

# Maximize

# Your

# Job Search

**Are you new to the job market?  
Looking for a career change?  
Recently unemployed?**

Regardless of your situation, this guide is for anyone making an employment transition. You will find proven, insider tips gathered from career transition professionals that will help you make every contact count, focus your efforts, market your skills and maximize your job search.

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# Getting Started



## First Things First

A job loss or career change can affect every aspect of your life. Work is not something we do simply to earn a living. Often people allow their jobs to define them as individuals. Losing a job may impact your self-image and your lifestyle.

Unemployment affects everyone in your family. Talk to your family about how you are feeling or what you are doing and ask for their assistance in conserving financial resources. By working through this together, you can build your family's self-esteem, sense of competence and trust in yourselves as a family unit.

As you begin a new job search, take some time to think through your situation.

- » Are you employed but want a different job or one more suited to your skills and education?
- » Have you recently lost your job?
- » Are you re-entering the workforce after an absence such as staying at home with children or nursing a family member?

Under any of these circumstances, this can be a tremendous opportunity to pursue a new career path. Being aware of your emotional reaction to this change is critically important to maintaining the kind of positive attitude you will need to successfully move forward.

## Reasons You Want to Find a New Job

- » Not challenged, bored
- » Underemployed
- » Need to leave a stressful environment that you cannot control
- » Need to make more money
- » Want more responsibility
- » Lost your job from downsizing, closure or any number of reasons

## Reactions to Losing a Job

- » Anger
- » Lack of self-confidence and esteem
- » Anxiety
- » Grief
- » Embarrassment, shame
- » Sense of hopelessness

## Examine Your Recent Work History

Take some time to think through the past. Get an accurate grasp on other job experiences to help define where you are and where you want to be.

Things I did well at my previous jobs

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Things that I could have improved

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Where I can find help during this process

1. *labor.idaho.gov*
- 2.
- 3.

## Finding Work Takes Effort

Looking for work can be a lot of work, especially if you haven't been in the job market for a while or you are changing careers. Today, job searching is rarely a one-time event. The U.S. Census Bureau found that workers in the United States stay with the same employer an average of 4.1 years. Learning the techniques of job searching is an invaluable and evolving lifetime skill.

## To Make the Job Search More Productive

- » Keep your skills current. Maintain an updated list of responsibilities and training you've had.
- » Update your résumé when you have gained new skills, abilities and accomplishments.
- » Get the training or experience you will need to move up in your field or to change careers.
- » Keep a list of awards, accomplishments and recognitions.

## Embrace the Change

Beginning a successful job search requires optimism, confidence and energy. In looking for a new job or career, it helps to first acknowledge the feelings that will shape your attitude. Get them out in the open. Just doing this much will likely reduce your tension. Putting it in writing can be a great way to address your feelings and help you move forward.

Ways my feelings affect me negatively

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Ways to handle my feelings positively

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What is my motivation?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**“The secret of getting ahead is getting started. The secret of getting started is breaking your complex overwhelming tasks into small manageable tasks and then starting on the first one.”**

- Mark Twain



# Identifying Skills

## Types of Skills

### Job Content Skills

Skills specific to a job or occupation. Some examples include:

- » An administrative assistant may be skilled in typing, filing, correspondence and telephone protocol.
- » A salesperson's skills could include customer service, order processing and record keeping.
- » Accountants would be skilled in accounts payable/receivable, calculations and tax preparation.
- » A nurse is skilled in administering medications, taking and recording vital signs and monitoring patient needs.
- » Construction workers may have specialties or a variety of skills such as welding, framing, setting tile, roofing, carpentry, concrete work, electrical and plumbing.

### Skills are the Foundation

Employers want to know who you are, where you've been and what you have to offer. You must identify the skills you gained through employment, community service, volunteerism and life experience. A skill isn't always something that requires years of formal education and experience.

### Transferable Skills

Skills that can be applied to a variety of activities because they are skills and abilities that are innate to you. These are skills that job seekers don't readily think about, but they can be very important in the jobs you are applying for. Think about the types of things that you are naturally good at and chances are they are transferable skills. For example:

- » If you were an office manager in a medical office, you probably organized patient files, greeted customers in person and on the phone, ordered office supplies and processed incoming mail. Those same administrative skills are needed in many different types of offices.
- » In your last job, you managed retail sales people. Your management skills could transfer to managing call center customer service agents or managing outside sales representatives.
- » If you were a stay-at-home parent, you have skills in budgeting, cooking, child development, property management and problem-solving to name a few. These can be useful skills in many types of occupations from day care to office management.

**A skill is anything you can do right now!**

## Good Interpersonal Skills are Always in Demand

Also referred to as “soft skills,” these skills are extremely important to employers because they can directly impact the quality of the work environment and the success of the business. Employers want to hire candidates who understand what it takes to be successful on the job and who are ready to go to work. Being a successful employee isn’t just about performing the tasks involved with a specific position. Being successful on the job includes:

- » Building successful relationships with co-workers and customers
- » Working well independently and with large and small groups
- » Keeping a positive attitude, even when working under pressure
- » Being professional in appearance, attitude and behavior while at work
- » Demonstrating a strong work ethic by being dedicated to getting the job done, managing your time wisely and leaving your personal life at home
- » Exhibiting positive self management skills including arriving on time ready to go to work, treating everyone with respect and focusing on your job responsibilities while you are at work

## Maintaining a Competitive Edge

Even if you have strong job content skills, it is a good idea to take a look at what skills are being required in the jobs you are interested in to determine whether or not your skills are up to date with industry standards. Are you able to operate the latest machinery, equipment and software that are typical to the occupation you are interested in? Do you have the training, certifications or licenses that are typically required or do you need to consider updating those? Now is the perfect time to take stock of your job specific skills, certifications and licenses and develop a plan for improvement if necessary. Today’s workplace requires us to engage in continuous learning and upgrading of skills in order to be marketable.

