Professor Hill can give you **more information** about my work on his national survey.

*Verify* suggests that you expect the employer to distrust what you’ve said.

## You-Attitude

Unsupported claims may sound overconfident, selfish, or arrogant. Create you-attitude (Chapter 3) by describing accomplishments and by showing how they relate to what you could do for this employer.

Lacks you-attitude: **An inventive and improvising individual like me is a necessity in your business.**

You-attitude: Building a summer house-painting business gave me the opportunity to find creative solutions to challenges. At the end of the first summer, for example, I had nearly 10 gallons of exterior latex left, but no more jobs. I contacted the home economics teacher at my high school. She agreed to give course credit to students who were willing to give up two Saturdays to paint a house being renovated by Habitat for Humanity. I donated the paint and supervised the students. I got a charitable deduction for the paint and hired the three best students to work for me the following summer. I could put these skills in problem solving and supervising to work as a personnel manager for Burroughs.

Show what you can do for them, not what they can do for you.

Lacks you-attitude: A company **of your standing could offer the challenging and demanding kind of position in which my abilities could flourish.**

You-attitude: Omit.

Remember that the word *you* refers to your reader. Using *you* when you really mean yourself or “all people” can insult your reader by implying that he or she still has a lot to learn about business:

Lacks you-attitude: Running my own business taught me that **you** need to learn to manage **your** time.

You-attitude: Running my own business taught **me** to manage **my** time.

Beware of telling readers information they already know as though they do not know it. This practice can also be considered insulting.

Lacks you-attitude: **Your company has just purchased two large manufacturing plants in France.**

You-attitude: **My three college French courses would help me communicate in your newly acquired French manufacturing facilities.**

Since you're talking about yourself, you'll use *I* in your letter. Reduce the number of *Is* by revising some sentences to use *me* or *my*.

Under my presidency, the Agronomy Club . . .

Courses in media and advertising management gave me a chance to . . .

My responsibilities as a summer intern included . . .

In particular, avoid beginning every paragraph with *I*. Begin sentences with prepositional phrases or introductory clauses:

As my résumé shows, I . . .

In my coursework in media and advertising management, I . . .

As a summer intern, I . . .

While I was in Italy, . . .

## Paragraph Length and Unity

Keep your first and last paragraphs fairly short—preferably no more than four or five typed lines. Vary paragraph length within the letter; it's OK to have one long paragraph, but don't use a series of eight-line paragraphs.

When you have a long paragraph, check to be sure that it covers only one subject. If it covers two or more subjects, divide it into two or more paragraphs.

Use topic sentences at the beginning of your paragraphs to make your letter more readable.

## Letter Length

Have at least three paragraphs. A short letter throws away an opportunity to be persuasive; it may also suggest that you have little to say for yourself or that you aren't very interested in the job.

Without eliminating content, tighten each sentence (Chapter 5) to be sure that you're using words as efficiently as possible. If your letter is a bit over a page, use slightly smaller margins or a type size that's one point smaller to get more on the page.

If you have excellent material that will not fit on one page, use it—as long as you have at least 6–12 lines of body text on the second page. The extra space gives you room to be more specific about what you've done and to add details about your experience that will separate you from other applicants. Employers don't *want* longer letters, but they will read them *if* the letter is well written and *if* the applicant establishes early in the letter that he or she has the credentials the company needs. Remember, however, that the trend is toward shorter letters.

## Editing and Proofreading

Be sure you edit and proofread your cover letter. Failure to do so can undo all the work you put into it. The web abounds with humorous examples of spelling errors making unintended statements (*I'm excellent at spelling and grammer*). In fact, some companies post the best bloopers on their web sites. For example, Robert Half International maintains Resumania (resumania.com); Killian Branding, an advertising agency, has "Cover Letters from Hell" on their website ([www.killianbranding.com/cover-letters-from-hell/](http://www.killianbranding.com/cover-letters-from-hell/)): the "poetic" Night-before-Christmas cover letter is amazing.

Check your content one last time to ensure that everything presents you as a hard-working professional. Make sure you are not revealing any frustration

with the job search process in your content or diction. Check your tone to see that it is positive about your previous experiences and yourself. Don't beg or show too much gratitude for commonplaces such as reading your letter.

## Follow-Up

Follow up with the employer once if you hear nothing after two or three weeks. It is also OK to ask once after one week if e-mail materials were received. If your job letter was prospecting, it is fine to follow up two or three times. Do not make a pest of yourself, however, by calling or e-mailing too often; doing so could eliminate you from further consideration.

## APPLICATION ESSAYS

Some jobs and internships, and many scholarship and graduate school applications, ask for an application essay. In a sense, this essay is an extended cover letter, but one written in an essay format rather than letter format. It will detail your strengths for the job/internship/scholarship/graduate school slot and show why you should be chosen instead of other applicants.

The essay offers you a chance to expand on your best points in more detail than does a cover letter. In so doing, you need to capture your readers' attention and show that you are exceptional. Frequently this means you need to put some of your personality into your essay. Here you can spell out with more interesting details skills you have already acquired from previous experiences and will bring to the new job or internship. Here you can elaborate on your academic achievements so you seem worthy of a scholarship or able to thrive in the rigors of graduate school. You can also expand more on general skills such as communication, critical thinking, and teamwork. Show that you are capable, hard working, and interesting.

The essay also gives you room to include content that you would not put in a cover letter. For instance, you might want to include an anecdote that shows something about you as a developing professional (hint: make it interesting but not melodramatic). Or you might talk some about future goals. How did you arrive at these goals? How would this internship advance your career goals? Why do you want to go to graduate school? What do you want to do after the internship, scholarship, or graduate career is over?



**WARNING:** Be careful when giving goals for job application essays. You do not want your goals to make the job seem like a quick steppingstone to better opportunities.

Remember to use the good writing techniques you have learned in this course and your other communication classes.

- Follow the directions, especially word and page limits, precisely. If the essay is to respond to a question, make sure it answers the question.
- Have a focal point for your essay, a unifying theme. This will help prevent you from merely listing accomplishments (your résumé did that).
- Start your essay with an interesting paragraph to catch attention. Do not summarize your essay, or your reader may go no further.
- Remember your audience. Show what you can do for this company, or why you want to go to this particular graduate school. But most of all, show what's in it for them if they accept you.



### Fatal Spelling Errors

These spelling errors occurred in actual cover letters:

- "I feel my rigorous education and subsequent internship have prepared me for any obstical I might encounter." Except the challenge of finding misspelled words.
- "I prefer a fast-paste work environment." For life's stickiest situations.
- "I am very interested in the newspaper add for the accounting position." And we're divided on your qualifications.
- "I am extremely detailori-ented." I'm afraid we're not convinced.
- Name on letterhead: "Sam Mevlin"; Signature: "Sam Melvin" Would the real Sam please come forward?

Robert Half International, "Cover Letter Statements," accessed March 20, 2011, <http://www.resumania.com/Resumania Archive>.

- Use vivid details in the body of the essay. They don't have to be wildly creative for a job essay; showing how you cut production time for the department newsletter by 15% will be interesting to your reader if the job is a good fit for you.
- Use some unique details. If your sentence could be used in many other applications, it is not showing why *you* should get the internship/job/scholarship/graduate school slot.
- Avoid unsupported generalities and clichés.
- Use topic sentences at the beginnings of your paragraphs. Remember these essays are frequently read quickly.
- Let your word choice reveal your personal voice. Since the essay is about you, it's fine to use some first person. Avoid thesaurus diction.
- End with a strong concluding paragraph. Remember, this is their last impression of you. Do not waste it on a boring summary of a one-page essay.

## S U M M A R Y O F K E Y P O I N T S

- Résumés differ from letters of application in the following ways:
  - The résumé summarizes all your qualifications. The letter expands your best qualifications to show how you can help the organization meet its needs, how you differ from other applicants, and that you have some knowledge of the organization.
  - The résumé avoids controversial material. The letter can explain in positive ways situations such as gaps in employment history.
  - The résumé uses short, parallel phrases and sentence fragments. The letter uses complete sentences in well-written paragraphs.
- Information and referral interviews can help you tap into the **hidden job market**—jobs that are not advertised. In an **information interview** you find out what the day-to-day work involves and how you can best prepare to enter that field. **Referral interviews** are interviews you schedule to learn about current job opportunities in your field.
- When you know that a company is hiring, send a **solicited job letter**. When you want a job with a company that has not announced openings, send a **prospecting job letter**. In both letters, you should
  - Address the letter to a specific person.
  - Indicate the specific position for which you're applying.
  - Be specific about your qualifications.
  - Show what separates you from other applicants.
  - Show a knowledge of the company and the position.
  - Refer to your résumé (which you would enclose with the letter).
  - Ask for an interview.
- Use your knowledge of the company, your coursework, your understanding of the field, and your experience in jobs and extracurricular activities to show that you're unique.
- Don't repeat information that the reader already knows; don't seem to be lecturing the reader on his or her business.

- Use positive emphasis to sound confident. Use you-attitude by supporting general claims with specific examples and by relating what you've done to what the employer needs.
- Have at least three paragraphs in your letter. Most job letters are only one page.
- Application essays give you a chance to expand on your best points and show your personality.

## CHAPTER 13 Exercises and Problems

\*Go to [www.mhhe.com/locker10e](http://www.mhhe.com/locker10e) for additional Exercises and Problems.

### 13.1 Reviewing the Chapter

1. What are three ways that job letters differ from résumés? (LO 13-2)
2. What are some ways to research specific employers? (LO 13-1)
3. What is the difference between information and referral interviews? (LO 13-1)
4. What are the differences between solicited and prospecting letters? (LO 13-2)
5. What are five tips for writing a job letter that makes you look attractive to employers? (LO 13-2)
6. What are 10 ways to create a professional image with your letter? (LO 13-2)

### 13.2 Reviewing Grammar

As you have read, it is crucial that your job letter be error-free. One common error in job letters, and one that spell-checking programs will not catch, is confusing

word pairs like *affect/effect*. Practice choosing the correct word with Exercises B.12, B.13, and B.14 in Appendix B.

### 13.3 Analyzing First Paragraphs of Prospecting Letters

All of the following are first paragraphs in prospecting letters written by new college graduates. Evaluate the paragraphs on these criteria:

- Is the paragraph likely to interest readers and motivate them to read the rest of the letter?
  - Does the paragraph have some content that the student can use to create a transition to talking about his or her qualifications?
  - Does the paragraph avoid asking for a job?
1. For the past two and one-half years I have been studying turf management. On August 1, I will graduate from ——— University with a BA in Ornamental Horticulture. The type of job I will seek will deal with golf course maintenance as an assistant superintendent.
  2. Ann Gibbs suggested that I contact you.
  3. Each year, the Christmas shopping rush makes more work for everyone at Nordstrom's, especially for the Credit Department. While working for Nordstrom's Credit Department for three Christmas and summer vacations, the Christmas sales increase is just one of the credit situations I became aware of.
  4. Whether to plate a two-inch eyebolt with cadmium for a tough, brilliant shine or with zinc for a rust-resistant, less expensive finish is a tough question. But similar questions must be answered daily by your salespeople. With my experience in the electroplating industry, I can contribute greatly to your constant need of getting customers.
  5. What a set of tractors! The new 9430 and 9630 diesels are just what is needed by today's farmer with his ever-increasing acreage. John Deere has truly done it again.
  6. Prudential Insurance Company did much to help my college career as the sponsor of my National Merit Scholarship. Now I think I can give something back to Prudential. I'd like to put my education, including a BS degree in finance from ——— University, to work in your investment department.
  7. Since the beginning of Delta Electric Construction Co. in 1993, the size and profits have grown steadily. My father, being a stockholder and vice president, often discusses company dealings with me. Although the company has prospered, I understand there have been a few problems of mismanagement. I feel with my present and future qualifications, I could help ease these problems.



### 13.4 Improving You-Attitude and Positive Emphasis in Job Letters

Revise each of these sentences to improve you-attitude and positive emphasis. You may need to add information.

1. I understand that your company has had problems due to the mistranslation of documents during international ad campaigns.
2. Included in my résumé are the courses in Finance that earned me a fairly attractive grade average.
3. I am looking for a position that gives me a chance to advance quickly.
4. Although short on experience, I am long on effort and enthusiasm.
5. I have been with the company from its beginning to its present unfortunate state of bankruptcy.
6. I wish to apply for a job at Austin Electronics. I will graduate from Florida State in May. I offer you a degree in electrical engineering and part-time work at Best Buy.
7. I was so excited to see your opening. This job is perfect for me.
8. You will find me a dedicated worker, because I really need a job.

### 13.5 Evaluating Letter Content

Improve the content of these passages from job cover letters. You may need to add content.

