Business and Administrative Communication

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Chapter 12
Writing Job Application Letters

- Letters vs. Résumés
- Employer and Job Research
- Solicited Letters
- Prospecting Letters
- E-mail Application Letters
- Professional Image
- Application Essays
# Résumés vs. Job Letters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Résumés</th>
<th>Job Letters</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adapted to a position</td>
<td>Adapted to needs of one organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summarizes all your qualifications</td>
<td>Shows ① you know organization, ② how your qualifications can help it, and ③ how you differ from other applicants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Résumés</td>
<td>Job Letters</td>
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<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Avoids controversial material</td>
<td>Explains complicated situations (e.g., career change or gap in employment)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uses short, parallel phrases and fragments</td>
<td>Uses complete sentences in well-written paragraphs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Employer and Job Research

- Use the internet
- Seek an internship
- Tap into the hidden job market
  - Conduct information interviews
  - Solicit referral interviews
Job Application Letters: Content and Organization

Focus on…

- Qualifications for major requirements of job
- Points that separate you from other applicants
- Points that show your knowledge of organization
- Qualities that every employer is likely to value
Job Application Letters: Two Kinds

- Solicited letter—to apply for a job the organization announced

- Prospecting letter—to apply for an unannounced position
Job Application Letters: Techniques

- Do these things in both kinds:
  - Address letter to a specific person
  - Name specific position you’re applying for
  - Be specific about your qualifications
  - Show how you differ from other applicants
  - Show knowledge of the organization and position
  - Refer to your résumé (enclose it)
  - Ask for an interview
Organize Solicited Letters

1. State that you’re applying; name the job
   - Tell how you know about job
   - Show that you have main qualifications job requires
   - Summarize other qualifications

2. Develop your main qualifications in detail
   - Be specific about what you’ve done
   - Relate achievements to work you will do in new job
Organize Solicited Letters, continued...

3. Develop other qualifications, even if not required
   - Show what separates you from other applicants
   - Illustrate knowledge of the organization

4. Ask for an interview
   - Tell when available to interview and to begin work
   - End on a positive, forward-looking note
Organize Prospecting Letters

1. Catch the reader’s interest
2. Create bridge between attention-getter and your qualifications
3. Develop your strong points in detail
   - Be specific
   - Relate what you’ve done in past to what you could do now
   - Show knowledge of organization
   - Identify the role you wish to fill
4. Ask for an interview
   - Tell when you’re available
   - End with a positive, forward-looking statement
E-mail Application Letters

- **Choices**
  - Paste traditional letter into e-mail screen
  - Edit letter so it fits one e-mail screen
- Include name as part of subject line
- Put the job number/title in the first paragraph
E-mail Application Letters, continued…

- Use standard business letter features
- Keep line length to a maximum of 65 characters
- Omit **ALL CAPS** and emoticons
- End with your name and e-mail address
Create a Professional Image

- Create letter in a program that features spell check
- Use a standard 12-point font
- Address letter to a specific person, including correct courtesy title
- Don’t mention relatives’ names
- Omit personal information not related to job
Create a Professional Image, continued…

- Use a conservative writing style, unless applying for a creative job
- Edit carefully and proof several times—only perfect is good enough
- Print on the same paper used for résumé
- Use a computer to print envelope address
Professional Image: Writing Style

- Use smooth, concise writing style
- Use technical jargon of your field
- Avoid businessese and stuffy words
- Use a lively, energetic style that makes you seem real
Professional Image: Positive Emphasis and You-Attitude

- Avoid words with negative connotations
- Show how your background applies
- Don’t plead or apologize
Professional Image: Positive Emphasis and You-Attitude, continued...

- Don’t use *you* when you mean yourself or all people
- Use *I* infrequently; revise to use *me* or *my* instead
  - Avoid starting every paragraph with *I*
  - Begin sentences with phrases or clauses
Professional Image: Paragraph Length and Unity

- Make first and last paragraph fairly short—4 or 5 typed lines maximum
- Vary paragraph length
  - Cover only one subject in long paragraphs
  - Divide paragraphs that cover two or more topics
Professional Image: Letter Length

- Write at least three paragraphs
- Keep to one page
  - Tighten each sentence
  - Use slightly smaller margins
  - Select a font size one point smaller
- Use 2 pages, if needed
  - Put at least six lines of text on page 2
  - Use extra space to add details about your experience
Professional Image: Editing and Proofreading

- Edit and proofread carefully!
- Check content one last time
- Don’t reveal frustration with job search
- Check your tone
- Don’t beg or show too much gratitude for commonplaces such as reading the letter
Professional Image: Follow-Up

- Don’t be a pest
- Contact employer after two or three weeks, if you hear nothing
- One week is OK to check if materials have been received
Application Essays

- Chance to expand on your best points in more detail
  - Uses essay format instead of letter
- Capture readers’ interest and show you are exceptional
  - Insert personality into writing
- May use anecdotes that
  - Show you developing as a professional
  - Outline future goals
Application Essays: Writing Guides

- Follow directions closely
- Use focal point/unifying theme
- Catch reader’s attention in opening
- Use vivid and unique details
- Avoid unsupported generalities and clichés
- Employ topic sentences
- Reveal your personal voice
- End with strong conclusion