## How Strong are Your “Soft Skills?”

Consider your skill level in these areas and how you can demonstrate these abilities to potential employers.

### Communication

Are you able to express your thoughts clearly and professionally?

### Leadership

Are you able to guide, direct and inspire others?

### Initiative

Are you self-motivated? Will you identify and take ownership of work that needs to be done?

### Time Management

Are you efficient and able to prioritize tasks and use your work time wisely?

### Flexibility

Will you adapt and adjust to changing situations?

### Conflict Resolution

Will you remain calm while handling stressful and tense situations?

### Positive Attitude

Do you remain optimistic, productive and engaged for as long as it takes to get the job done?

### Problem-Solving

Can you envision new and creative solutions?

### Teamwork and Collaboration

Can you work successfully in a group setting and bring out the best in others?



# Set Your Goals

Review your answers to the questions in the “Identifying Skills” section and identify the best job or career options for you. Establish short- and long-term goals that put you in pursuit of those jobs or careers.

A goal can be simple and short term such as posting your résumé online, or longer term and more significant such as completing an educational program. Regardless, identifying goals, writing them down, tracking progress and setting time lines for yourself are critical components of keeping up the momentum during your transition.

## Consider Your Options

You possess a distinct set of skills, values and characteristics, and your situation is unique. The following questions will help you define your options based on your situation. Although answering some of these questions may require a little research, they will also help you identify how and where to start focusing your job search efforts.

- » How much do I need to earn?
- » Can I wait for the “perfect” job, or do I need to take anything that is available?
- » What kind of work am I able to do?
- » What kind of work do I want to do?
- » What occupations require my skills?
- » What types of jobs are available in my area?
- » Is relocating an option?
- » Do I need training?
- » Do I have the time and access to resources to get training?

**“The most important thing about a goal is having one”**

-Geoffrey F. Abert



## Sample Job Search Record

Date	Business	Contact Person	Method	Address/Phone/Email	What	Results	Follow up Needed	When
Jan. 23	ABC Health Systems	Jane Smith	Email	jsmith@hs.org	Inquired about info interview	Referred to Steve Strong, HR manager	Call Steve 555-5555 to schedule interview	Jan. 27 - 3:30 PM (added reminder in cell phone)
Jan. 23	Inno-Tech Med Equip	David Jones	Met @ job fair	888-8888 david_jones@innovate.net	Discussed opening, instructed to go to the Department of Labor and pick up an app	Positive lead	1. Send David email ("nice to meet, thank you for info"). 2. Pick up app at Department of Labor	Jan. 25 - anytime

## Sample Schedule

<b>Monday</b>	8:30 a.m.	Attend Job Search Workshop at the Idaho Department of Labor
<b>Tuesday</b>	8 a.m.	Compile necessary information to build résumés and cover letters (employer names/dates, education, experience/results, special awards, recognition)
	10:30 a.m.	Research employers of interest, compile employer information useful in résumés and interviews
	1 p.m.	Prepare multiple résumés targeted towards specific employers/jobs/industries
<b>Wednesday</b>	8 a.m.	Gather portfolio including copies of generic résumé, note pad, pens and business cards to take to networking group
	10 a.m.	Attend Software Developer's Forum at Convention Center
	1 p.m.	Write down names, potential job leads and follow-up notes from networking group
	2 p.m.	Follow up on potential leads generated from networking group/record contacts, names, numbers and additional follow-up dates

## Make the Most of Your Time

Landing that new job requires an organized, focused and consistent effort. To help manage your time:

### Stay Focused

- » There will be distractions. Many things may sound better than looking for work, but your job search must be your primary focus. The results you achieve will depend on the effort you invest.
- » Let your family and friends know that finding a job is your primary focus. This will help minimize distractions.
- » Challenges and frustrations in the job search process can make you lose your focus for a while so use each experience to polish your approach and improve your marketing campaign.

### Research

- » Research the job market and employers in your area through personal contacts, online resources, newspapers, publications, current and past employees. Make informed decisions about the direction of your job search based on facts rather than feelings.

### Plan Ahead

- » Create a specific schedule of what needs to be accomplished each day.
- » Remain flexible and modify your plans accordingly.

### Keep Track

- » Use day planners, calendars and online tools to keep records of your job search activities. Good records will help you capitalize on all opportunities. Your personal profile page on IdahoWorks — [labor.idaho.gov/idahoworks](http://labor.idaho.gov/idahoworks) — provides great online tools for keeping track of your search.
- » Check your progress daily and ensure your goals are realistic.

### Take Care of Yourself

- » Build personal time into your schedule to rejuvenate.
- » Eat well, sleep well and be active to maintain your health.
- » Reward yourself for accomplishing goals.

Maximize Your Job Search

# The Hidden Job Market and Networking

The Shortest Distance Between You and Your Next Career



## What is the Hidden Job Market?

The hidden job market is any job not advertised. Only about 20 percent of all jobs are ever advertised, meaning 80 percent are filled by companies who never advertised those positions. This is the hidden job market. They are filled by referral, the “who do you know” method of recruitment. So while keeping an eye on newspaper advertisements and Internet job search sites is important, the percentages are in your favor if you investigate the hidden job market.