1. My internship gave me lots of experience for this job.
2. My job duties at Saxon Sport were to create displays, start an employee newsletter, and on weekends I was part of the sales staff.
3. While at San Fernando State, I participated in lots of activities. I played intramurals in baseball, football, basketball, hockey, and volley ball. I was treasurer and then president of the Marketing Club. I was in the Gaffers' Guild, where I made blown-glass creations. I was also in Campus Democrats.
4. I will be in Boston for a family reunion June 23–25 and will drop by your office then for an interview.
5. I feel any of my bosses would tell you that I try hard and pay attention to to detail.
6. I wish to apply for your job as a computer programmer. I have a computer science minor and two summers of sales experience at Best Buy in their computer department.
7. I am a very hard worker. In fact, I have a reputation for finishing the jobs of other workers.

### 13.6 Evaluating Rough Drafts

Evaluate the following drafts. What parts should be omitted? What needs to be changed or added? What parts would benefit from specific supporting details?

1.

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

There is more to a buyer's job than buying the merchandise. And a clothing buyer in particular has much to consider.

Even though something may be in style, customers may not want to buy it. Buyers should therefore be aware of what customers want and how much they are willing to pay.

In the buying field, request letters, thank-you letters, and persuasive letters are frequently written.

My interest in the retail field inspired me to read The Gap's annual report. I saw that a new store is being built. An interview would give us a chance to discuss how I could contribute to this new store. Please call me to schedule an interview.

Sincerely,

2.

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am taking the direct approach of a personnel letter. I believe you will understand my true value in the areas of practical knowledge and promotional capabilities.

I am interested in a staff position with Darden in relation to trying to improve the operations and moral of the Olive Garden Restaurants, which I think that I am capable of doing. Please take a minute not to read my résumé (enclosed) and call to schedule an interview.

Sincerely,

3.

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

I would like to apply for the opening you announced for an Assistant Golf Course Superintendent. I have the qualifications you are asking for.

Every year the Superintendent must go before the greens committee to defend its budget requests. To prepare myself to do this, I took courses in accounting, business and administrative writing, and speech.

I have done the operations necessary to maintain the greens properly.

I look forward to talking with you about this position.

Sincerely,

### 13.7 Gathering Information about an Industry

Use six recent issues of a trade journal to report on three or four trends, developments, or issues that are important in an industry.

**As your instructor directs,**

- a. Share your findings with a small group of other students.
- b. Summarize your findings in a memo to your instructor. Include a discussion of how you could use this information in your job letter and résumé.
- c. Present your findings to the class.
- d. Join with a small group of other students to write a report summarizing the results of this research.

### 13.8 Gathering Information about Companies in Your Career Field

Use five different websites, such as those listed in Figure 13.1, to investigate three companies in your career field. Look at salary guides for your level of qualifications, product/service information, news articles about the companies, mission/vision statements, main competitors, annual reports, and financial reports.

**As your instructor directs,**

- a. Share your findings with a small group of other students.
- b. Summarize your findings in a memo to your instructor. Include a discussion of how you could use this information in your job letter and résumé.
- c. Present your findings to the class.
- d. Join with a small group of other students to write a report summarizing the results of this research.

### 13.9 Gathering Information about a Specific Organization

Gather information about a specific organization, using several of the following methods:

- Check the organization's website.
- Read the company's annual report.

- Pick up relevant information at the Chamber of Commerce.
- Read articles in trade publications and the *Wall Street Journal* or that mention the organization (check the indexes).
- Read recruiting literature provided by the company.

**As your instructor directs,**

- a. Share your findings with a small group of other students.

- b. Summarize your findings in a memo to your instructor. Include a discussion of how you could use this information in your job letter and résumé.
- c. Present your findings orally to the class.
- d. Write a paragraph for a job letter using (directly or indirectly) the information you found.

### 13.10 Conducting an Information Interview

Interview someone working in a field you're interested in. Use the questions listed on page 412 or the shorter list here:

- How did you get started in this field?
- What do you like about your job?
- What do you dislike about your job?
- What courses and jobs would you recommend as preparation for this field?

**As your instructor directs,**

- a. Share the results of your interview with a small group of other students.

- b. Write up your interview in a memo to your instructor. Include a discussion of how you could use this information in your job letter and résumé.
- c. Present the results of your interview orally to the class.
- d. Write to the interviewee thanking him or her for taking the time to talk to you.

### 13.11 Conducting a Referral Interview

- a. Write to a friend who is already in the workforce, asking about one or more of the following topics:
  - Are any jobs in your field available in your friend's organization? If so, what?
  - If a job is available, can your friend provide information beyond the job listing that will help you write a more detailed, persuasive letter? (Specify the kind of information you'd like to have.)
  - Can your friend suggest people in other organizations who might be useful to you in your

job search? (Specify any organizations in which you're especially interested.)

- b. List possible networking contacts from your co-workers, classmates, fraternity/sorority members, friends, family friends, former employers and co-workers, neighbors, faculty members, and local business people. Who would be the most valuable source of information for you? Who would you feel most comfortable contacting?

### 13.12 Writing a Solicited Letter

Write a letter of application in response to an announced opening for a full-time job (not an internship) you would like.

**Turn in a copy of the listing.** If you use option (a) below, your listing will be a copy. If you choose option (b), you will write the listing.

- a. Respond to an ad in a newspaper, in a professional journal, in the placement office, or on the web. Use an

ad that specifies the company, not a blind ad. Be sure that you are fully qualified for the job.

- b. If you have already worked somewhere, assume that your employer is asking you to apply for full-time work after graduation. Be sure to write a fully persuasive letter.

### 13.13 Writing a Prospecting Letter

Pick a company you'd like to work for and apply for a specific position that is not being advertised. The position can be one that already exists or one that you would create if you could to match your unique blend of talents.

Address your letter to the person with the power to create a job for you: the president of a small company,

or the area vice president or branch manager of a large company.

Create a job description; give your instructor a copy of it with your letter.

### 13.14 Critiquing a Job Letter

After you have written your job letter for Exercise 13.12 or 13.13, bring it to class and share it with a classmate.

- Read your cover letter aloud to your classmate noting any changes you would like to make and any areas that may not sound appropriate.

- Have your classmate reread your job letter and make suggestions to enhance it.

- Swap letters and go through the exercise again.

Write a memo to your instructor discussing the changes you will make to your job letter on the basis of this exercise.

### 13.15 Writing a Rhetorical Analysis of Your Job Letter

- a. Examine the job letter you wrote for Exercise 13.12 or 13.13 and answer the following questions in a memo to your instructor:

- Who is your audience? Identify them beyond their name. What will they be looking for?
- How did you consider this audience when selecting information and the level of detail to use? What information did you exclude? How did you shape the information about you to address your audience's needs?
- How did you organize your information for this audience?

- How did you adapt your tone and style for this audience? How did you balance your need to promote yourself without bragging? Where did you use you-attitude, positive tone, and goodwill?

- How did you show knowledge of the company and the position without telling your audience what they already know?

- b. Review a class member's cover letter using the same questions.

### 13.16 Applying Electronically

Write an e-mail application letter with a résumé in the text of the message.

### 13.17 Applying at Google

Using the Google sidebar on page 414, research possible jobs at Google. Pick the one most appropriate for you and write an electronic job letter to Google.

### 13.18 Editing a Cover Letter

In Chapter 12, Exercise 12.13, you critiqued the résumé of Jennifer Stanton. Below is her cover letter. Using the information about Jennifer from Exercise 12.13, redo her

letter to improve it. Then write a memo to your instructor discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the letter and explaining why you made the changes you did.

From: wildechilde@gmail.com  
To: pattersj@micquant.com  
Date: 13 February, 2012  
Re: Job!

Dear Ms. Patterson:

My name is Jennifer Stanton and I really want to work with you at Quantum National! Your job looks a whole lot like the one I had at my internship this past summer, so I'm pretty sure I'd be great at it.

I can't start until this Summer, because I'm finishing up my degree at Iowa State. I'm currently working on a degree in Business Management, so I'd be a great manager at your business. The one thing I've learned for sure in college is how to balance deadlines to get everything done on time. I've had a few classes where we had to work in teams, and I've been the team leader every time: once I step in, people just want to follow where I lead.

I think my work experience is exactly what you're looking for, too. At my internship last summer, I was basically unsupervised, so I had to learn fast! I managed client and department needs, I did the budgets—twice!—and I worked with a sales and marketing team to put together client information packages. I also did the scheduling for the team the whole time, which was my supervisor's job but she delegated it to me, because I am trustworthy. I also worked for years at my family's bookstore, which shows I can hold down a job.

Like I said, I'm really interested in this job. I think that this would be a great place to start my career, and I know I can do the job! Give me a call on my cell when you decide who you're interviewing!

Thanks,  
Jennifer Stanton

### 13.19 Reviewing Cover Letters

All-Weather, Inc., invited applications for the position of Sales Representative (Residential Sales). To be based in Nebraska, this person will be mainly responsible for sales

of All-Weather's vinyl windows in local markets, including single- and double-hung windows and casement windows. The job description for the position reads as follows:

The Sales Representative (Residential Sales) will be responsible for successful market penetration of identified market segments. Specifically, the duties include achieving targeted sales, conducting product demonstrations, contacting customers and other stakeholders, gathering market intelligence, preparing market and sales reports, communicating with internal customers, coordinating between customers and the Service and Installation Group, participating in meetings of trade associations and government agencies, attending company training events, and performing other duties assigned by managers. The ideal candidate will be someone with a BS degree, preferably with a technical major. Additionally, the candidate must have at least one year of sales experience, preferably in industrial products. Candidates with experience in brand marketing will also be considered. Among skills for the job, the candidate must possess computer skills, PR and communication skills, teamwork skills, and the ability to perform basic mathematical computations.

Below are two cover letters received from applicants. In a memo to your instructor, discuss the strengths and weaknesses of both. Judging just from their cover letter, which applicant would you prefer to hire? Why?

### Figure 1 Antonio Ramirez's Cover Letter

Antonio Ramirez aramirez@bestmail.com 164 Beet St. Houston, TX

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October 12, 2012  
Ms. Erin Lenhardt  
1210 Polaroid Av.  
St. Paul, MN

Dear Ms. Lenhardt:

Please consider this letter as my application for the post of Sales Representative (Residential Sales). I learned about your job from the journal *Plastics US* (September issue). I have a bachelor's degree in chemistry from the University of Austin, Texas, and have two years of experience selling PVC resin.

The last two years I have been a Sales Executive in Goodman Petrochemicals in Houston, TX. My responsibilities include selling Goodman's PVC resin to Houston-based PVC processors of rigid and flexible applicatons.

As you suggest in your advertisement, my degree in chemistry will help me explain to customers the important technical attributes of your vinyl windows. My focus during my bachelor's degree was inorganic chemistry, especially hydrocarbons and its practical applications. Apart from my coursework, I also interned at Bright Fenestration Products in Austin, TX.

I look forward to discussing my experience and interst in your organization with you in a face-to-face interview. I'm available for the interview anytime in the next two weeks at a day's notice. I'm confident I will meet—and exceed—all your expetations for this important front line position.

Sincerely,

Antonio Ramirez

**Figure 2** Michelle Chang's Cover Letter**Michelle Chang**

4334, Sunset Boulevard, Lincoln, NE  
mchang@myemail.com

October 14, 2012  
Ms. Erin Lenhardt  
HR Manager  
1210 Polaroid Av.  
St. Paul, MN

Dear Ms. Lenhardt:

I wish to apply for the position of Sales Representative (Residential Sales) advertised through Monster.com. After acquiring a bachelor's degree in design, I joined Albatross Advertising in November, 2010, as a trainee in the Accounts Department. Currently, I'm an Account Representative handling three of our most promising brands: *LiteWait* vacuum cleaners, Nebraska Furniture Mart, and Chimney Rock Art Gallery.

My bachelor's degree in design with a major in community and regional planning not only familiarized me with demands of buildings and landscapes in our 21st century living but also acquainted me with concepts of media and design. I joined Albatross because I wanted to see if my education has equipped me to inform, persuade, and help customers with regard to products and brands.

During my nearly two-year tenure at Albatross as Account Representative, I have created and given insightful presentations to clients. As a result of my performance, the agency has entrusted me with three of its most promising accounts, the ones that I mention above.

I would be delighted at an opportunity for a personal interview to further make my case for the job. You can contact me at my e-mail address mentioned above.

Sincerely,

Michelle Chang

**13.20** Reviewing a Cover Letter

In the cover letter in Figure 13.4, Jeff Moeller is responding to the following job advertisement from Telltale

Games. Using the ad, evaluate Jeff's letter to see how well he shows he is qualified for the job.

**Game Designer**

Telltale is searching for game designers to work on our growing library of unique episodic games. The game designer will be responsible for generation of detailed concepts covering all aspects of gameplay and story, as well as for prototyping, implementation and polish. Creative writing skills are a plus.

