

# Cover Letters, Resumes, & Portfolios

How to WOW an Employer

# Overview

- Research
- Format
- Dissemination and Delivery
- Employers Observations
- Thank you letters and Portfolios

# Research: Know What You Have to Offer

- Do a self-inventory and know your accomplishments. Be ready to share and talk intelligibly about your:
  1. Education
    - a. Degrees/Diplomas
    - b. Power Hitter – Did you pay for your education yourself while working and managing other responsibilities such as family and children

# Research: Know What You Have to Offer Continued...

## 2. Work Experience

- a. Know where and when you worked. Look for gaps in employment and be prepared to provide an acceptable reason for breaks such as stopped to attend school full-time
- b. Know your title and major responsibilities in your previous role
- c. Be prepared to provide a positive answer for why you left
- d. Be prepared to share a work problem you successfully solved
- e. Be able to connect the skills in past positions to the skills needed for the new position

# Research: Know What You Have to Offer Cont....

## 3. Accomplishments

- a. Certifications – C.P.R., C.N.A., etc...
- b. Honors and Awards – Dean's list, Honorable mention lists, etc...
- c. Certificates – Workshop completion, technical courses or computer training, etc...
- d. Individual or team projects you have successfully completed
- e. Successfully earning a degree while working, maintaining a family, and multiple responsibilities
- f. Maintaining a high G.P.A. against all odds

# Research: Know What You Have to Offer Cont...

4. Skills –What skills are required for the position?
  - a. Computer Skills and Programs
    1. What role will the computer play in this position?
    2. Does the position require basic or advanced computer skills?
    3. What computer programs do you need to know?
  - b. Technical Skills
    1. What office machinery does the position require?
    2. What other technical skills are required?

# Research: Know What You Have to Offer Cont...

## D. Communication Skills

1. Verbal Communication – Do you speak professionally, fluently, and clearly?
2. Written Communication – Does your writing send clear, professional, grammatically correct, and comprehensive messages?
3. Body Language – Does your body language coincide with your written and verbal communication? Does it convey positive messages of a professional who is determined to succeed?

# Research: Know What You Have to Offer Cont...

## **c. People Skills**

- 1. Are you a good team player?**
- 2. Do you get along well with people?**
- 3. Can you remain calm and think clearly in high-stressed situations?**
- 4. Do you get along well with co-workers, managers, customers, and other workplace representatives?**



# Research: Know What You Have to Offer Cont...

- 5. Strengths
  - A. Strong Leadership Skills
    1. Organized
    2. Good Time Management
    3. Responsible and Dependable
    4. Persevere during difficult times
  - B. Think about what you like to do and do well.

# Research: Know What You Have to Offer Cont...

## 6. Areas that Need Improvement

- a. Present anything that needs improvement positively with the intention and sincerity of fulfilling this need
- b. Provide an example of something you recognized needed improvement and the action you took to fulfill this need

# Research: Know Who They Are And What They Do

- Research the Company
  1. Know their products and services
  2. Know their clientele and customers
  3. Know their mission and vision
  4. Know their culture
  5. Know their earnings and growth

# Research: Know Who They Are And What They Do Cont...

- Tailor your cover letter and resume to meet the employer's needs.
- How do your skills and experience relate to the skills needed for this position?
- Remember, the company wants to know what you can do for them.

# Cover Letters

- Three Paragraphs – The body of a cover letter contains three paragraphs
- Correct Format –
- Professional
- Grammatically Correct
- Correct Paper – Resume Paper
- Accompanies Resume

# Cover Letters

- Purpose

1. Serves as introduction for your resume
2. Introduces you and your employment credentials to the employer
3. Creates employer's interest in interviewing you

# Cover Letters Reminders

- Gear the letter to the employer's interests and needs
  1. What key factors, skills, and experience is the employer looking for and expecting to find in your cover letter?
  2. What motivational factors will create a desire to interview you?

# Three Paragraphs of Cover Letters

- Paragraph #1:
  1. Tells who you are
  2. Position you are applying for
  3. How you found out about the position
  4. Includes specific company knowledge
  5. Compliments company on its achievements



# Cover Letters Content Cont...

- Paragraph #2:
  1. Provides 3 or 4 skills relative to the position
  2. Provides example of skills used to successfully complete past work objectives

# Cover Letter Content Cont...

- Paragraph #3:
  1. Requests Interview
  2. Thanks Employer for Their Time
  3. Reiterates Interest in Position
  4. Provides Contact Information

# Cover Letter Format

- Return Address
  - Sender's address
- Date
- Company Address
  - Skip line after date
  - Include name, job title, and organizations full mailing address
- Salutation
  - Dear (Mr. or Mrs.) employer's last name