## What is a Network ?

A network is any group of individuals you have some connection with. Your job-seeking network is all of your friends, relatives and acquaintances, who know you are looking for work.

## Why Should You Network?

You use your network in many ways. Have you ever hired someone to do repairs in your home? Care for your child? Fix your car? If so, you understand the importance of hiring someone who has been referred to you by someone you know and trust — someone in your network. The same philosophy applies to hiring employees in a business.

- » Hiring an applicant the employer has no previous experience with poses significant risks to any business.
- » Employees can make or break a business.
- » Advertising, recruiting, hiring and training are some of the most costly and time-consuming activities for businesses. Hiring referred applicants can greatly reduce the time and costs.

## The Long Term

Even when you are employed, maintaining and expanding your network is important to your future. It can be easier while you are employed. You never know when a better opportunity will present itself or when you might again need that network should circumstances change.

## How to Network

Focus your networking efforts on as many people as possible who work in or have some tie to the types of work you are interested in doing. This will yield more suitable opportunities. See the next page for ideas on how to expand your network.

## Sources of Advertised Jobs

- » Idaho Department of Labor
- » Online job search sites
- » Social networking sites
- » Newspaper classified ads
- » Staffing agencies

Non-Advertised Jobs  
(the hidden job market)

Advertised  
Jobs

# My Personal Network

## Start With Us

Idaho Department of Labor offices throughout the state coordinate a variety of hiring events, workshops and networking opportunities. Find these events on our statewide calendar at [labor.idaho.gov](http://labor.idaho.gov) or contact your local office.

## Informational Interviews

This is one of the most valuable ways to gain insight into potential careers.

Join volunteer organizations, community service centers, volunteer to serve on a board or council or work with non-profit organizations that may have some connection to the type of work you are interested in. The benefits are many. Besides helping people or groups, you are also meeting new people. If you are unemployed, it also will keep you busy.

## Volunteer

## Keep Talking

Tell as many people as possible you are looking for work. Discuss your interests and skills. Develop a 30-second speech for these conversations and remember the broad and instant reach of email for getting the word out.

## Have Fun

Participate in community and social activities that interest you, and get to know the people who share in those activities. If you're short on cash, check your local newspaper for free events.

## Network Online

Social networking sites such as LinkedIn and Facebook have become a desirable method for professional networking and connecting applicants and employers.

## How to do Informational Interviews

- » Identify companies of interest.
- » Identify who you want to see – the owner, a manager. Call, email or make a personal visit to that person, explaining you are doing personal research for a career transition and would like to know who might be able to meet briefly for an informational interview about the business or industry.
- » Schedule the interview.
- » Develop a list of open-ended questions that encourage as much conversation as possible.
- » Follow up with a thank you note.

## Why?

- » You'll gain first-hand knowledge about a business, giving you a competitive edge for your résumé and cover letter and the potential interview.
- » You establish a rapport and the prospective employer begins to gain a basic understanding of you as a potential employee.
- » You expand your network and increase opportunity.

## Sample Informational Interview Questions

- » What are the organization's goals?
- » Which skills are most important to the organization?
- » What type of education or experience is required?
- » What are the most important personal characteristics for success in the field?
- » What type of positions does the business offer? What do you like most about your position?
- » What are the challenges you experience?

## 30-Second Speech

The 30-second speech is a tool that will help you best verbalize your skills for those important, face-to-face connections during networking activities as well as job interviews.

- » Write it down to organize your thoughts, identify the types of work you are seeking and the key skills to emphasize.
- » Develop a professional, courteous, personal introduction.
- » Practice out loud. You will gain confidence the more you hear yourself speak.
- » Express yourself in a positive and enthusiastic manner.

## Online Networking Tips

- » Research. Some sites will be better equipped than others to deliver the best results for you. Learn how each site differs and which are most used by employers.
- » Keep personal information personal.
- » Be persistent. Developing an online presence takes consistency over time.
- » This is only one of several methods that make up a successful job search. There is still no substitute for face-to-face interaction or a personal referral.

# Social Networking

## E-Marketing 101

### Know Your Site

Be it LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter or any other number of Web-based social networking applications, do some research before deciding which will be the most effective for marketing yourself to employers. While using multiple applications casts a broad job search net, managing these sites can be time intensive and may not generate the results you want.

### Send the Right Message

If a potential employer looked at your Facebook account today, would they find information that doesn't represent you in a positive or professional manner? What you say to the world about yourself – and about others – online will determine what employers assume about you professionally.

### Let Them Serve You

Many online sites allow users to set up “alerts” via email, text messages or other options such as RSS feeds to let the user know when relevant information is available. Generally users select specific criteria for any alerts. Unless your situation requires you to take the first job that comes your way, choose options that ensure you are alerted to the most relevant opportunities for your situation. This will help you avoid being overwhelmed with unwanted alerts.

### Target Your Audience

Make the most of your time by identifying the sites that will link you to opportunities that match your preferences. For example, you can customize your job search preferences and alerts online with the Idaho Department of Labor at [labor.idaho.gov/jobseeker](http://labor.idaho.gov/jobseeker). Focus on sites that match you:

- » Targeted industries
- » Targeted employers
- » Skills
- » Geographic preferences
- » Interests

### Typical Rules May Not Apply

The nature of technology – tweeting, texting, instant messaging – has streamlined communication through writing. Accurate spelling and grammar are essential to produce a good “paper” portfolio and convey your best message to potential employers. But those rules may need to be altered when using some of the latest communication tools like Twitter, where abbreviations and “shorthand” are necessary to save space. Although short and sweet may be the preferred technique when posting your professional information on Web-based applications, be careful not to sacrifice quality for brevity.