- Responsibilities
  - Work with lead designer to conceive fresh, innovative storytelling games, consistent with company game philosophy and vision

- Design and implement gameplay-related functionality including controls, dialogs, puzzles, and mini-games using Lua
- Implement front end and menu systems, NPC interactions and various other scripted events
- Implement character behaviors in various game scenarios according to story specifications and gameplay needs
- Test and refine gameplay features throughout the development cycle of the project
- Essential Skills and Experience
  - Demonstrated ability to work with artists and other designers
  - Good communication and interpersonal skills
  - Proven experience and proficiency with high level scripting languages (examples: JavaScript, Lua, Python, Perl)
  - Demonstrated ability to write clear, maintainable code
- Preferred Skills and Experience
  - Game industry experience in a design or programming position
  - Experience with Lua
  - Experience with Visual Studio and Source Safe
  - Creative writing skills
  - B.S. in Computer Science, Literature or Creative Writing

Principals only. Sorry, no unsolicited agencies, please!



# Interviewing, Writing Follow-Up Messages, and Succeeding in the Job

## Chapter Outline

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### 21st Century Interviews

#### Interview Strategy

#### Interview Preparation

- Final Research
- Elevator Speech
- Travel Planning
- Attire
- Professional Materials

#### Interview Channels

- Campus Interviews
- Phone Interviews
- Video Interviews

#### Interview Practice

#### Interview Customs

- Behavior
- Note-Taking
- Interview Segments

### Traditional Interview Questions and Answers

#### Kinds of Interviews

- Behavioral Interviews
- Situational Interviews
- Stress Interviews
- Group Interviews

#### Final Steps for a Successful Job Search

- Following Up with Phone Calls and Written Messages
- Negotiating for Salary and Benefits
- Deciding Which Offer to Accept

#### Dealing with Rejection

#### Your First Full-Time Job

#### Summary of Key Points

# The Four-Day Interview



When President Barack Obama nominated Elena Kagan to fill a place on the United States Supreme Court, he was criticized by leaders and commentators of both parties. In addition to the normal concerns with her political views, many expressed worries about her lack of judicial experience. Kagan, a former dean of the Harvard Law School, had never been a judge and had very little trial experience. It looked like she might have an uphill battle to be confirmed by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Over four days of intense hearings, the 16 members of the Judiciary Committee grilled Kagan on her experience, her political and social views, her performance and decisions in her jobs, and her published articles and private communications. Throughout the process, Kagan answered the most difficult questions candidly and thoughtfully, with occasional humor. She acknowledged the complexities of the questions and explained her positions without apologizing.

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*“The confirmation hearings for Elena Kagan were nothing more than an extended job interview for one of the highest profile jobs in the world.”*

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By the end of the hearings, she had won over some of her harshest critics. In fact, Senator Tom Coburn, who had criticized her answers early in the process, said at the end that her hearings had been some of the best in his experience. In the end, she was confirmed by the Judiciary Committee and then by the full Senate.

At the core, the confirmation hearings for Elena Kagan were nothing more than an extended job interview for one of the highest profile jobs in the world. While most job candidates will not face four

days of interviews like Kagan, they will be asked to answer in-depth questions about their abilities and experiences, and they will need to explain uncomfortable details of their pasts. In that sense, Kagan’s composed and professional conduct during her hearing can be an example to other job seekers.

In the end, Kagan got the job, thanks in large part to her four-day interview.

Sources: Ariane De Vogue and Ann H. Sloan, “The Kagan Hearings: Were They Necessary and Worthwhile?” ABC News, July 2, 2010, [http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/Supreme\\_Court/elena-kagan-hearings-worthwhile/story?id=11068199&page=1](http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/Supreme_Court/elena-kagan-hearings-worthwhile/story?id=11068199&page=1); James Gordon Meek, “Elena Kagan Hearings: Supreme Court Justice Nominee Grilled over Military Recruitment Ban at Harvard,” *NY Daily News*, June 29, 2010, [http://articles.nydailynews.com/2010-06-29/news/27068623\\_1\\_elena-kagan-harvard-law-school-gays](http://articles.nydailynews.com/2010-06-29/news/27068623_1_elena-kagan-harvard-law-school-gays); and “Kagan Confirmed to Supreme Court,” *Washington Post*, accessed April 18, 2011, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/package/supremecourt/2010candidates/elena-kagan.html>.

## Learning Objectives

After studying this chapter, you will know

- LO 14-1** What kinds of interviews you may encounter.
- LO 14-2** What preparations to make before you start interviewing.
- LO 14-3** What to do during an interview.
- LO 14-4** How to answer common interview questions.
- LO 14-5** What to do after an interview.
- LO 14-6** How to succeed at your first full-time job.



### “Best” Hires

*Fortune* magazine offers these tips to increase your chances for a job at one of its “100 Best Companies to Work For.”

Know someone at the company; most of these companies rely on employee referrals.

Emphasize your volunteer work; these companies support community outreach.

Be ready for multiple interviews.

Put your inner storyteller to work; you will be asked how you handled various work scenarios.

Do more research about the company than your rivals do.

Be a team player (one manager actually counts the number of times candidates say “I”).

Show your willingness to build your career in that company; most are looking for long-term employees.

Show a passion for learning and growing at that company.

Adapted from Anne Fisher, “How to Get Hired by a ‘Best’ Company,” *Fortune*, February 4, 2008, 96.

Job interviews are scary, even when you’ve prepared thoroughly. Surveys show that, according to hiring managers, job candidates are more likely to make mistakes during their interviews than at any other point of their job search.<sup>1</sup> But when you are prepared, you can reduce the number of missteps so that you put your best foot forward and get the job you want. The best way to prepare is to know as much as possible about the process and the employer.

## 21ST CENTURY INTERVIEWS **LO 14-1**

Interviews remain an important part of the hiring process. A survey of 600 managers found that they overwhelmingly preferred evaluating job candidates in person, either by interviews or temporary work performance.<sup>2</sup>

Interviews are changing, however, as employers respond to interviewees who are prepared to answer the standard questions. Today, many employers expect you to

- Follow instructions to the letter.
- Participate in many interviews. You may have one or more interviews by phone, Skype, or video before you have an office interview.
- Take one or more tests, including drug tests, psychological tests, aptitude tests, computer simulations, skills tests, and essay exams where you’re asked to explain what you’d do in a specific situation.
- Be approved by the team you’ll be joining. In companies with self-managed work teams, the team has a say in who is hired.
- Provide—at the interview or right after it—a sample of the work you’re applying to do. You may be asked to write a memo or a proposal, calculate a budget on a spreadsheet, write computer code, or make a presentation.

All the phoning required in 21st-century interviews places a special emphasis on phone skills. Be polite to everyone with whom you speak, including administrative assistants and secretaries. Find out the person’s name on your first call and use it on subsequent calls. Be considerate: “Thank you for being so patient. Can you tell me when a better time might be to try to reach Ms. X? I’ll try again on [date].” Sometimes, if you call after 5 pm, executives answer their own phones since clerical staff have gone home. However, some of them resent interruptions at that time, so be particularly well prepared and focused.

If you get someone's voice mail, leave a concise message—complete with your name and phone number. Give the phone number slowly so it can be jotted down. Keep your voice pleasant. If you get voice mail repeatedly, call the main company number to speak with a receptionist. Ask whether the person you're trying to reach is in the building. If he or she is on the road, ask when the person is due in.

## INTERVIEW STRATEGY

Develop an overall strategy based on your answers to these three questions:

1. **What about yourself do you want the interviewer to know?** Pick two to five points that represent your strengths for that particular job and that show how you will add value to the organization. These facts are frequently character traits (such as enthusiasm), achievements and experiences that qualify you for the job and separate you from other applicants, or unique abilities such as fluency in Spanish. For each strength, think of a specific accomplishment to support it. For instance, be ready to give an example to prove that you're hardworking. Be ready to show how you helped an organization save money or serve customers better.

Then at the interview, listen to every question to see if you could make one of your key points as part of your answer. If the questions don't allow you to make your points, bring them up at the end of the interview.

2. **What disadvantages or weaknesses do you need to minimize?** Expect that you may be asked to explain weaknesses or apparent weaknesses in your record such as lack of experience, so-so grades, and gaps in your record.

Plan how to deal with these issues if they arise. Decide if you want to bring them up yourself, particularly disadvantages or weaknesses that are easily discoverable. If you bring them up, you can plan the best context for them during the interview. Many students, for example, have been able to get good jobs after flunking out of school by explaining that the experience was a turning point in their lives and pointing out that when they returned to school they maintained a B or better grade point average. Although it is illegal to ask questions about marital status, married candidates with spouses who are able to move easily sometimes volunteer that information: "My husband is a dentist and is willing to relocate if the company wants to transfer me." See the suggestions later in this chapter under "Answering Traditional Interview Questions" and "Behavioral and Situational Interviews."

3. **What do you need to know about the job and the organization to decide whether or not you want to accept this job if it is offered to you?** Plan *in advance* the criteria on which you will base your decision (you can always change the criteria). Use "Deciding Which Offer to Accept" below to plan questions to elicit the information you'll need to rank each offer.

## INTERVIEW PREPARATION LO 14-2

Preparing for your interviews is vital in these days of intense competition for jobs. It can also help you to feel more confident and make a better impression.

### Final Research

Research the company interviewing you. Read their web pages, Facebook page, Twitter page, company newsletters, and annual reports. Many companies now have YouTube videos and employee blogs to give you insight into



### How to Get a Job at Google

What you have heard is true. Getting hired by Google is difficult, even for highly intelligent people, and even after you make it through the brain-teaser portion of the interview. A former Google recruiter offers these insights:

- Show a willingness to tackle hard problems, including the brain-teasers.
- Have something excellent on your résumé. A 4.0 GPA might work, but a low GPA with your own consulting business, or a major contribution to a nonprofit, may also get you an interview.
- Prepare for behavioral questions, and make sure your answers say positive things about the ways you prefer to work.

Adapted from Phil Stott, "How to Get Hired by Google," Vault.com, accessed April 18, 2011, <http://www.vault.com/wps/portal/usa/vcm/detail/Career-Advice/Interviewing/How-to-Get-Hired-by-Google?id=64619>.



### What Not to Wear at an Interview

CareerBuilder.com surveyed hiring professionals to discover the top fashion mistakes interviewees make:

1. Too-short skirts
2. Overly bright or vividly patterned clothing
3. Wrinkled or stained clothing
4. Poorly fitted clothing
5. Socks that are too short, or don't go with the shoes
6. Patterned hosiery or bare legs
7. Scuffed or inappropriate footwear, including sneakers, stilettos, sandals, and open-toed shoes
8. Extra buttons or tags attached to a new suit
9. Earrings on men; multiple sets of earrings on women
10. Visible tattoos, tongue jewelry, facial piercings
11. Heavy makeup
12. Long or bright fingernails
13. Unnatural hair colors or styles
14. Strong aftershaves, perfumes, or colognes
15. Backpacks, fanny packs, or purses (use a briefcase)
16. Sunglasses on top of your head or headphones around your neck

Adapted from "What Not to Wear to an Interview: Top 20 Wardrobe Malfunctions," CareerBuilder, accessed April 15, 2011, <http://www.careerbuilder.com/Article/CB-462-Getting-Hired-What-Not-to-Wear-to-an-Interview/>.

the company and its culture. Some of them even offer interview tips. Read about them in trade journals and newspapers. Do a Google search. Ask your professors, classmates, friends, family, and co-workers about them. If possible, find out who will interview you and research them, too.

Also research salaries for the job: What is average? What is the range? Use web tools like [indeed.com/salary](http://indeed.com/salary) or [salary.com](http://salary.com) to find salary information by job title and location.

## Elevator Speech

After you have finished your research, prepare your elevator speech, a short—two minute max—powerful statement of why you are a good candidate for this particular job. (The name comes from the scenario of being alone with the recruiter for a multifloor elevator ride. What can you say in that short period to convince the recruiter to consider you?) Even though it is short, your elevator speech will need some carefully selected details to be convincing. It will come in handy for questions like “Tell me about yourself” or “Why should I hire you?” It is useful in a variety of situations, including group interviews (p. 458) and receptions where you meet a variety of the company’s employees in brief, one-on-one conversations.

## Travel Planning

If your interview is not on campus, make sure you can find the building and the closest parking. Plan how much time you will need to get there. Leave time margins for stressors such as traffic jams or broken elevators. If you are fortunate enough to be flown to an interview, don’t schedule too tightly. Allow for flight delays and cancellations. Plan how you will get from the airport to the interview site. Take enough cash and credit cards to cover emergencies.

## Attire

First impressions are important; employers start judging you from the first second they see you. A major part of that first impression is your appearance.