# Cover Letter Format Cont...

- Body
  - Left justification; single spaced; double spaced between paragraphs
  - First paragraph states the position desired and how you found out about it
  - Second paragraph provides three or four skills you have that relate to this position
  - Third paragraph shows your interest in an interview and thanks the employer for their time

# Cover Letters Format Cont...

- Closing
  - Sincerely; Respectfully; Appreciatively
- Signature Line
  - Skip four lines between the closing and signature line to fill in a handwritten signature
- Enclosure Line
  - Two lines below signature

# Characteristics of a Good Cover Letter

- An Introductory Paragraph that:
  - Generates Interest
  - Expresses Interest In Position
  - Shows Knowledge of Company and its Products or Services
- A Value-Selling Paragraph that:
  - Highlights your skills and strengths as well as your education and experience
- A closing that compels “follow up action” and a statement of appreciation

# Characteristics of Bad Cover Letters

- Poor Overall Appearance
- Poor grammar, punctuation, and misspellings
- Rambling – lack of focus
- Bland, boring text
- Gross exaggeration
- Aggressive Tone
- Self-deprecation

# Cover Letters

- Employer Observations: Employers look for the following when reviewing a cover letter and resume:
  1. Written Communication Skills
  2. Organization
  3. Intelligence
  4. Ability to Remain Focused
  5. Strengths
  6. Technical Knowledge
  7. Format
  8. Paper
  9. Delivery



# General Guidelines

- Grammatically correct
- Honest and verifiable
- Concise and relevant
- Consistent: verb tenses, punctuation, and abbreviations
- Correct format
- Appropriate paper
- Avoid pronouns and whole sentences

# Selling It – Not Telling It

- Telling It

Describes features

Tells what and how

Details activities

Focuses on what you did

- Selling It

Describes benefits

Sells why the “what” and “how” are important

Includes results

Details how what you did benefited the company, team, department, customers

# Resume Content: Heading

- Heading
  - Name
  - Address (current or permanent)
  - Telephone
  - E-mail

# Resume Content: Objective

- Objective
  - Includes position, field, and skills used
  - Relates to industry/employer and job target
  - Uses advertised job title
  - Avoids whole sentences and pronouns

# Resume Content: Profile

- Profile
  - Sometimes called “Highlight of Qualifications”
  - Summarizes your most relevant skills and experience
  - Uses power words (action verbs such as organized, implemented, created...)
  - Highlights areas of expertise, skills, and strengths
  - Presents transferable, technical, computer and interpersonal skills

# Resume Content: Education

- Education
  - Reverse chronological order ( most recent first)
  - BOLD type: degree, major/minor/ concentration, graduation date
  - College and location
  - GPA and academic achievements
  - % self-financed

# Resume Content: Experience

- Experience
  - Work experience, internships, military
  - Include: Job title, company, location (city, state), dates of employment
  - Use power words (action verbs)
  - Use correct verb tenses
  - Results-oriented

# Other Useful Content

- Relevant courses or academic projects
- Volunteer, community, cross-cultural experiences
- Hobbies and interests
- Honors, awards, and recognition
- Professional Development  
(Memberships, certifications, licenses)



# Resume Styles: Chronological

- Chronological Resumes

- Organized by dates

- Lists experience and education in reverse chronological order

# Resume Styles: Functional

- Functional Resumes
  - Organized by qualifications
  - Emphasizes transferable skills
  - Targets skills to employer's needs

# Resume Styles: Combination

- Combination Resumes
  - Combines chronological and functional styles
  - Lists experiences by dates and targets skills to employer's needs

# Thank You Letters

## Benefits

- Shows appreciation for interview
- Reiterates interest in position
- Reaffirms qualifications
- More likely to be remembered
- Builds on strengths of interview
- Opportunity to forward additional materials
- Bring up anything you thought of after the interview

# Thank You Letters

- Blank thank you card with handwritten thank you message
- Forward after an interview
- Know the correct spelling of the name of the interviewer
- Longer letters should be edited before forwarding

# Portfolios

- Definition

A portfolio is a professional collection of a learner's work that documents effort, progress, and achievements. It may include products of work as well as other evidence of success.

# Portfolios

- Portfolios Include:
  - Recommendation Letters
  - Awards/Certificates/Honors
  - Degrees/Diplomas
  - Resume
  - Transcripts
  - Photographs
  - Volunteer Work
  - Professional Memberships

# Final Thoughts

- All resumes and cover letters should be on resume paper
- Resumes, cover letters, thank you letters, and portfolios should be professional in appearance and content; organized; use correct format; be honest and verifiable; and grammatically correct.