



BUSINESS ETIQUETTE

FOR RESUMES, COVER LETTERS, E-MAILS AND E-MAIL ATTACHMENTS

1. REGARDING E-MAIL ADDRESSES...

- Avoid using your business e-mail on your resume. You should have your own personal e-mail account. If you do not have one, sign up for a free one through Yahoo, Hotmail, or Juno.
- In setting up an e-mail address, consider an address that is indicative of your name – for example:

louis_miceli@yahoo.com, or LDM1969@hotmail.com – something that identifies with you, but is benign. These examples might use my name or my name and my date of birth or my name and the year I graduated high school.

Examples you should avoid:

These are real addresses (the suffix has been changed to protect the privacy of the actual applicant) that I received from *New York City workforce development professionals* for a job posting I recently had advertised:

foxylady@whatever.com

machoman@whatever.com

batabing@whatever.com

praiseandglorytohim@whatever.com

lalalicious@whatever.com

seandsun@whatever.com

hermanthegreat@whatever.com

withjoyandgreatfulness@whatever.com

lucky69@whatever.com

... You get the point. Businesses will automatically put these kinds of communications into the proverbial recycle bin. Your personal e-mail used for a professional communication must still be professional. Obviously, this same message applies to job seekers who may not have a work history, and might be unaware of the reason for distinguishing personal addresses or “handles” that they may use with their friends on the Internet and those e-mail addresses they will use to communicate with employers.

2. REGARDING THE E-MAILS THEMSELVES...

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- There are two schools of thought on this. When you are sending a resume and cover letter for a job posting to a specific employer via e-mail, you can choose to either: 1.) Send the cover letter and resume in the body of the e-mail; or 2.) Send the e-mail with a communication directing the reader to attachments that you provide (always in Microsoft Word unless the job posting specifies otherwise). The best rule of thumb is to use the job posting as your guide wherever possible.
- If a procedure is not specified, it is generally best to include the cover letter and resume in the body of the e-mail itself. Use a “clean” cut and paste method to take the text of your documents from Microsoft Word and place them in the e-mail. The text should not include italics, varying font point sizes, or include any font other than *Arial* or *Times New Roman* – which are the two most common, and the least likely to present conversion problems on the employer’s end of the communication.
- Also, for the e-mail, you should also NOT assume that the person on the receiving end of the communication is the stakeholder involved in the hiring process. Address the e-mail "To Whom It May Concern," and make sure that the cover letter is addressed to the contact person (if specified).

Use your intuition and your common sense!

Avoid these pitfalls in the text of the e-mail message (these are actual examples from communications I have received):

“I look forward to talking with you.”

Or worse... “I am look forward to talk to you.”

“Please tell me if you have a 501(c)3.”

What you should write is:

To: jobs@workforceprofessionals.org

Re: ***Director of Training Position at Workforce Professionals Training Institute*** (always be sure to include a subject line – if you leave it blank, anti-spam software might delete your message.)

To Whom This May Concern:

Attached are a cover letter and resume for the available Director of Training Position for Workforce Professionals Training Institute, that was posted on the Idealist.org website on September 10, 2004.

These attachments are in Microsoft Word 2003 format. Please contact me if you have any problems opening these attachments.

I thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Lou Miceli

3. REGARDING E-MAIL ATTACHMENTS...

- If you use attachments, you should make sure that you indicate in a simple sentence or two in your e-mail that the attachments are included, and you should indicate both the software application and version for the recipient.
- The attachments should be named in a manner that they are easily identified with you. Avoid these kinds of mistakes (actual examples I have received):

“momsresume.doc”

“momscoverletter.doc”

“pleaforwork.txt”

“coverletter.doc”

“hireme.doc”

“resume.doc”

“johnspitch.doc”

“resignationlet.doc”

What you should do is simply use your name and the title of what the file contains:

lmicelicoverletter.doc

lmiceliresume.doc

...or if you know the specific posting or you are responding to a single posting among many:

lmiceli cl for director of training.doc

lmiceli resume for director of training.doc

****Note that Microsoft Word and Corel Word Perfect (the only two applications you should use) both allow for spaces in file names, which was not the case until fairly recently.***

- NEVER SEND A BLANK E-MAIL WITH ATTACHMENTS. MANY ANTI-SPAM SOFTWARE APPLICATIONS WILL AUTOMATICALLY DELETE YOUR MESSAGE!
- And lastly: ALL E-MAILS SHOULD BE SPELL-CHECKED! Outlook, Yahoo, AOL, NetZero, Hotmail, and many other e-mail service providers all have spell-check features.

4. REGARDING COVER LETTERS...

- In the “modern age” of cut-and-paste, you should always provide a header for your cover letter in response to any job posting where information on the addressee (and name/title of the contact person) is included. And in using cut and paste, you should never misspell a contact person’s name!
- In a recent job posting that I had advertised, I received a total of 220 responses. A whopping 38 cover letters were sent blind even though the posting included my contact information. A whopping 23 applicants misspelled my first or last name!
- Even when a job posting does not include specific information, but you do know the business/organization, you would still address the letter in care of the Human Resources Department and include the organization’s name and address.