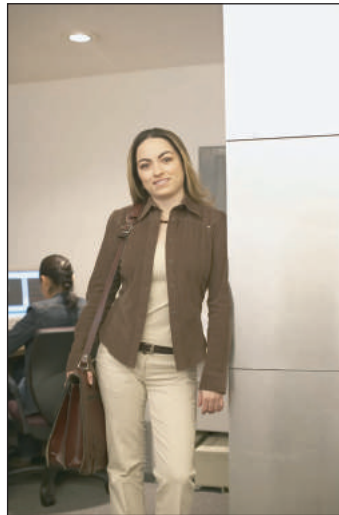
The outfit you wear to an interview should meet your interviewer’s expectations. The most conservative choice is the traditional dark business suit with a light blouse or shirt, plus tie shoes with matching dark socks for men and close-toed pumps with nude, unpatterned hose for women. Although this outfit is probably still the most common choice, you cannot count on it being the right choice. Many companies now expect more casual attire: sport jackets for men, coordinated jackets for women. Skirts should come at least to the knee; low-cut tops should be avoided. Sneakers and sandals are inappropriate.

For campus interviews, you should follow the dress code of your campus career center.

For office interviews, you should show that you understand the organization’s culture. Try to find out from your career contacts what is considered appropriate attire. Some interviewers do not mind if you ask them what you should wear to the interview. (Others do mind, so be careful. They believe it means you have not done your homework.)

Paul Capelli, former public relations executive at Amazon.com and now vice president of corporate communications at QVC, suggests that applicants find out what employees wear “and notch it up one step”:

If the dress is jeans and a T-shirt, wear slacks and an open collar shirt . . . If it’s slacks and an open collar shirt, throw on a sport coat. If it’s a sport coat, throw on a suit. At least match it and go one step up.<sup>3</sup>



You can wear a wide range of apparel to interviews. Find out what is appropriate—and inappropriate—for each interview. Which of these outfits would you wear?

No matter what outfit you choose, make sure it fits well (especially important if it has been a few months since you wore it), is comfortable, and does not show too much cleavage or chest. Avoid casual items such as skin-tight pants, shorts, or sandals.

Choose comfortable shoes. You may do a fair amount of walking during an onsite interview. Check your heels to make sure they aren't run down; make sure your shoes are shined.

Make conservative choices. Have your hair cut or styled conservatively. Jewelry and makeup should be understated; face jewelry, such as eyebrow and nose studs, should be removed. If possible, cover tattoos. Personal hygiene must be impeccable, with close attention paid to fingernails and breath. Make sure your clothes are clean and pressed. Avoid cologne and perfumed after-shave lotions.

## Professional Materials

Take extra copies of your résumé. If your campus placement office has already given the interviewer a data sheet, present the résumé at the beginning of the interview: "I thought you might like a little more information about me."



### Career Fair Advice

Stanford University's Career Development Center offers the following tips for career fairs:

1. Prepare for the Career Fair. Answer the following questions before you attend:
  - What organizations are attending?
  - How will the employers be organized at the event?
  - What is the starting and ending time?
  - What attire is appropriate?
2. Prepare a résumé to hand out to potential employers. However, if you do not have a résumé, you can still attend the fair to gather information.
3. Set up a plan: Make a prioritized list of organizations you want to visit. However, be open to interesting organizations you run across at the fair.
4. Create a one-minute presentation to give to potential employers outlining your background and qualifications which will meet the organization's needs.
5. Bring questions to ask.
6. Bring a pen and notepad to stay organized during the fair.
7. Collect business cards and write a fact on the back to remember when you write a thank you.
8. Thank employers at the fair for materials you are given.
9. Write a thank-you note to those organizations you wish to pursue.

Adapted from "Preparing for a Career Fair," Stanford University Career Development Center, accessed April 16, 2011, <http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/cdc/services/career-fair-prepare>.

Take something to write on and something to write with. It's OK to carry a small notepad with the questions you want to ask on it.

Take copies of your work or a portfolio: an engineering design, a copy of a memo you wrote on a job or in a business writing class, an article you wrote for the campus paper. You don't need to present these unless the interview calls for them, but they can be very effective: "Yes, I have done a media plan. Here's a copy of a plan I put together in my advertising seminar last year. We had a fixed budget and used real figures for cost and rating points, just as I'd do if I joined Foote, Cone & Belding."

Take the names, street addresses, e-mail addresses, and phone numbers of references. Take complete details about your work history and education, including dates and street addresses, in case you're asked to fill out an application form.

If you can afford it, buy a briefcase in which to carry these items. At this point in your life, an inexpensive vinyl briefcase is acceptable. Women should let the briefcase replace a purse.

## INTERVIEW CHANNELS LO 14-1

Interviews use other channels in addition to the popular office setting. As a college student, you may well find yourself being interviewed on campus. You may also find you have a phone or video conference, as more and more companies use technology to keep hiring costs in check. Most of the interview advice in this chapter applies to all settings, but some channels do have unique particulars you should consider.

### Campus Interviews

Most campus career offices have written protocols and expectations for campus interviews arranged through them. Be sure to follow these expectations so that you look informed.

However, because campus interviewers will see so many students who are all following the same protocols, it is important that you have good details and professional stories about your work to help you stand out from the crowd. Focus on three to four selling points you most want the interviewer to remember about you. If you have a choice, do not schedule your interview late in the day when interviewers are getting tired.

### Phone Interviews

Some organizations use phone interviews to narrow the list of candidates they bring in for office visits. Phone interviews give you some advantages. Obviously, you do not have to dress up for them, or find an office. You can use all the materials you want as you speak. You can also take all the notes you want, although copious note-taking will probably impact your speaking quality, and you certainly don't want the sound of keyboard clicking to be heard by your interviewer.

On the other hand, phone interviews obviously deny you the important component of visual feedback. To compensate for this loss, you can ask your interviewer for verbal feedback (e.g., Is this sufficient detail? Would you like more on this topic?).

Although you always want to speak distinctly at an interview, doing so is even more crucial for a phone interview. And speech experts recommend that you smile, lean forward, and even gesture, although no one can see you. Such activities add warmth to your words. Be sure to eliminate all background

noise such as music or TV. Finally, just as you did for a campus interview, focus on three to four selling points you most want the interviewer to remember about you.

## Video Interviews

Video interviews are becoming more common. You may experience two different kinds. In one, the organization sends you a list of questions and you prepare a video which you send back to them. In the other, the organization conducts live interviews using videoconferencing equipment or programs such as Skype.

If you are preparing a video,

- Practice your answers so you are fluent. You don't want to stumble over your responses, but you also don't want to sound like you have memorized the answers.
- Be thorough. Since the employer can't ask follow-up questions, you want to consider what those questions could be and then be sure to answer them.

If you are participating in a videoconference,

- Do a practice video of yourself ahead of time. Listen to your pronunciation and voice qualities. Watch your video with the sound turned off: check your posture, gestures, facial expressions, and clothing. Do you have nervous mannerisms you need to control?
- During the actual interview, keep your answers under two minutes. Then ask if interviewers want more information. People are generally more reluctant to interrupt a speaker in another location, and body language cues are limited, so ask for feedback ("Would you like to hear about that?").

## INTERVIEW PRACTICE

Rehearse everything you can: Put on the clothes you'll wear and practice entering a room, shaking hands, sitting down, and answering questions. Ask a friend to interview you. Saying answers out loud is surprisingly harder than saying them in your head. If your department or career center offers practice interviews, take advantage of them.

Some campuses have videotaping facilities so that you can watch your own sample interview. Videotaping is particularly valuable if you can do it at least twice, so you can modify behavior the second time and check the tape to see whether the modification works.

## INTERVIEW CUSTOMS LO 14-3

Your interviewing skills will improve with practice. If possible, schedule a few interviews with other companies before your interview with the company that is your first choice. However, even if you're just interviewing for practice, you must still do all the research on that company. If interviewers sense that you aren't interested, they won't take you seriously and you won't learn much



### Interview Etiquette: Deteriorating?

A Vault survey found that the majority of employers believe interview manners have deteriorated over the last few years. Employers have seen job candidates show up drunk, fall asleep during the interview, and tell inappropriate stories. Here is some etiquette advice from the survey:

- Be on time. Some employers would eliminate people late for their interview. Other employers do not like people who arrive more than 10–15 minutes early, because they are distracting.
- Turn off your cellphone. Most employers would disqualify someone who answered a call during an interview. They also disapproved of looking at text messages. Such behavior shows a lack of engagement in the interview.
- Show gratitude: Send a thank-you note within 24 hours of the interview.

Adapted from Ingrid Ahlgren, "Job Interview Etiquette 101," Vault.com, accessed April 16, 2011, <http://www.vault.com/wps/portal/usa/vcm/detail/Career-Advice/Interviewing/Job-Interview-Etiquette-101?id=1067>.





### Tips for a Successful Interview Meal

David Rand, consultant on professional etiquette, offers these tips to look confident at the interview table.

- Hold premeal drinks in your left hand, so your handshake is not wet and clammy.
- Remember BMW for food placement: bread on the left, meal in the center, and water to your right.
- Unfold your napkin only after your host has done so, or all are seated at the table.
- Use silverware from the outside in. This means your salad fork will be farther from your plate than your dinner fork.
- Always pass the pepper along with salt; don't salt your own food first and then pass.
- When leaving your seat temporarily, place your napkin on your chair; after your meal, place the crumpled napkin back on the table.

Adapted from Rebecca Knight, "MBAs Mind their Manners—An Etiquette and Networking Course Aims to Remove the Angst from the Cocktail Interview," *Financial Times*, February 2, 2009, 11.

from the process. Also, interviewers talk to each other, sharing impressions and stories, sometimes with names attached.

Not all interviews are question and answer sessions. More employers are starting to use other screening devices; they are asking candidates to provide on-the-spot writing samples, or to take personality, critical thinking, or intelligence tests. For example, one securities broker-dealer uses IQ tests, personality tests, and emotional intelligence tests.<sup>4</sup>

## Behavior

How you act at the interview is as important as what you say, and first impressions of behavior are as important as they are for appearance.

Employers start judging you from the first second they see you. If you meet multiple people, first impressions will begin anew with each encounter. Always act professionally. Have a pleasant handshake; avoid the limp, dead-fish hand. Be polite to everyone, including people such as security agents, receptionists, and people in the restroom. Their input about you may be sought.

Politeness extends to the interview itself:

- Be punctual, but not too early (no more than 10 minutes early). Many recruiters don't like someone hanging around their reception area.
- Practice active listening (see Chapter 4); it makes speakers feel appreciated and you will likely pick up clues you can use effectively during your interview.
- Do not monopolize the interview time with lengthy monologues. Generally your interviewer will have many questions to cover and will not appreciate an undue amount of time wasted on just one. Check the interviewer's verbal cues and body language for the amount of detail and depth desired. After two to three minutes, ask if the interviewer wants more detail. The best interviews are conversations in which you and your interviewer enjoy your interactions.
- Never say anything bad about current and former employers, a category that includes schools. Candidates who snipe about their employers and instructors will likely continue to do so on their new job and thus appear to be unattractive colleagues.

Be enthusiastic about the job. Enthusiasm helps convince people you have the energy to do the job well. Show how you are a good choice for their job by clearly presenting your carefully chosen accomplishments and strengths. If you are attending an onsite interview, where you could well be asked the same questions by different people, prepare to repeat yourself—with enthusiasm.

Should you be yourself? There's no point in assuming a radically different persona. If you do, you run the risk of getting into a job that you'll hate (though the persona you assumed might have loved it). Furthermore, as interviewers point out, you have to be a pretty good actor to come across convincingly if you try to be someone other than yourself. Yet keep in mind that all of us have several selves: we can be lazy, insensitive, bored, slow-witted, and tongue-tied, but we can also be energetic, perceptive, interested, intelligent, and articulate. Be your best self at the interview.

Interviews can make you feel vulnerable and defensive; to counter this, review your accomplishments—the things you're especially proud of having done. You'll make a better impression if you have a firm sense of your own self-worth.

Every interviewer repeats the advice that you've probably heard: sit up straight, don't mumble, look at people when you talk. It's good advice for interviews. Be aware that many people respond negatively to smoking. Remember to turn off your cellphone.

As much as possible, avoid **nervous mannerisms**: playing with your hair, jingling coins in your pocket, clicking your pen, or repeating verbal spacers such as "like" and "uh." These mannerisms distract your audience and detract from your presentation. It's OK to be a little nervous, however; it shows that you care.

Site visits that involve **meals and semisocial occasions** call for sensible choices. When you order, choose something that's easy to eat without being messy. Watch your table manners. Eat a light lunch, with no alcohol, so that you'll be alert during the afternoon. A survey by the Society for Human Resource Management found that 96% of human resources professionals believe job candidates should not drink at interview meals.<sup>5</sup> At dinner or an evening party, decline alcohol if you don't drink. If you do drink, accept just one drink—you're still being evaluated, and you can't afford to have your guard down. Be aware that some people respond negatively to applicants who drink hard liquor, even if it was offered to them (think of it as another test you have to pass).

