

## Looking Good on Paper

Resume/cl portion

By The Editors of WetFeet Press

You're ready to begin the job hunt. You know what types of positions and companies you'd like to apply to. Now you just need to whip together a resume and proceed, right? Sounds simple—but writing a resume that raises you above the pack and conveys your perfect fit to an employer is a handsome challenge indeed, especially if you take into account that most recruiters spend an average of 30 seconds scanning a resume before sending it to the “yes” or “no” pile. You've got the goods: experience, education, personality. But how do you sum up a lifetime's worth of hard work and accomplishments in one or two pages of text?

The first step to creating killer cover letters and resumes is understanding what they really are and how they should be used in a successful job search. Many people think of cover letters as mere formalities accompanying a resume, full of inflated, impersonal language, and rife with business-speak. The more syllables, the better. Resumes are generally considered documents tracing one's work history and skills. To some degree, this is true. Cover letters are formal accompaniments to resumes, intended to introduce a job candidate, while resumes do indeed explain a portion of one's work history and skills.

But cover letters and resumes are also much more than that. They are an advertisement for a quality product: you. They're marketing tools to get the attention of your desired audience—potential employers—and interest them in learning more about the product—you. How do consumer products companies get us to buy their products? Marketing. How do financial services companies attract more customers? Marketing. How do political candidates move their campaigns forward? That's right, marketing.

In this light, it's easy to see how important a killer cover letter and resume are to a job search—and how much potential these marketing tools have. But any successful marketing campaign requires a carefully crafted message that speaks directly to the needs of its audience. Your resume should make recruiters say, “Yes! This is exactly what we need. I want to meet this candidate to learn more.”

Many job seekers make the fundamental mistake of viewing the job search in terms of their own needs and desires. While these are certainly important factors in finding a fulfilling job and career path, it is not the most effective way of approaching employers. Rather than viewing your target employers from the outside in, look at them from the inside out, and place yourself in the recruiter's shoes. You need to understand what employers look for in the initial review of applications, and what qualities will lead you to the next stage in the hiring process.

To get some sense of the employers' perspective, check out this bit of information: Recently, ResumeDoctor.com contacted more than 5,000 recruiters and hiring managers throughout the United States and Canada regarding the success of using online job postings. More than 92 percent of those surveyed reported being inundated with irrelevant responses to their job postings. Most participants indicated that they receive hundreds of responses per online job posting.

Additional complaints included:

- A majority of resumes do not match the job description. [71%]
- Job seekers “blasting out” unsolicited resumes. [63%]
- Job seekers fail to follow specific resume submission instructions found in job post. [34%]
- Mike Worthington of ResumeDoctor.com says, “Most online job postings bury recruiters with literally hundreds of resumes.... The ease that job seekers can respond to postings online is now their greatest obstacle.”

Did you hear that? The number-one complaint from employers is that most resumes they receive don't match the posted job description—most applicants are not fulfilling the employers' needs, or even trying to. While the high number of responses to job postings may be an obstacle, the lack of preparation (not to mention customization) by most job seekers presents a grand opportunity to the savvy resume writer.