### Tweet Wisely

The “30-second elevator speech” you prepared for a job interview must now also be converted into a 140 character tweet if you hope to Twitter your way to a new career. With such a limited opportunity to market yourself, your professional message must find the perfect balance between appealing and informative. Clear and concise is the key.

### Not the Sole Source

With a focused and well-planned approach, using online networking methods can certainly move your job search to the next level. While this method can initially connect you to a broad array of opportunities, it does not replace the value of networking in person.

### Prepare for the Future

Technological advances are taking the hiring process to new places, and employers are making their own rules when it comes to recruiting employees. You must be ready for just about anything in this fast-paced job market, ready to market yourself in any number of ways. Don't be surprised if an employer asks you to make a 30-second video of yourself from your cell phone to tell him why you would make a great salesperson or he texts you with a message saying, “I've got 10 minutes to meet with you about a job. Are you available?”



# Applications

Most employers from small stores to large corporations require an application. The application is an opportunity to make a good impression. The following are some general guidelines for completing applications.

## Curbside Appeal

Fill out the application neatly with no errors in grammar or spelling. Print clearly, avoid abbreviations, use black ink and answer every question. Print N/A if the question does not apply to you.

## Follow Directions

Read the entire application before you complete it. Pay close attention to what is being asked and how you are expected to respond.

## Be Upbeat

Present a positive, honest picture of yourself. Avoid any negative information. Look for ways to show that you are the right person for the job. Think of what you would look for in an employee if you were an employer.

## Honesty is Best

The information you provide may become part of your permanent employment record. False information can become the basis for dismissal. Provide only the information the employer is seeking or is necessary to sell your qualifications.

## Meet the Need

Applications have limited space. Use it to showcase your most relevant skills, experience and accomplishments. This will increase your chances of landing an interview. Show them you meet their needs.

## Be Position Specific

Identify the position you want. Responses like "open" or "any" imply desperation or lack of focus.

## Desired Salary

The time to negotiate salary is when the job is offered. If an application asks about salary requirements, give a range or respond with "negotiable."

## Reasons for Leaving

Try to make your reasons for separating from previous employment positive or neutral. Choose your words carefully when responding to this question. Using words like "quit" or "fired" may affect the employer's decision. Here are some examples you might use:

- » Reorganization or merger
- » Returned to school
- » Contract ended
- » Lack of work
- » Not enough hours
- » Promotional opportunity
- » New job
- » Raised a family
- » Career change
- » Work was seasonal
- » Better opportunity
- » Relocated
- » Seeking growth

## Questionable Questions

Questions on applications should be relevant to your ability to do the job. Questions about age, gender, disability, health, marital status, children, race, arrests or convictions may be difficult to answer or seem irrelevant and in some cases, may even be illegal to ask. Use your best judgment. If the question does not bother you, answer it. If you have concerns about a question, try to get clarification.

## Tips for Completing an Application

- » Whenever possible, take the application home and get more than one copy in case you make a mistake. At home, you can fill it out where you are comfortable and able to take your time. Some companies put their printable applications online. Follow the directions for submitting the application.
- » Never leave a blank space. Print N/A or a dash.
- » Use correction fluid for fixing minor errors or print out another application and start over.
- » Write out responses using a separate sheet of paper before completing the application. An alternative is to obtain a second application.
- » Double check grammar, spelling and content. When possible, have someone proofread it.
- » Prepare a personal data sheet – your cheat sheet. Use it as a reference sheet when completing applications, writing résumés and interviewing. Collect data that might be requested such as dates you started and ended jobs, managers' names, business addresses and telephone numbers.

**APPLY NOW**



## Online Tips

Many companies require job seekers to apply online at their company website. The online application process can be intimidating at first but will become easier with each application. Here are some tips to keep in mind when completing an online application.

- » Read all instructions thoroughly before you begin.
- » Whenever possible, print the application out and create a rough draft of your application before you enter the data onto the company website.
- » Have all of your work history, employment dates and contact information available before you begin.
- » Proofread everything thoroughly before you submit your application.

## Scannable Résumés

### What is a scannable résumé?

A scannable résumé can be viewed by a computer using document imaging technology called optical character recognition. This makes it possible for employers to scan résumés for key words quickly and store them in a résumé database. Many employers request scannable résumés with online applications. The two most important elements of a scannable résumé are formatting and keywords.

### Formatting

- » Use a common, plain font such as Arial or Times New Roman.
- » Use spacing breaks to indicate a section heading rather than using bold fonts or bullets.
- » Left justify everything and use line spacing to indicate breaks.
- » Use as many nouns as possible.

### Keywords

When employers typically scan for key words, they are usually looking for nouns that describe your skill and attributes as well as any special training or education that might be required. Use words describing skills specific to the industry.

Some examples include:

- » Ethics
- » Teamwork
- » Marketing
- » Leadership skills
- » Finance
- » Java
- » Flash
- » Forklift certification
- » CPR certification



Maximize Your Job Search

# Do I Really Need a Résumé?

**Absolutely!** A well written résumé will help give you a competitive edge and is your first shot at selling yourself to an employer. A compelling résumé will most likely persuade the employer to invite you to an interview. It is a marketing tool about you, not a listing of all the jobs you have ever had. Keep it short, though, or it may not get read at all.