Because they may last longer, sometimes site interviews will present you with **minor problems** such as being brought back late from lunch, or being kept overtime with one interviewer so you are late for your appointment with another. Don't let these minor problems throw you. Think of them as a new opportunity to show that you can roll with the punches; move forward calmly.

If you have any **expenses**, be sure you keep all receipts for reimbursement. Many people forget to get taxi or shuttle receipts and thus are not reimbursed for those expenses.

The interview is also a time for you to see if you want to work for this organization. Look for signs of organizational culture (see page 32). How do people treat each other? Are offices or cubbies personalized? How many hours a week do the newest employees work? Is this the place where you want to become another new employee?

## Note-Taking

During or immediately after the interview, write down

- The name of the interviewer (or all the people you talked to, if it's a group interview or an onsite visit).
- Tips the interviewer gave you about landing the job and succeeding in it.
- What the interviewer seemed to like best about you.
- Any negative points or weaknesses that came up that you need to counter in your follow-up messages or phone calls.
- Answers to your questions about the company.
- When you'll hear from the company.

The easiest way to get the interviewer's name is to ask for his or her card. You may be able to make all the notes you need on the back of the card.

Some interviewers say that they respond negatively to applicants who take notes during the interview. However, if you have several interviews back-to-back or if you know your memory is terrible, do take brief notes



### Body Language Mistakes

"A new CareerBuilder survey of more than 2,500 hiring managers reveals that failure to make eye contact (67 percent), lack of smile (38 percent) and fidgeting too much (33 percent) would make them less likely to hire someone. . . .

"When asked overall what additional body language mistakes would make them less likely to hire job candidates, hiring managers reported the following:

- Bad posture
- Handshake that is too weak
- Crossing arms over their chest
- Playing with their hair or touching their face
- Using too many hand gestures"

Quoted from CareerBuilder, "New CareerBuilder Survey Reveals Top Body Language Mistakes Candidates Make in Job Interviews," press release, July 28, 2010, <http://www.career-builder.com/share/aboutus/pressreleasesdetail.aspx?id=pr581&sd=7/29/2010&ed=7/29/2009>.



### Interview Checklist

Here is a checklist of tips for a surefire attitude from Judi James, author of *You're Hired! Interview: Tips And Techniques for a Brilliant Interview*.

**Sell yourself to yourself:** If you don't believe in yourself, chances are the interviewer won't believe in you either.

**Show, don't tell:** Prepare short stories of your accomplishments; they are more convincing than simply stating you are a good leader or problem solver. Keep your information relevant to the job.

**Avoid JBY syndrome:** An interview is not the place to Just Be Yourself (JBY). Interviews are formal events; reflect that formality in your attire and behavior.

**Be vivid:** Energy, enthusiasm, and charisma help you stand out.

**Avoid body language "leakage":** Nervous habits such as fidgeting and fiddling can send negative signals.

**Make a good entrance:** Stand tall, smile, look confident. Practice a firm handshake and making eye contact.

**Look the part:** Dress appropriately for the company and job.

Adapted from "It's Hire Education—Ten Tips to Succeed in an Interview," *The Sun*, February 5, 2009, 49.

during the interview. That's better than forgetting which company said you'd be on the road every other week and which interviewer asked that *you* get in touch with him or her. Try to maintain eye contact as much as possible while taking notes.

## Interview Segments

Every interview has an opening, a body, and a close.

In the **opening** (two to five minutes), good interviewers will try to set you at ease. Some interviewers will open with easy questions about your major or interests. Others open by telling you about the job or the company. If this happens, listen so you can answer questions later to show that you can do the job or contribute to the company that's being described.

The **body** of the interview (10 to 25 minutes) is an all-too-brief time for you to highlight your qualifications and find out what you need to know to decide if you want to accept a site trip. Expect questions that give you an opportunity to showcase your strong points and questions that probe any weaknesses evident from your résumé. (You were neither in school nor working last fall. What were you doing?) Normally the interviewer will also try to sell you on the company and give you an opportunity to raise questions.

You need to be aware of time so that you can make sure to get in your key points and questions: "We haven't covered it yet, but I want you to know that I . . ." "I'm aware that it's almost 10:30. I do have some more questions that I'd like to ask about the company."

In the **close** of the interview (two to five minutes), the interviewer will usually tell you what happens next: "We'll be bringing our top candidates to the office in February. You should hear from us in three weeks." Make sure you know who to contact if the next step is not clearly spelled out or you don't hear by the stated time.

The close of the interview is also the time for you to summarize your key accomplishments and strengths and to express enthusiasm for the job. Depending on the circumstances, you could say: "I've certainly enjoyed learning more about Zappos." "I hope I get a chance to visit your Las Vegas office. I'd really like to see the new computer system you talked about."

## TRADITIONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS LO 14-4

First interviews seek to screen out less qualified candidates rather than to find someone to hire. Negative information will hurt you less if it comes out in the middle of the interview and is preceded and followed by positive information. If you blow a question near the end of the interview, don't leave until you've said something positive—perhaps restating one of the points you want the interviewer to know about you.

As Figure 14.1 shows, successful applicants use different communication behaviors than do unsuccessful applicants. Successful applicants are more likely to use the company name during the interview, show they have researched the company, support their claims with specific details, use appropriate technical language, and ask specific questions about the company and industry. In addition to practicing the content of questions, try to incorporate these tactics.

The ultimate questions in your interviewers' minds are probably these three: What can you do for us? Why should we hire you instead of another

**Figure 14.1** The Communication Behaviors of Successful Interviewees

Behavior	Unsuccessful interviewees	Successful interviewees
Statements about the position	Have only vague ideas of what they want to do.	Specific and consistent about the position they want; are able to tell why they want the position.
Use of company name	Rarely use the company name.	Refer to the company by name.
Knowledge about company and position	Make it clear that they are using the interview to learn about the company and what it offers.	Make it clear that they have researched the company; refer to specific website, publications, or people who have given them information.
Level of interest, enthusiasm	Respond neutrally to interviewer's statements: "OK," "I see." Indicate reservations about company or location.	Express approval nonverbally and verbally of information provided by the interviewer; "That's great!" Explicitly indicate desire to work for this particular company.
Nonverbal behavior	Make little eye contact; smile infrequently.	Make eye contact often; smile.
Picking up on interviewer's cues	Give vague or negative answers even when a positive answer is clearly desired ("How are your writing skills?").	Answer positively and confidently; and back up the claim with a specific example.
Use of industry terms and technical jargon	Use almost no technical jargon.	Use appropriate technical jargon.
Use of specifics in answers	Give short answers—10 words or less, sometimes only one word; do not elaborate. Give general responses: "fairly well."	Support claims with specific personal experiences.
Questions asked by interviewee	Ask a small number of general questions.	Ask specific questions based on knowledge of the industry and the company. Personalize questions: "What would my duties be?"

candidate? Will you fit in our company/division/office? However, many interviewers do not ask these questions directly. Instead, they ask other questions to get their answers more indirectly. Some of the more common questions are discussed below. Do some unpressured thinking before the interview so that you'll have answers that are responsive, are honest, and paint a good picture of you. Choose answers that fit your qualifications and the organization's needs.

Check your answers for hidden negatives. If you say you are the kind of person who is always looking for challenges, your interviewer may wonder about hiring you for this entry-level position, which needs someone who does mostly routine work with care. Similarly, if you say you want lots of responsibility, your interviewer may again not see you as a good fit for entry-level positions, which are not known for providing lots of responsibility.

Rehearse your answers mentally, so you feel confident you have good answers. Then get family and friends to interview you. You may be surprised at how much work good mental answers still need when you give them out loud.



### Tell Me a Story

One effective way to stand out from the hordes of people being interviewed is to tell a memorable story about yourself.

- Choose a story that shows your personality as well as professional abilities.
- Use a story highly relevant for the particular job.
- Use colorful details, including sensory ones.
- Keep it short—two minutes at the very most.
- Your story is to be an honest anecdote about your professional self, not a fiction.

1. **Tell me about yourself.** Focus on several strengths that show you are a good candidate. Give examples with enough specifics to prove each strength. Don't launch into an autobiography, which will have too many details the interviewer will not care about. Provide professional, not personal, information.
2. **Walk me through your résumé.** Highlight your best features and offer reasons for major decisions. Why did you choose this college? Why did you take that job? Have professional reasons: You went to State U because it has a top-ranked accounting department, not because it is close to home; you took that summer job because it allowed some interaction with the company's accounting department, not because it was the only one you could find.
 

Don't try to cover too much; your résumé walk should be no longer than three minutes. But do try to add some interesting detail that is not on your résumé. Above all, do maintain eye contact; do not read your résumé.
3. **What makes you think you're qualified to work for this company? Or, I'm interviewing 120 people for two jobs. Why should I hire you?** This question may feel like an attack. Use it as an opportunity to state your strong points: your qualifications for the job, the things that separate you from other applicants.
4. **What two or three accomplishments have given you the greatest satisfaction?** Pick accomplishments that you're proud of, that create the image you want to project, and that enable you to share one of the things you want the interviewer to know about you. Focus not just on the end result, but on the problem-solving, thinking, and innovation skills that made the achievement possible.
5. **Why do you want to work for us? What is your ideal job?** Even if you're interviewing just for practice, make sure you have a good answer—preferably two or three reasons you'd like to work for that company. If you don't seem to be taking the interview seriously, the interviewer won't take you seriously, and you won't even get good practice.
 

If your ideal job is very different from the ones the company has available, the interviewer may simply say there isn't a good match and end the interview. If you're interested in this company, do some research so that what you ask for is in the general ballpark of the kind of work the company offers.
6. **What college subjects did you like best and least? Why?** This question may be an icebreaker; it may be designed to discover the kind of applicant they're looking for. If your favorite class was something outside your major, prepare an answer that shows that you have qualities that can help you in the job you're applying for: "My favorite class was a seminar in the American novel. We got a chance to think on our own, rather than just regurgitate facts; we made presentations to the class every week. I found I really like sharing my ideas with other people and presenting reasons for my conclusions about something."
7. **What is your class rank? Your grade point? Why are your grades so low?** If your grades aren't great, be ready with a nondefensive explanation. If possible, show that the cause of low grades now has been solved or isn't relevant to the job you're applying for: "My father almost died last year, and my schoolwork really suffered." "When I started, I didn't have any firm goals. Once I discovered the field that was right for me, my grades have all been B's or better." "I'm not good at multiple-choice tests. But I am good at working with people."
8. **What have you read recently? What movies have you seen recently?** These questions may be icebreakers; they may be designed to probe your intellectual depth. The term you're interviewing, read at least one book



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or magazine (multiple issues) and see at least one serious movie that you could discuss at an interview. Make thoughtful selections.

9. **Show me some samples of your writing.** Many jobs require the ability to write well. Employers no longer take mastery of basic English for granted, even if the applicant has a degree from a prestigious university.

The year you're interviewing, go through your old papers and select a few of the best ones, editing them if necessary, so that you'll have samples to present at the interview if you're asked for them.

10. **Describe a major problem you have encountered in your work and how you dealt with it.** Choose a problem that was not your fault: a customer's last-minute change to a large order, a flu outbreak during Christmas rush. In your solution, stress skills you know the company will be seeking.
11. **What are your interests outside work? What campus or community activities have you been involved in?** While it's desirable to be well-rounded, naming 10 interests is a mistake: the interviewer may wonder when you'll have time to work. Select activities that show skills and knowledge you can use on the job: "I have polished my persuasion skills by being a cabin counselor at a camp for troubled preteens."

If you mention your fiancé, spouse, or children in response to this question ("Well, my fiancé and I like to go sailing"), it is perfectly legal for the interviewer to ask follow-up questions ("What would you do if your spouse got a job offer in another town?"), even though the same question would be illegal if the interviewer brought up the subject first.

12. **What have you done to learn about this company?** An employer may ask this to see what you already know about the company (if you've read the recruiting literature and the website, the interviewer doesn't need to repeat them). This question may also be used to see how active a role you're taking in the job search process and how interested you are in this job.
13. **What adjectives would you use to describe yourself?** Use only positive ones. Be ready to illustrate each with a specific example of something you've done.
14. **What are your greatest strengths?** Employers ask this question to give you a chance to sell yourself and to learn something about your values.



### Zappos Interview Questions

Below are some interview questions used at Zappos, where the emphasis is on hiring people compatible with their strong service mission:

- Give me an example from your previous job(s) where you had to think and act outside the box.
- What was the best mistake you made on the job? Why was it the best?
- Tell me about a time you recognized a problem/area to improve that was outside of your job duties and solved [it] without being asked to. What was it, how did you do it?
- Would you say you are more or less creative than the average person? Can you give me an example?
- If it was your first day on the job at Zappos and your task was to make the interview/recruiting process more fun, what would you do for those eight hours?
- What's an example of a risk you took in a previous job? What was the outcome?