- Of the 220 responses I received for this recent job opening, over 50 people started their cover letter with: “It is with great interest that,” or “It is with great enthusiasm that”... Avoid colloquialisms and clichés!
- Keep the letter succinct. It is a marketing instrument that provides a 30 second-or-less pitch to the reader in order to entice them to review your resume.

And consider the three golden rules:

1. *Cover letters must convey your enthusiasm and that you are an appropriate match without actually having to spell that out in an exacting manner* – the employer should be able to discern that in the skills you possess and by what you choose to highlight – not because you go ahead and say that you are the best match for the job;
2. *Cover letters should highlight your attributes that are best applicable to the position*, and the letter must clearly demonstrate that you have both researched the job posting and the organization itself (where applicable);
3. *Less is more*: Being compact and succinct in your pitch demonstrates to the potential employer your ability to think critically, to be strategic in your approach to problems, and your sensitivity to their time commitment in reviewing your materials.

5. THE RESUME...

- *Resumes must be customized to the job order in question*. You should not have “one” resume. All resumes must be customized, to some degree, to the position for which you are applying. Many recruitment professionals and career coaches I speak with suggest that you have at least three or four versions of your resume that highlight different areas of your expertise (for example, if you have a lot of experience in the social services sector, you might have one version that highlights clinical skills, one that highlights education and training skills, one that highlights administrative skills, and one that highlights workforce development skills.) Especially if you have a strong track record in a particular field, one “boilerplate” document cannot effectively encapsulate all that you have to offer. And you do not want to put an employer off, or have them believe that you are over-qualified for a position!
- *Use simple formatting techniques*: It is best to use the Times New Roman font. It is the standard. Being “stylish” can backfire on you when you send resumes electronically. Not all employers may have printer servers that support the fonts that you carry. Do not vary text font point sizes too dramatically, and use standardized 1” rap-around margins. If you are using a bullet-method resume, the bullet should look like the ones on this page. No characters (e.g. file images, clip art, word/text art) should be used, as they might convert to unsupported formats (or perhaps more embarrassing characters!)

- *Be concise, use complete sentences, and use caution when combining functional and bullet-method formats.* Customize and balance your approach based on the job posting in question.
- *Spell check several times, and have someone you trust but who is objective review the document for you.* What is the important overall message that you are trying to convey? Does your objective reader get that message in a 45 second review of your document?
- *E-mail or hardcopy snail-mail a resume whenever possible.* Faxes often present problems, unless you are communicating from one scanner-fax to another. You want the document to come out clearly and properly formatted. An e-mail and/or a hardcopy are the only ways to guarantee this.
- *Despite the digital age, length rules still apply!* The rule of thumb is about one page per ten years of experience. You may have heard that the rule has loosened a bit with e-mail technology. At the end of the day, the employer still must print out and review your document. In doing so, you do not want to overwhelm them with too much information – the Resume is a **MARKETING TOOL** – NOT your autobiography! Be selective and strategic in what you choose to highlight! There are of course, exceptions. The Curriculum Vitae – used most often in academia, is a format that can be quite lengthy because the document includes publications, presentations, etc. Similarly, a performance artist’s dossier might have a listing of all their previous performances. Those are industry-specific suggestions, however.
- *Avoid cut-and-paste jobs!* Although job searching is full time work unto itself, and you want to streamline the process by having a series of sound bites that you use – mixing and matching based on the types of jobs openings you are replying to – remember to customize your resume and cover letter enough that the cutting and pasting does not look obvious. Oftentimes, what you use for one type of job advertisement will not quite fit other types, and what you end up with is a kind of textual dissonance that leaves the reader confused as to the actual intent or theme of your resume.

6. AND LASTLY, THE DIGITIZED HR OFFICE...

- *Do your research!* Understand what is being asked throughout the process before you coach job seekers through the process.
- *Use your team!* Have your colleagues go through the process. Split up the work. Find out what is required. It is best for you to know in advance before you refer a job seeker to manage the process – whether with your assistance or on their own. Is a psychological test required? Does the job seeker have to give personal information (e.g. a social security number) up-front? Are their waivers that have disclaimers that should be carefully read, but might be easily overlooked with a click of the mouse?
- *Know your limits!* The relationship with an employer – and knowing their expectations in advance – means as much as your ability to help multiple job seekers through the process. What about the digital application process can be negotiated? What can be circumvented? Know what employers are willing to do to help you and your job seekers manage the process only after you have

established an on-going relationship. For some of your job seekers, the digital application process may just be too difficult or cumbersome given the reality of the time constraints in your program.

- *Get the updated information!* Things have changed in the HR sector. Understand employers rights and the upcoming screening tools (e.g. background checks, credit checks.) Only then are you in the best position to advise your job seeker during the process.
- *Don't Quit Easily!* The process does get easier with practice and time. So it will be with your job seekers as well. Many employers use the same software and interfaces to manage their application processes. Once you have learned a few of the templates, you will be more familiar and accustomed with the process that other employers may expect.