## Tips and Suggestions

### Write Your Own Résumé

It's okay to seek assistance but be sure that your résumé is written in a way that accurately represents you and how you normally communicate.

### Be Thorough

Take time to identify all of your skills, knowledge and abilities. It will be well worth the effort.

### Meet the Need

If you are submitting a résumé for a specific job listing, review the requirements and identify your skills, knowledge and accomplishments that correspond with the employer's needs. By making this comparison, you can demonstrate that you are a great candidate for the position.

### Speak Their Language

Pay close attention to the wording in the job description and use the same words when they reflect your skills and abilities. For example, if the employer is asking for someone with customer service and problem solving skills, your response could be something like "10 years excellent customer service experience while providing mutually beneficial solutions for both clients and employer."

### Make It Relevant

The employer wants to know why you are the best candidate for this position, so write your résumé in a way to make it relevant to the job for which you are applying.

### Be Results Oriented

Describe each accomplishment in simple, powerful action statements, emphasizing how it benefitted the employer. Use active voice. Results speak louder than a list of responsibilities.



## Formatting

- » Keep it to one page if at all possible. If you have to include a second page be sure it is at least a third of a page. If it is less, consider adding more content or rethink the first page content.
- » Make your résumé easy to read. Use conservative and easy-to-read fonts like Times New Roman, Arial or Calisto.
- » Use 11 or 12 point font size.
- » Make your margins 1 inch.
- » Avoid paragraphs. Use bulleted statements.
- » White space is important. White space is the "open space" between sections. White space enhances readability.
- » Emphasize category headings using boldface type, larger font, all caps or a combination.
- » There are a variety of résumé styles. Check out other resources for examples.

## Proofread

This may be the most important part of writing a résumé. Ask someone else to proofread it as well. It may take only one spelling, grammar or punctuation error for an employer to set your résumé aside. Put your best foot forward and create a perfect résumé.

## Content That Matters

An effective résumé generally contains five distinct components – heading, objective, highlights of qualifications, relevant experience and work history. Additional information that may be helpful includes education, training and volunteer or community activities.

### Heading

- » Keep it simple but informative. Include your name, address, phone number and a professional email address if you have one. This is usually centered on the page.

### Objective (Optional)

- » If you know the job title, be specific and concise. Let the résumé support your objective.  
**Example:** Customer Service Representative for ABC Company
- » If you do not know the job title or a job has not yet been posted, write the objective to reflect the employer's perspective, not your own.  
**Example:** To manage people, interface with customers and work with highly technical software or hardware applications.
- » Another option would be to give a more detailed explanation of your qualifications for the job.  
**Example:** Acquire an entry level position in the hospitality industry where I can apply my experience in advertising and public relations.

### Highlights of Qualifications

- » Grab their attention. This may be the most important section in the résumé so it should be strong and convincing. Most employers will spend 15 to 20 seconds scanning your résumé. If they do not see a connection to the job description, they might not read any further.
- » Emphasize in a few brief statements the skills and experience you have that match what the employer has asked for in the job description. Use a strong, active voice.
- » Ask yourself the question, "Is every item in the highlights section relevant to my target job?"  
**Example:** Over 10 years experience as an organizational training consultant.  
Energetic self-starter with excellent analytical, organizational and creative skills.

### Relevant Experience

- » The rest of the story. This is where you have the opportunity to elaborate on the information you provided in the "Highlights of Qualifications" section.
- » Let the employer know what you have produced, what happened as a result of your efforts or what you are especially gifted or experienced at doing.
- » Use past tense action verbs when describing your accomplishments.
- » When possible use quantifiers to make your accomplishments stand out.  
**Example:** Increased annual sales in 2009 by 20 percent for a total profit of \$85,000 more than in 2008.

### Work History

- » Who, what, when and where.
- » List jobs in reverse chronological order. Include dates, job titles, company name and location.  
**Example:** December 2007- Present Data Entry Clerk XYZ Company Boise, Idaho

### References

- » Create a reference sheet and have it available when appropriate. Some employers will ask for references when applying and some will ask for them later.
- » Always ask references if you can use their names and contact information and tell them what you are applying for so they will be prepared if they are called.

**"When you're prepared, you're more confident. When you have a strategy, you're more comfortable."**

-Fred Couples

## James Donaldson

10 Emerson Drive

Norfolk, ID 33333

(101) 555-1234

username@yahoo1.com

### HIGHLIGHTS OF QUALIFICATIONS

- More than 10 years of experience in medical billing and bookkeeping
- Skilled at performing collections while maintaining high levels of customer service
- Demonstrated communication skills and ability to interact with people from diverse cultures and backgrounds
- Proficient in Microsoft Office products and Peachtree Accounting
- Experienced in CPT and ICD-9 coding

### RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

#### ***Medical Billing and Records***

- Prepared files for up to 50 patients a week and updated their records electronically and in hard copy files
- Processed on average 200 insurance claims a month through various carriers including private and group, medical, auto, government insurances and workers' compensation
- Maintained patient information database and provided timely information to physicians and collection agencies
- Managed billing and insurance inquiries for more than 500 active claims per month

#### ***Payroll and Bookkeeping***

- Executed queries and maintained data in AS400 database system for payroll of 600 employees
- Accessed complex data system to research and answer customer questions by phone and in person
- Conducted payroll expense and lump sum payment audits in complex mainframe accounting system
- Performed A/R and A/P postings in general journal and general ledger via automated computer system, paying close attention to detail and assuring accuracy