Quoted from Tony Hsieh, *Delivering Happiness: A Path to Profit, Passion, and Purpose* (New York: Business Plus, 2010), 172. With permission from Central Grand Publishing.

Pick strengths related to work, school, or activities: “I’m good at working with people.” “I really can sell things.” “I’m good at solving problems.” “I learn quickly.” “I’m reliable. When I say I’ll do something, I do it.” Be ready to illustrate each with a specific example of something you’ve done. It is important to relate your strengths to the specific position.

15. **What is your greatest weakness?** Use a work-related negative, even if something in your personal life really is your greatest weakness. Interviewers won’t let you get away with a “weakness” like being a workaholic or just not having any experience yet. Instead, use one of these strategies:
- a. Discuss a weakness that is not related to the job you’re being considered for and will not be needed even when you’re promoted. (Even if you won’t work with people or give speeches in your first job, you’ll need those skills later in your career, so don’t use them for this question.) End your answer with a positive that *is* related to the job:

[For a creative job in advertising:] I don’t like accounting. I know it’s important, but I don’t like it. I even hire someone to do my taxes. I’m much more interested in being creative and working with people, which is why I find this position interesting.

[For a job in administration:] I don’t like selling products. I hated selling cookies when I was a Girl Scout. I’d much rather work with ideas—and I really like selling the ideas that I believe in.

- b. Discuss a weakness that you are working to improve:

In the past, I wasn’t a good writer. But last term I took a course in business writing that taught me how to organize my ideas and how to revise. I may never win a Pulitzer Prize, but now I can write effective reports and memos.

- c. Describe advice you received, and how that advice helped your career.

The professor for whom I was an undergraduate assistant pointed out to me that people respond well to liberal praise, and that I was not liberal with mine. As I have worked on providing more positive feedback, I have become a better manager.

16. **What are your career goals? Where do you want to be in five years? Ten years?** This question is frequently a test to see if you fit with this company. Are your goals ones that can be met at this company? Or will the company have the expense of training you only to see you move on promptly to another company?
17. **Why are you looking for another job?** Do not answer this with a negative—“My boss didn’t like me,” “I didn’t like the work”—even if the negative is true. Stress the new opportunities you’re looking for in a new job, not why you want to get away from your old one: “I want more opportunity to work with clients.”

Also be careful of hidden negatives: “I couldn’t use all my abilities in my last job” sounds like you are complaining. It also suggests that you don’t take the initiative to find new challenges. If you are looking for a job with a bigger salary, it is better to use other points when answering this question.

If you were fired, say so. There are various acceptable ways to explain why you were fired:

- a. It wasn't a good match. Add what you now know you need in a job, and ask what the employer can offer in this area.
  - b. You and your supervisor had a personality conflict. Make sure you show that this was an isolated incident, and that you normally get along well with people.
  - c. You made mistakes, but you've learned from them and are now ready to work well. Be ready to offer a specific anecdote proving that you have indeed changed.
18. **Why do you have a gap in your employment history?** Answer briefly and positively; do not apologize for family decisions.

I cared for an ill family member. Because of the time it took, it wasn't fair to an employer to start a new job.

I stayed home with my children while they were young. Now that they are both in school, I can devote myself to top performance in your company.

If you were laid off, be prepared to explain why you were one of the people let go. It helps if you can truthfully say that all new employees with less than three years' experience at the firm were laid off, or that legal services were outsourced, or that the entire training department was disbanded. Be careful you do not display bitter, angry feelings; they will not help you get a new job. It may help you to realize that in tight economies, being laid off is not an issue for many interviewers.

19. **What questions do you have?** This question gives you a chance to cover things the interviewer hasn't brought up; it also gives the interviewer a sense of your priorities and values. Almost all interviewers will ask you for questions, and it is crucial that you have some. A lack of questions will probably be interpreted as a lack of interest in the company and a lack of preparation for the interview. These are some questions you might want to ask:

- What would I be doing on a day-to-day basis?
- What's the top challenge I would face in this job?
- What kind of training program do you have?
- How do you evaluate employees? How often do you review them?
- What will a good employee have done by the time of his or her first evaluation?
- Where would you expect a new trainee (banker, staff accountant) to be three years from now? Five years? Ten years?
- What happened to the last person who had this job?
- How would you describe the company's culture?
- This sounds like a great job. What are the drawbacks?
- How are interest rates (new products from competitors, imports, demographic trends, government regulations, etc.) affecting your company? Questions like these show that you care enough to do your homework and that you are aware of current events.
- What do you like best about working for this company? Ending with a question like this closes your interview on an upbeat note.



Do not ask these questions:

- Questions about information you can easily find (and should have found) on the company's website.
- Questions that indicate dissatisfaction with the job for which you are being interviewed (How soon can I get promoted?).
- Questions about salary and benefits (wait until you have a job offer).

Not all interview questions are proper. Various federal, state, and local laws prohibit questions that would allow employers to discriminate on the basis of protected characteristics such as race, sex, age, disability, and marital status. If you are asked an improper or illegal question during an interview, you have several options:

- You can answer the question, but you may not get hired if you give the "wrong" answer.
- You can refuse to answer the question. Doing so is within your rights, but it may make you look uncooperative or confrontational, so again you may not get hired.
- You can look for the intent behind the question and provide an answer related to the job. For example, if you were asked who would care for your children when you had to work late on an urgent project, you could answer that you can meet the work schedule a good performance requires.

Keep in mind in each situation that legal and illegal questions can be very similar. It is legal to ask if you are over 18, but illegal to ask you how old you are. It is legal to ask you which languages you speak (if that talent is relevant for the job), but it is illegal to ask you what your native language is. Also be careful of variants of illegal questions. Asking when you graduated from high school gives the interviewer a pretty good idea of your age.

You won't be able to anticipate every question you may get. Check with other people at your college or university who have interviewed recently to find out what questions are currently being asked in your field.

## KINDS OF INTERVIEWS LO 14-1

Many companies, dissatisfied with hires based on one interview, are turning to multiple interviews. Geoff Smart and Randy Street, in their business best seller *Who: The A Method for Hiring*, present a four-interview system for finding the best employees:

1. Screening interview, which culls the list (done by phone).
2. Topgrading interview, which walks job candidates through their careers so far.
3. Focused interview, which focuses on one desired aspect of the candidate's career.
4. Reference interview, which checks in with candidates' references.<sup>6</sup>

Granted, this system is not for hiring entry-level people, but you won't be entry level very long, if you are even now. Even companies that won't use a



Amy's Ice Cream stores sell entertainment. To find creative, zany employees, Amy Miller gives applicants a white paper bag and a week to do something with it. People who produce something unusual are hired.

four-tiered system to interview you may be supplementing traditional interviews with behavioral, situational, stress, and group interviews.

## Behavioral Interviews

Using the theory that past behaviors predict future performance, **behavioral interviews** ask applicants to describe actual past behaviors, rather than future plans. Thus instead of asking “How would you motivate people?” the interviewer might ask, “Tell me what happened the last time you wanted to get other people to do something.” Follow-up questions might include, “What exactly did you do to handle the situation? How did you feel about the results? How did the other people feel? How did your superior feel about the results?”

Additional behavioral questions may ask you to describe a situation in which you

- Created an opportunity for yourself in a job or volunteer position.
- Used writing to achieve your goal.
- Went beyond the call of duty to get a job done.
- Communicated successfully with someone you disliked.
- Had to make a decision quickly.
- Took a project from start to finish.
- Used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
- Worked under a tight deadline.
- Worked with a tough boss.
- Worked with someone who wasn't doing his or her share of the work.

In your answer, describe the situation, tell what you did, and explain what happened. Think about the implications of what you did and be ready to talk about whether you'd do the same thing next time or if the situation were



### Mass Interrogation

If you've seen a Senate committee grill a person nominated for a federal job, you've seen a panel interview. This trend is growing even in the private sectors. If you will have a panel interview, here are some tips to help you.

- Take notes. When the panel members introduce themselves, write their names in the same arrangement they are seated.
- Focus on one question at a time rather than getting overwhelmed by the entire experience.
- Address the current questioner, but also make eye contact with other panel members.
- Try to identify the person with the most authority. The body language of the other people usually helps you do so. For instance, everyone may look to them for the answer to a question.
- Ask at least one question of each panel member. Doing so makes you look prepared and invested in the job, and the responses from various panel members help you get a better idea about the company.
- Write a thank-you note to each panel member.

Adapted from Anne Fisher, "1 Job, 11 Interviewers," *Fortune*, November 25, 2008, <http://money.cnn.com/2008/11/20/news/economy/interview.fortune/index>.

slightly different. For example, if you did the extra work yourself when a team member didn't do his or her share, does that fact suggest that you prefer to work alone? If the organization you're interviewing with values teams, you may want to go on to show why doing the extra work was appropriate in that situation but that you can respond differently in other situations.

A good way to prepare for behavioral interviews is to make a chart. Across the top list jobs, accomplishments, and projects. Down the left side, list qualities employers will want in candidates for the jobs you seek. These qualities should include skills such as communication, teamwork, critical thinking, networking, influencing people, and leadership; traits such as honesty, reliability, and a developed ethical sense; and the ability to meet situations such as those in the list above. Then you fill in the boxes. How does that presentation you made to skeptical administrators demonstrate your communication skills? Your ethics? Your ability to perform under pressure? Make sure each item in your boxes casts you in a favorable light: the ability to work under pressure is generally valued, but if you had to pull three all-nighters to finish your marketing project, employers might see you as a procrastinator.

## Situational Interviews

**Situational interviews** put you in situations similar to those you will face on the job. They test your problem-solving skills, as well as your ability to handle problems under time constraints and with minimal preparation. While behavioral interviews asked how you handled something in the past, situational interviews focus on the future. For instance, for jobs with strong service components you could expect to be asked how you would handle an angry client. For jobs with manufacturing companies, you might be asked to imagine a new product.

Frequently situational interviews contain actual tasks candidates are asked to perform. You may be asked to fix some computer coding, sell something to a client, prepare a brochure, or work with an actual spreadsheet. Two favorite tasks are to ask candidates to prepare and give a short presentation with visuals or to work through an online in-box. Both of these tasks test communication and organization skills, as well as the ability to perform under time constraints.

## Stress Interviews

Obviously, if the task is complex, performing it at a job interview, particularly with time constraints, is stressful. Thus situational interviews can easily move into stress interviews. The higher you move in your career, the more likely it is that you will have situational or stress interviews. **Stress interviews** deliberately put applicants under stress to see how they handle the pressure. The key is to stay calm; try to maintain your sense of humor.

Sometimes the stress is physical: for example, you're given a chair where the light is in your eyes. Speak up for yourself: ask if the position of the blind can be changed, or move to another chair.

Usually the stress is psychological. Panel interviews, such as those for many political appointments, may be stressful (see sidebar on this page). The group of interviewers may fire rapid questions. However, you can slow the pace down with deliberate answers. In another possibility, a single interviewer may probe every weak spot in your record and ask questions that elicit negatives. If you get questions that put you on the defensive, rephrase



Stress interviews can use physical conditions and people placement to see how candidates respond to uncomfortable situations. You have the option to change some uncomfortable conditions, such as lights shining in your eyes.

them in less inflammatory terms, if necessary, and then treat them as requests for information.

- Q:** Why did you major in physical education? That sounds like a pretty Mickey Mouse major.
- A:** Are you wondering whether I have the academic preparation for this job? I started out in physical education because I've always loved team sports. I learned that I couldn't graduate in four years if I officially switched my major to business administration because the requirements were different in the two programs. But I do have 21 hours in business administration and 9 hours in accounting. And my sports experience gives me practical training in teamwork, motivating people, and management.

Respond assertively. The candidates who survive are those who stand up for themselves and who explain why indeed they *are* worth hiring.

Sometimes the stress comes in the form of unusual questions: Why are manhole covers round? How many tennis balls would fit inside a school bus? If you were a cookie/car/animal, what kind would you be? If you could be any character from a book, who would you be? How you handle the question will be as important as your answer, maybe more important. Can you think creatively under pressure?



### STAR: An Interviewing Technique

“One strategy for preparing for behavioral interviews is to use the STAR Technique, as outlined below. (This technique is also referred to as the SAR and PAR techniques.)

#### Situation or Task

Describe the situation that you were in or the task that you needed to accomplish. You must describe a specific event or situation, not a generalized description of what you have done in the past. Be sure to give enough detail for the interviewer to understand. This situation can be from a previous job, from a volunteer experience, or any relevant event.

#### Action You Took

Describe the action you took and be sure to keep the focus on you. Even if you are discussing a group project or effort, describe what you did—not the efforts of the team. Don't tell what you might do, tell what you did.

#### Results You Achieved

What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn?”

Quoted from “STAR Interviewing Response Technique for Success in Behavioral Job Interviews,” QuintCareers, accessed April 16, 2011, [http://www.quintcareers.com/STAR\\_interviewing.html](http://www.quintcareers.com/STAR_interviewing.html). Reprinted with permission.



### Most Common Interview Mistakes

According to a survey of 2,400 hiring managers, these are the most common mistakes job candidates make during their interviews:

- Answering a cellphone or texting during the interview.
- Dressing inappropriately.
- Appearing disinterested.
- Appearing arrogant.
- Speaking negatively about a current or previous employer.
- Chewing gum.
- Not providing specific answers.
- Not asking good questions.

Bullets quoted from CareerBuilder, "Employers Reveal Outrageous and Common Mistakes Candidates Made in Job Interviews, According to New CareerBuilder Survey," news release, January 12, 2011, <http://www.careerbuilder.com/share/aboutus/pressreleasesdetail.aspx?id=pr614&sd=1/12/2011&ed=01/12/2011>.

Silence can also create stress. One woman walked into her scheduled interview to find a male interviewer with his feet up on the desk. He said, "It's been a long day. I'm tired and I want to go home. You have five minutes to sell yourself." Since she had planned the points she wanted to be sure interviewers knew, she was able to do this. "Your recruiting brochure said that you're looking for someone with a major in accounting and a minor in finance. As you may remember from my résumé, I'm majoring in accounting and have had 12 hours in finance. I've also served as treasurer of a local campaign committee and have worked as a volunteer tax preparer through the Accounting Club." When she finished, the interviewer told her it was a test: "I wanted to see how you'd handle it."

## Group Interviews

In group interviews, sometimes called "cattle calls," multiple candidates are interviewed at a time. While many interview tips still apply to these interviews, successful candidates will also practice other techniques. Researching the job and company becomes even more important, because your time to show how you fit the job will be so limited. Have a two-minute summary of your education and experience that shows how you fit this job. Practice it ahead of time so you can share it during the interview.

Arrive early so you have time to meet as many interviewers and interviewees as possible. Get business cards from the interviewers if you can. This pre-interview time may be part of the test, so make the most of it.

During the interview, listen carefully to both interviewers and interviewees. Make eye contact with both groups as well. Participate in the discussion, and look engaged even when you aren't. Watch your body language (see Chapter 4) so you don't give off unintended signals.

Some group interviews are organized around tasks. The group may be asked to solve a problem. Another scenario is that the group will be split into teams, with each team performing a task and then presenting to the whole group. Remember that your participation in these activities is being watched. You will be judged on skills such as communication, persuasion, leadership, organization, planning, analysis, and problem-solving. Do you help move the action forward? Are you too assertive? Too shy? Do you praise the contributions of others? Do you help the group achieve consensus? Are you knowledgeable?

Many group interviews particularly test how you interact with other people. Talking too much may work against you. Making an effort to help quiet people enter the discussion may work in your favor. Connecting your comments to previous comments shows you are a good listener as well as a team player. Be careful not to get caught up in a combative situation.

At the end of the interview, thank each interviewer. Follow up with a written thank you to each interviewer.

## FINAL STEPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL JOB SEARCH LO 14-5

What you do after the interview can determine whether you get the job. Many companies expect applicants to follow up on their interviews within a week. If they don't, the company assumes that they wouldn't follow up with clients.

If the employer sends you an e-mail query, answer it promptly. You're being judged not only on what you say but on how quickly you respond. Have your list of references (see page 390) and samples of your work ready to send promptly if requested to do so.

## Following Up with Phone Calls and Written Messages

After a first interview, make a follow-up phone call to show enthusiasm for the job, to reinforce positives from the first interview, to overcome any negatives, and to provide information to persuade the interviewer to hire you. Do not stalk the recruiter. Call only once unless you have excellent reasons for multiple calls. If you get voice mail, leave a message. Remember that caller ID will tell the recruiter that you were the person making the multiple hang-ups.

A thank-you note, written within 24 hours of an interview, is essential. Some companies consider the thank-you note to be as important as the cover letter. The note should

- Thank the interviewer for useful information and any helpful action.
- Remind the interviewer of what he or she liked in you.
- Use the jargon of the company and refer to specific things you learned during your interview or saw during your visit.
- Be enthusiastic about the position.
- Refer to the next move, whether you'll wait to hear from the employer or whether you want to call to learn about the status of your application.

If the note is for a site visit, thank your hosts for their hospitality. In the postscript, mention enclosed receipts for your expenses.

Be sure your thank-you is well written and error-free. Double-check the spelling of all names. The note can be an e-mail, but many employers are still impressed by paper thank-you notes. In either case, do not use text messaging abbreviations or emoticons.

Figure 14.2 is an example of a follow-up letter after a site visit.

## Negotiating for Salary and Benefits

The best time to negotiate for salary and benefits is after you have the job offer. Try to delay discussing salary early in the interview process, when you're still competing against other applicants.

Prepare for salary negotiations by finding out what the going rate is for the work you hope to do. Ask friends who are in the workforce to find out what they're making. Ask the campus placement office for figures on what last year's graduates got. Check trade journals and the web.

This research is crucial. The White House Report on the status of women shows that women earn about 75% as much as men, at all levels of education. Even when compared to direct male counterparts, the difference is substantial.<sup>7</sup> Knowing what a job is worth will give you the confidence to negotiate more effectively.

The best way to get more money is to convince the employer that you're worth it. During the interview process, show that you can do what the competition can't.

After you have the offer, you can begin negotiating salary and benefits. You're in the strongest position when (1) you've done your homework and know what the usual salary and benefits are and (2) you can walk away from



### Interview Bloopers

A recent survey asked executives for the most embarrassing interview moments

they had encountered. Here are some examples.

- "The candidate sent his sister to interview in his place."
- "The person was dancing during the interview. He kept saying things like, 'I love life!' and 'Oh yeah!'"
- "The candidate stopped the interview and asked me if I had a cigarette."
- "We had one person who walked out of an interview into a glass door—and the glass shattered."
- "The candidate got his companies confused and repeatedly mentioned the strengths of a competing firm, thinking that's who he was interviewing with."
- "A guy called me by the wrong name during the entire interview."
- "We're a retail company, and when we asked the candidate why she wanted to work for us, she said she didn't want to work in retail anymore."
- "An interviewee put his bubble gum in his hand, forgot about it, and then shook my hand."
- "A candidate fell asleep during the interview."

Bullets quoted from "Dancing, Smoking, Sleeping and Other Bad Interview Moves: Survey Reveals Most Embarrassing Job Interview Blunders," Robert Half International: OfficeTeam, May 28, 2008, <http://officeteam.rhi.mediaroom.com/index.php?s=247&item=824>.

**Figure 14.2** Follow-Up Letter after an Office Visit

405 West College, Apt. 201  
Thibodaux, LA 70301  
April 2, 2012

*Single-space your address and the date when you don't use letterhead.*

Mr. Robert Land, Account Manager  
Sive Associates  
378 Norman Boulevard  
Cincinnati, OH 48528

Dear Mr. Land:

After visiting Sive Associates last week, I'm even more sure that writing direct mail is the career for me.

*Refers to things she saw and learned during the interview.*

I've always been able to brainstorm ideas, but sometimes, when I had to focus on one idea for a class project, I wasn't sure which idea was best. It was fascinating to see how you make direct mail scientific as well as creative by testing each new creative package against the control. I can understand how pleased Linda Hayes was when she learned that her new package for *Smithsonian* beat the control.

*Reminds interviewer of her strong points.*

Seeing Kelly, Luke, and Gene collaborating on the Sesame Street package gave me some sense of the tight deadlines you're under. As you know, I've learned to meet deadlines, not only for my class assignments but also in working on Nicholls' newspaper. The award I won for my feature on the primary election suggests that my quality holds up even when the deadline is tight!

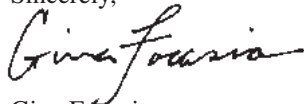
Thank you for your hospitality while I was in Cincinnati. You and your wife made my stay very pleasant. I especially appreciate the time the two of you took to help me find information about apartments that are accessible to wheelchairs. Cincinnati seems like a very livable city.

I'm excited about a career in direct mail and about the possibility of joining Sive Associates. I look forward to hearing from you soon!

*Be positive, not pushy. She doesn't assume she has the job.*

*Refers to what will happen next.*

Sincerely,



Gina Focasio  
(504) 555-2948

*Writer's phone number.*

*Puts request for reimbursement in P.S. to de-emphasize it; focuses on the job, not the cost of the trip.*

P.S. My expenses totaled \$454. Enclosed are receipts for my plane fare from New Orleans to Cincinnati (\$367), the taxi to the airport in Cincinnati (\$30), and the bus from Thibodaux to New Orleans (\$57).

Encl.: Receipts for Expenses

this offer if it doesn't meet your needs. Avoid naming a specific salary. Don't say you can't accept less. Instead, say you would find it difficult to accept the job under the terms first offered.

Remember that you're negotiating a package, not just a starting salary. A company that truly can't pay any more money now might be able to review you for promotion sooner than usual, or pay your moving costs, or give you a better job title. Some companies offer fringe benefits that may compensate for lower taxable income: use of a company car, reimbursements for education, child care or elder care subsidies, or help in finding a job for your spouse or partner. And think about your career, not just the initial salary. Sometimes a low-paying job at a company that will provide superb experience will do more for your career (and your long-term earning prospects) than a high salary now with no room to grow.

Work toward a compromise. You want the employer to be happy that you're coming on board and to feel that you've behaved maturely and professionally.

## Deciding Which Offer to Accept

The problem with choosing among job offers is that you're comparing apples and oranges. The job with the most interesting work pays peanuts. The job that pays best is in a city where you don't want to live. The secret of professional happiness is taking a job where the positives are things you want and the negatives are things that don't matter as much to you.

To choose among job offers, you need to know what is truly important to *you*. Start by answering questions like the following:

- Are you willing to work after hours? To take work home? To travel? How important is money to you? Prestige? Time to spend with family and friends?
- Would you rather have firm deadlines or a flexible schedule? Do you prefer working alone or with other people? Do you prefer specific instructions and standards for evaluation or freedom and uncertainty? How comfortable are you with pressure? How much variety and challenge do you want?
- What kinds of opportunities for training and advancement are you seeking?
- Where do you want to live? What features in terms of weather, geography, cultural and social life do you see as ideal?
- Is it important to you that your work achieve certain purposes or values, or do you see work as "just a way to make a living"? Are the organization's culture and ethical standards ones you find comfortable? Will you be able to do work you can point to with pride?

No job is perfect but some jobs will fulfill more of your major criteria than will others.

Some employers offer jobs at the end of the office visit. In other cases, you may wait for weeks or even months to hear. Employers may offer jobs orally. You must say something in response immediately, so it's good to plan some strategies in advance.

If your first offer is not from your first choice, express your pleasure at being offered the job, but do not accept it on the phone. "That's great! I assume I have two weeks to let you know?" Then *call* the other companies you're interested in. Explain, "I've just gotten a job offer, but I'd rather work for you. Can you tell me what the status of my application is?" Nobody will put that



### Crazy Job-Seeking Stunts

In the struggle to land the perfect job, some job seekers will do almost anything to get noticed and secure a position. A survey conducted by CareerBuilder.com discovered some of the most unconventional methods experienced by hiring managers as candidates attempted to get a job. The following are some of the most bizarre and ones you probably want to avoid:

- Used an official celebrity fan site as a portfolio accomplishment
- Sent a nude photo to the hiring manager
- Performed a stand-up comedy routine
- Waited for the hiring manager at his car
- Dressed as a cat
- Wore a tuxedo
- Brought coffee for the entire office
- Asked the interviewer to dinner
- Provided Yankee tickets for the interviewer
- Provided a baby gift for a pregnant interviewer

Keep in mind, the goal of an interview is to be remembered in a positive way!

Adapted from Rosemary Haefner, "Weirdest Job Seeker Stunts," CareerBuilder, September 24, 2007, <http://www.careerbuilder.com/Article/CB-263-Job-Search-Weirdest-Job-Seeker-Stunts>.



information in writing, but almost everyone will tell you over the phone. With this information, you're in a better position to decide whether to accept the original offer.

Companies routinely give applicants two weeks to accept or reject offers. Some students have been successful in getting those two weeks extended to several weeks or even months. Certainly if you cannot decide by the deadline, it is worth asking for more time: The worst the company can do is say *no*. If you do try to keep a company hanging for a long time, be prepared for weekly phone calls asking you if you've decided yet.

Make your acceptance contingent upon a written job offer confirming the terms. That letter should spell out not only salary but also fringe benefits and any special provisions you have negotiated. If something is missing, call the interviewer for clarification: "You said that I'd be reviewed for a promotion and higher salary in six months, but that isn't in the letter." Even well-intentioned people can forget oral promises. You have more power to resolve misunderstandings now than you will after six months or a year on the job. Furthermore, the person who made you the promise may no longer be with the company a year later.