### WORK HISTORY

July 2006 - Present

***Billing Coordinator***

**Medical Insurance Corp.**, Cole, Va.

October 2001 - May 2006

***Payroll Specialist***

**Donzall & Associates**, Monton, Calif.

June 1998 - August 2001

***Financial Specialist***

**United States Air Force**, Monton, Calif.

### EDUCATION

**Bachelor of Arts in Accounting and Business** — Northwest College, Santa Rosa, Va.

## Ben Turner

2345 Brook Avenue  
Englewood, Idaho 12345  
(208) 555-5555  
username@email.com

### OBJECTIVE

Security Guard for Pinkerton Services

### SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

- Active U.S. government security clearance
- Bilingual — fluent in both English and Spanish, both written and spoken
- Superior performance award for past four years in security management

### EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

#### **Security Specialist, U.S. Marine Corps, May 2008 to present**

- Supervised \$100 million worth of highly sensitive equipment — security efforts led to zero loss in a three-year period
- Implemented new security system plan that led to increased lockdown protection for personnel
- Provided leadership, instruction and supervision of 25 personnel — efforts resulted in 30 percent decrease in staff turnover and a 10 percent increase in promotions
- Expertly managed investigative reports — recognized as Non-Commissioned Officer of the Quarter for efficiency and accuracy of written instructions and documents
- Proven ability to communicate effectively in diverse environments — efficiently managed a diverse workforce and inmate population resulting in a 10 percent decrease in inmate violence

#### **Warehouse Supervisor, Micro Chemical, Inc., Denver, Colo., February 2004 to May 2008**

- Supervised crew of 15 in daily operations and evacuation — efforts led to company-record promotion rate for staff and a 10 percent decrease in staff turnover
- Monitored complex cataloging and ordering systems; implemented a fast track procurement system for office supplies resulting in a 20 percent decrease in supply ordering turn-around
- Helped develop and implement an effective security system — efforts led to \$24k savings annually by reducing pilferage and damage
- Proficient at using Windows Vista, Microsoft Office and PeopleSoft databases

#### **Security Guard, Mayfield Malls, Denver, Colo., August 1999 to January 2004**

- Coordinated work assignments, evaluated performance and managed a four-member security team — recognized as “Security Supervisor of the Quarter” for boosting morale and encouraging an innovative and safe working environment
- Investigated security and safety violations and wrote detailed incident reports — led to Mayfield Mall being recognized as the “Safest Shopping Facility in the Mountain States” in 2003 and 2004
- Helped diffuse conflicts in a public environment with regard to everyone’s safety — consistently recognized through customer feedback for excellent customer relations

### EDUCATION

**U.S. Marine Corps**, Specialized Training: Explosives, Firearms, Leadership, Diversity, Communication  
**Metro State College**, 42 Semester Units in Administration of Justice, Denver, Colo.

# Captivating Cover Letters



## Do I Really Need a Cover Letter?

**Absolutely!** While not all employers request a cover letter, it is a good idea to include one with your résumé for several reasons. A cover letter is an additional opportunity to market your skills and abilities to the employer. It is an opportunity to present a complete picture of yourself and your attention to detail. It also allows you the opportunity to address unique situations that are difficult to include in your résumé such as relocation, gaps in work history, criminal records and career changes.

- » Make it compelling, personal and brief. Use active verbs.
- » Keep it specifically related to the position.
- » Be positive! Be positive! Be positive!
- » Avoid references to salary or benefits.
- » If it is not an online letter, use 8 1/2" x 11" paper – identical in color and font style to your résumé paper.
- » Include contact information as shown on your résumé.
- » Proofread it and ask another person to proofread it, too.
- » Remember to sign it!

## Cover Letter Basics

Cover letters are typically two to four paragraphs in length.

### Salutation

Use the employer's name and title if known. Do not use a first name only. Use the entire name or last name such as "Dear Mr. Wilson." Otherwise address the letter as "Dear Hiring Manager."

### First Paragraph

Your first sentence should tell how you learned of the possible opening. Use the remainder of the paragraph to express interest in a specific position or a particular kind of job, and state that you have enclosed a résumé.

### Second and Third Paragraphs

Your cover letter needs to fit the needs of the organization and job of interest. Direct attention to your qualifications and company knowledge. Remember, the purpose of your cover letter is to convince the employer to read your résumé. The letter needs to be concise and professional.

### Fourth Paragraph

Request an interview and express your interest in meeting with them at their earliest convenience. End the letter by thanking the person for his or her consideration.

### Closing and Signature

May use Sincerely, Cordially, Respectfully.

**You only have seconds to convince the employer to invite you to an interview.**

**Mike Brown**

113 Oak St., Lakeview, ID 55555, (208) 555-xxxx  
username@yahoo.com

June 26, 2011

Mr. Phillip Moore  
Production Manager  
XYZ Corporation  
21 Industry Lane  
Lakeview, ID 55555

Dear Mr. Moore:

I am applying for the position of Production Assistant that was listed with the Idaho Department of Labor. With a high-tech background in Fortune 100 companies, I am well qualified to represent your company in this position. I am accustomed to a fast-paced environment where deadlines are a priority and handling multiple jobs simultaneously is the norm.

With five years experience in production, I supervised up to 35 personnel, often making decisions quickly and effectively. Constant negotiations with all levels of management and employees have strengthened my interpersonal skills.