When you've accepted one job, notify the other places you visited. Then they can go to their second choices. If you're second on someone else's list, you'll appreciate other candidates' removing themselves so the way is clear for you.

## DEALING WITH REJECTION

Because multiple people usually apply for each job opening, most job seekers get far more rejections than job offers. Learn to live with this fact of the job hunt. Form support groups with your friends who are also on the job market. Try to keep an upbeat attitude; it will show in job interviews and make you a more attractive candidate. Remember that candidate selection can be a political process. You may have been competing with the boss's daughter, an inside candidate, or a candidate who was recommended by a respected employee.

## YOUR FIRST FULL-TIME JOB LO 14-6

Just like the step from high school to college, the step from college to your first full-time job brings changes that you must negotiate. The new business environment is exhilarating, with many opportunities, but it also contains pitfalls. As you go to being the new kid on the block yet again, remember all the coping strategies you have developed as a newbie in middle school, high school, and college.

- Reread all your materials on the organization, its competition, and the industry.
- Get to know your new colleagues, but also keep networking with people in the field.
- Talk to recent hires in the organization. Ask them what they found to be helpful advice when they were starting.
- Fit into the corporate culture by being observant. Watch what people wear, how they act, how they talk. Watch how they interact during meetings and in the break room. Look at the kinds of e-mails and letters people send. Discover who people go to when they need help.
- Use your breaks effectively. Stop by the coffee station, water cooler, or break room occasionally to plug into the grapevine.

- Find a successful person who is willing to mentor you. Even better, find a support network.
- Ask lots of questions. It may feel embarrassing, but it will feel even worse to still be ignorant several months down the road.
- Seek early opportunities for feedback. What you hear may not always be pleasant, but it will help you become a valued employee more quickly.
- Learn the jargon, but use it sparingly.
- Be pleasant and polite to everyone, including support personnel.
- Be punctual. Arrive for work and meetings on time.
- Be dependable. Do what you say you will do—and by the deadline.
- Be organized. Take a few minutes to plan your daily work. Keep track of papers and e-mails.
- Be resourceful. Few work projects will come to you with the detailed instructions provided by your professors. Think projects through. Ask for suggestions from trusted colleagues. Have a plan before you go to your boss with questions.
- Use technology professionally. Keep your cellphone on vibrate, or turn it off. Resist the temptation to send text messages during meetings. Don't visit inappropriate websites; remember that all computer activity can be tracked. Learn the company's Internet policies.
- Be discreet. Be careful what you say, and where you say it. Above all, be careful what you put in e-mails!
- Proofread all your written messages, including tweets and texts, before you send them. At rushed times, such as the end of the day or week, proofread them twice.
- Go the extra mile. Help out even when you are not asked. Put in extra hours when your help is needed.
- Do your share of grunt work—making coffee or refilling the paper tray.
- Take advantage of voluntary training opportunities.
- Take advantage of company social events, but always act professionally at them. Seriously limit your intake of alcohol.
- Document your work. Collect facts, figures, and documents. You will need this information for your performance reviews.
- Enjoy yourself. Enthusiasm for your new job and colleagues will have you part of the team in short order.

## S U M M A R Y O F K E Y P O I N T S

- Develop an overall strategy based on your answers to these three questions:
  1. What two to five facts about yourself do you want the interviewer to know?
  2. What disadvantages or weaknesses do you need to overcome or minimize?
  3. What do you need to know about the job and the organization to decide whether or not you want to accept this job if it is offered to you?
- Check on dress expectations before the interview.
- Rehearse everything you can. In particular, practice answers to common questions. Ask a friend to interview you. If your campus has practice interviews or videotaping facilities, use them so that you can evaluate and modify your interview behavior.

- Bring an extra copy of your résumé, something to write on and write with, and copies of your work to the interview.
- Record the name of the interviewer, tips the interviewer gave you, what the interviewer liked about you, answers to your questions about the company, and when you'll hear from the company.
- Successful applicants know what they want to do, use the company name in the interview, have researched the company in advance, back up claims with specifics, use appropriate technical jargon, ask specific questions, and talk more of the time.
- **Behavioral interviews** ask the applicant to describe actual behaviors, rather than plans or general principles. To answer a behavioral question, describe the situation, tell what you did, and tell what happened. Think about the implications of what you did and be ready to talk about what you'd do the next time or if the situation were slightly different.
- **Situational interviews** put you in a situation that allows the interviewer to see whether you have the qualities the company is seeking.
- **Stress interviews** deliberately create physical or psychological stress. Change the conditions that create physical stress. Meet psychological stress by rephrasing questions in less inflammatory terms and treating them as requests for information.
- Use follow-up phone calls and written messages to reinforce positives from the first interview, and to provide information to persuade the interviewer to hire you.
- The best time to negotiate for salary and benefits is after you have the job offer.
- If your first offer isn't from your first choice, call the other companies you're interested in to ask the status of your application.

## CHAPTER 14

## Exercises and Problems

\*Go to [www.mhhe.com/locker10e](http://www.mhhe.com/locker10e) for additional Exercises and Problems.

### 14.1 Reviewing the Chapter

1. Name four interview channels. What special considerations do you have to make for them? (LO 14-1)
2. What are three special kinds of interviews you may encounter? What are tips to succeed in them? (LO 14-1)
3. What preparations should you make before an interview? (LO 14-2)
4. What are some behavior tips you should keep in mind during an interview? (LO 14-3)
5. What should you accomplish in the close of an interview? (LO 14-3)
6. What are some common interview questions? What are effective answers for you? (LO 14-4)
7. What do you need to do after an interview? (LO 14-5)
8. When do you negotiate for salary? Why? (LO 14-5)
9. What are some tips to help you succeed at your first full-time job? (LO 14-6)

### 14.2 Interviewing Job Hunters

Talk to students at your school who are interviewing for jobs this term. Possible questions to ask them include the following:

- What field are you in? How good is the job market in that field this year?
- How long is the first interview with a company, usually?
- What questions have you been asked at job interviews? Were you asked any stress or sexist questions? Any really oddball questions?

- What answers seemed to go over well? What answers bombed?
- At an office visit or plant trip, how many people did you talk to? What were their job titles?
- Were you asked to take any tests (skills, physical, drugs)?
- How long did you have to wait after a first interview to learn whether you were being invited for an office visit? How long after an office visit did it take to learn whether you were being offered a job? How much time did the company give you to decide?

- What advice would you have for someone who will be interviewing next term or next year?

**As your instructor directs,**

- a. Summarize your findings in a memo to your instructor.
- b. Report your findings orally to the class.
- c. Join with a small group of students to write a group report describing the results of your survey.

### 14.3 Interviewing an Interviewer

---

Talk to someone who regularly interviews candidates for entry-level jobs. Possible questions to ask include the following:

- How long have you been interviewing for your organization? Does everyone on the management ladder at your company do some interviewing, or do people specialize in it?
- Do you follow a set structure for interviews? What are some of the standard questions you ask?
- What are you looking for? How important are (1) good grades, (2) leadership roles in extracurricular groups, or (3) relevant work experience? What advice would you give to someone who lacks one or more of these?
- What are the things you see students do that create a poor impression? Think about the worst candidate you've interviewed. What did he or she do (or not do) to create such a negative impression?

- What are the things that make a good impression? Recall the best student you've ever interviewed. Why did he or she impress you so much?
- How does your employer evaluate and reward your success as an interviewer?
- What advice would you have for someone who still has a year or so before the job hunt begins?

**As your instructor directs,**

- a. Summarize your findings in a memo to your instructor.
- b. Report your findings orally to the class.
- c. Join with a small group of students to write a group report describing the results of your survey.
- d. Write to the interviewer thanking him or her for taking the time to talk to you.

### 14.4 Analyzing a Video Interview

---

Analyze a video clip of an interview session.

**As your instructor directs,**

1. In groups of four, search on a video-based website such as Google video or YouTube for terms such as "interview" or "student interview."
2. Watch a video clip of an interview and note the strengths and weaknesses of the interviewee.

3. Discuss your observations with your group and explain why you considered certain responses as strengths and weaknesses.
4. Share your video and analysis with your class.

### 14.5 Analyzing a Panel Interview

---

Watch some of the videos of the confirmation hearings (e.g., job interviews) for Elena Kagan. What good interview behaviors do you notice? What interview behaviors do you think could be improved? How does she handle difficult questions?

**As your instructor directs,**

- a. Share your findings with a small group of other students.

- b. Describe your findings in a memo to your instructor.
- c. Present your findings orally to the class.

## 14.6 Preparing an Interview Strategy

Prepare your interview strategy.

1. List two to five things about yourself that you want the interviewer to know before you leave the interview.
2. Identify any weaknesses or apparent weaknesses in your record and plan ways to explain them or minimize them.
3. List the points you need to learn about an employer to decide whether to accept an office visit or plant trip.

**As your instructor directs,**

- a. Share your strategy with a small group of other students.
- b. Describe your strategy in a memo to your instructor.
- c. Present your strategy orally to the class.

## 14.7 Preparing Questions to Ask Employers

Prepare a list of questions to ask at job interviews.

1. Prepare a list of three to five general questions that apply to most employers in your field.
2. Prepare two to five specific questions for the three companies you are most interested in.

**As your instructor directs,**

- a. Share the questions with a small group of other students.
- b. List the questions in a memo to your instructor.
- c. Present your questions orally to the class.

## 14.8 Analyzing Answers to Interview Questions

What might be problematic about these responses to interview questions? How might the answers be improved?

- a. Q: Tell me about yourself.  
A: I'm really a fun-loving person. I get along well with everyone.
- b. Q: Why are you leaving Software Solutions?  
A: Everyone is leaving. The owner is totally inept. He was even late paying our withholding taxes last year.
- c. Q: Tell me about a weakness you have.  
A: I'm a workaholic.
- d. Q: What was your least favorite class in college?  
A: Business communication.
- e. Q: What was your favorite class in college?  
A: American Indian storytelling.
- f. Q: Tell me about a group project that had problems.  
A: Our marketing team had a real deadbeat on it. But I saved our asses by going to the teacher and getting her to take him off.
- g. Q: Tell me about a book you have read and enjoyed that wasn't a textbook.  
A: We read *To Kill a Mockingbird* in 10th grade English.
- h. Q: What are your interests outside work?  
A: Partying.
- i. Q: Where do you see yourself in five years?  
A: In your job.
- j. Q: Why do you want this job?  
A: This is a great job for me. It will really increase my skills set.

## 14.9 Preparing Answers to Tricky Questions

In small groups, find a website that has some trick (sometimes called weird) interview questions such as those at <http://finance.yahoo.com/career-work/article/111757/>

[the-25-weirdest-interview-questions-of-2010](http://the-25-weirdest-interview-questions-of-2010). Choose four and discuss how you could answer them. Share your best two examples with the class.

## 14.10 Preparing Answers to Questions You May Be Asked

Prepare answers to each of the interview questions listed in this chapter and to any other questions that you know are likely to be asked of job hunters in your field or on your campus.

**As your instructor directs,**

- a. Write down the answers to your questions and turn them in.

- b. Conduct mini-interviews in a small group of students. In the group, let student A be the interviewer and ask five questions from the list. Student B will play the job candidate and answer the questions, using real information about student B's field and qualifications. Student C will evaluate the content of the answer. Student D will observe the nonverbal behavior of the interviewer (A); student E will observe the nonverbal behavior of the interviewee (B).

After the mini-interview, let students C, D, and E share their observations and recommend ways that B could be even more effective. Then switch roles. Let another student be the interviewer and ask five questions of another interviewee, while new observers note content and nonverbal behavior. Continue the process until everyone in the group has had a chance to be "interviewed."

### 14.11 Writing a Follow-Up Message after an Onsite Visit

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Write a follow-up e-mail message or letter after an office visit or plant trip. Thank your hosts for their hospitality; relate your strong points to things you learned about the

company during the visit; allay any negatives that may remain; be enthusiastic about the company; and submit receipts for your expenses so you can be reimbursed.

### 14.12 Clarifying the Terms of a Job Offer

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Last week, you got a job offer from your first choice company, and you accepted it over the phone. Today, the written confirmation arrived. The letter specifies the starting salary and fringe benefits you had negotiated. However, during the office visit, you were promised

a 5% raise in six months. The job offer says nothing about the raise. You do want the job, but you want it on the terms you thought you had negotiated.

Write to your contact at the company, Damon Winters.

### 14.13 Researching a Geographic Area

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Research a geographic area where you would like to work. Investigate the cost of living, industrial growth in the area, weather and climate, and attractions in the area you could visit. The local Chamber of Commerce is a good place to start your research.

**As your instructor directs,**

- a. Share your findings with a small group of other students.

- b. Describe your findings in a memo to your instructor.  
c. Present your findings orally to the class.