Please consider my qualifications for this position. I look forward to hearing from you to discuss how I could provide value to your organization. I can be reached during the day at (208) 555-5555 or in the evening at (208) 555-xxxx. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Mike Brown

## John Smith

500 W. Gold Lane • Silver City, ID 83850  
[username@goldmine.com](mailto:username@goldmine.com) • (208) 555.xxxx  
[www.linkedin.com/in/username](http://www.linkedin.com/in/username)

May 10, 2011

Crystal Gold Mine  
51931 Silver Valley Road  
Kellogg, ID 83837-0519

Dear Hiring Manager:

Thank you for the opportunity to apply for the marketing manager at Crystal Gold Mine. With the combination of my master's of business administration degree and over 15 years marketing and branding work in the mining industry, I am a strong match for this position. Please consider the brief summary below and my more-detailed résumé enclosed.

### YOUR REQUIREMENTS

- Minimum of Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science degree, Master of Arts/Master of Science degree preferred with corporate and client experience.
- Strong analytical and communication skills.
- Must be self-motivated, flexible and adaptable to client and organizational changes. Ability to work independently with minimal supervision. Detail-oriented.
- Works well under pressure. Excellent time/deadline management skills.
- Team player

### MY QUALIFICATIONS

- Master of Business Administration degree from Boise State University, a Bachelor of Science Cum Laude degree and a successful track record of working directly with corporate clients.
- Proven ability to solve problems with strong written and oral communication skills through more than 15 years working in teams, presenting to groups and reporting to management.
- As an independent marketing consultant for eight years, I applied self-discipline and strong organizational skills to stay flexible, driven and adaptable to clients' changing needs.
- Demonstrated success managing and delivering marketing projects on time and within budget in intensive, fast-paced work environments.
- Worked collaboratively in teams and have partnered with multiple departments to execute complex, long-term projects.

I look forward to meeting with you as I am confident I have much to contribute to this position.

Sincerely,

  
John Smith

Maximize Your Job Search

# Gearing Up for the Interview



**A successful interview requires you to think like the employer.**

## Before the Interview

**Research the Company.** If it has a website, study it. Read company literature, talk to people familiar with the company and observe workplace dress, attitudes and company culture.

**Navigate.** Find out where the company is located and how to get there. Use Google Maps or Mapquest and print out the directions. Allow extra traveling time in case you are delayed beyond your control. Whenever possible, take time for a trial run that will give you an idea of what kind of traffic and parking to expect.

**Write Down Important Information.** Write down the date of your appointment as well as the name, address and phone number of the company. If you know the name of the person you will be interviewing with, write that down as well. Keep the information with you.

**Take Your Portfolio.** Your portfolio includes copies of your résumé, certificates, letters of recommendation, references, samples of your work. Bring a pen and notebook.

**Dress for Success.** Double check your appearance. Your clothes should be clean, pressed and appropriate for the interview. Make sure your hands, nails and hair are clean and your perfume or aftershave isn't too strong.

The rule is to wear "one step above" what others in the company are wearing. Neutral colors such as black, brown, grey or navy are best. Appropriate shoes are important.

**Be Punctual.** It's your interview — go alone. Arrive 10 to 15 minutes early. Cordially let the receptionist know who you are and who you wish to see.

## During the Interview

Be yourself. You got the interview because of your skills.

Present yourself in a friendly, straightforward and confident manner.

When introduced to the interviewer, shake hands if it seems appropriate, smile and remain standing until you are asked to be seated.

Make yourself comfortable and retain your poise.

Place your purse or other personal items on the floor next to your chair.

Be diplomatic. Don't argue or tell the employer your troubles.

Refrain from jokes or gossip, use proper grammar and avoid slang such as "okay" and "yeah."

Maintain eye contact and be aware of body language.

Be a good listener. Be enthusiastic.

## Employers Want To Know

**You are resourceful.** You don't need constant supervision and you work well independently.

**You maintain a positive attitude.** You work well with others.

**You are a loyal team member.** You take pride in the company.

**You always maintain a professional demeanor.** You take pride in your appearance and behavior.

**You are easy going.** You're not arrogant, rude, pushy or moody.

**You are a quick learner.** You won't need a lot of time to become productive.

**You are a hard worker.** You always give 100 percent.

**You are dependable.** You don't constantly call in sick or miss work.

## Sell Yourself

Almost every interview begins with "So, tell me about yourself." What they want to know is what kind of person you are, will you fit in and are you dependable, motivated and eager to learn. Keep any personal information about yourself to a minimum if you discuss it at all.

## Demonstrate Your Ability

Show that you can help their business by using examples from past experiences, stating results and quantifying when you can. For example; did you increase sales, cut costs, improve quality, reduce production time or save money? Tell the story.

## Be Positive

You got the interview because you possess the skills necessary to do the job. However, the number one reason people are hired is because of their attitude. Your attitude is revealed by the way you dress, your eye contact, body language, voice and choice of words.

## Close the Deal

When the interview is coming to a close, let the employer know that you want the job. For example: "Mr. Smith, after speaking with you, I am very interested in this position and I am confident that I would be an asset to your company. What is the next step in the process?"

## Don't Allow Tough Questions to Become a Road Block

### What have you been doing between jobs?

Tell them about the constructive things you have been doing such as schooling, volunteer work or temporary work.

### Why should we hire you instead of someone else?

Explain the qualities you have that would make you an asset to the company.

### Do you have any questions?

This is only difficult if you haven't prepared! Do your homework and learn something about the company before the interview.

### Sample questions include:

- » What are the key tasks for this position?
- » What is the company's position within the industry?
- » Is there anything I can do or study to get a head start on learning this job?
- » Why do people like working here?

Make sure you get the information you need to decide if you want the job. Even in a buyers' market, the employer is selling the job to you as well.

**The time to discuss salary is when you are offered the job, not during the interview.**

# Thank You Notes

## Who Really Sends a Thank You Note?

Those who are serious about finding a job. Thank you notes are seldom used but are a great way to get a competitive edge.

Thank you notes reveal your sincerity, attention to details, manners, thoughtfulness towards the company and your desire to work for them.

## Finish Strong!

- » You may consider sending your thank you note by email but handwritten is more personal.
- » Send a thank you letter or note no later than 24 hours after the interview.
- » Be brief and to the point.
- » Address the note to the name and title of person who interviewed you.
- » List the date of your interview.
- » Include the job title.
- » Thank them for their time.
- » Restate your interest in the position and the company.

*Thank  
You*



# The Job Offer

Everything is negotiable, and that includes salary. Here are a few tips to keep in mind when considering a job offer. The local economic conditions will play a big role in how you choose to negotiate.

## Take Some Time

It is acceptable to ask for time to consider an offer but don't take more than a day or two and be specific about the length of time you would like to have to consider the offer.

## Know the Numbers

Research the salary range for the position you are applying for to determine if the offer is reasonable. One place to look for comparable salaries in different cities in Idaho is the labor market information on the Idaho Department of Labor website at [lmi.idaho.gov](http://lmi.idaho.gov).

## Discuss Value

Talk about money in terms of the value of your particular skill set in the marketplace and what you have to offer in terms of expertise and experience.

## Be Positive

If a job offer is unacceptable to you, remain positive and state clearly why the offer is unacceptable and what you would need to have modified in order to accept the offer.

## Negotiating the Terms

The process of hiring someone is expensive. The employer may be prepared to negotiate so you should be, too. Consider the following points when choosing to negotiate.

### Ask For the Offer in Writing

If you choose to negotiate, ask for the start date, salary, job details and benefits in writing.

### Back It Up

Be prepared to remind the employer of your skills and expertise and the added value you will bring to their organization.

### Be Open-Minded

Remain open during the negotiation process. If salary negotiation is limited, perhaps there is room to negotiate a benefit package that would better suit your needs.

# Online Job Search and Career Planning Services



## Labor Office Directory

### BLACKFOOT

Phone: (208) 236-6713  
blackfootmail@labor.idaho.gov

### BOISE

Phone: (208) 332-3575  
boisemail@labor.idaho.gov

### BONNERS FERRY

Phone: (208) 267-5581  
bonnersferrymail@labor.idaho.gov

### CANYON COUNTY

Caldwell  
Phone: (208) 364-7781  
canyoncountymail@labor.idaho.gov

### EMMETT

Phone: (208) 364-7780  
emmettmail@labor.idaho.gov

### GRANGEVILLE

Phone: (208) 983-0440  
grangevilleemail@labor.idaho.gov

### IDAHO FALLS

Phone: (208) 557-2500  
idahofallsmail@labor.idaho.gov

### KOOTENAI COUNTY

Post Falls  
Phone: (208) 457-8789  
kcmail@labor.idaho.gov

### LEWISTON

Phone: (208) 799-5000  
lewistonmail@labor.idaho.gov

### MAGIC VALLEY

Twin Falls  
Phone: (208) 735-2500  
magicvalleymail@labor.idaho.gov

### MCCALL

Phone: (208) 634-7102  
mccallmail@labor.idaho.gov

### MERIDIAN

Phone: (208) 364-7785  
meridianmail@labor.idaho.gov

### MINI-CASSIA

Burley  
Phone: (208) 678-5518  
mini-cassiamail@labor.idaho.gov

### MOSCOW

Phone: (208) 882-7571  
moscowmail@labor.idaho.gov

### MOUNTAIN HOME

Phone: (208) 364-7788  
mountainhomemail@labor.idaho.gov

### OROFINO

Phone: (208) 476-5506  
orofinomail@labor.idaho.gov

### PAYETTE

Phone: (208) 642-9361  
payettemail@labor.idaho.gov

### POCATELLO

Phone: (208) 236-6710  
pocatellomail@labor.idaho.gov

### REXBURG

Phone: (208) 557-2501  
rexburgmail@labor.idaho.gov

### SALMON

Phone: (208) 756-2234  
salmonmail@labor.idaho.gov

### SANDPOINT

Phone: (208) 263-7544  
sandpointmail@labor.idaho.gov

### SILVER VALLEY

Kellogg  
Phone: (208) 783-1202  
silvervalleymail@labor.idaho.gov

### SODA SPRINGS

Soda Springs, ID 83276  
Phone: (208) 236-6711  
sodaspringsmail@labor.idaho.gov

### ST. MARIES

Phone: (208) 245-2518  
stmariesmail@labor.idaho.gov

### WOOD RIVER

Bellevue  
Phone: (208) 788-3526  
blainecountymail@labor.idaho.gov

### CENTRAL OFFICE

317 W. Main St.  
Boise, ID 83735  
Phone: (208) 332-3570

A PDF version of this booklet and an online workshop are available online at [labor.idaho.gov/jobseeker](http://labor.idaho.gov/jobseeker).

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