

## Chapter 1

# Best Messages: Land Jobs and Leap Ahead

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Saying hello to a bevy of winning messages in the New Digital Age
  - ▶ Learning the ropes of writing great job search letters from top pro writers
  - ▶ Guarding your new letters' good looks as they travel online to change your life
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**A** new blast of recruiting technology is blowing the hinges off the way we once pursued a job search: when we applied, got a call, went in for an interview, and either got hired or continued looking until we hit pay dirt.

Just as computers and the Internet forever changed the way job seekers *find* hiring companies, digital technology is forever changing the way job seekers *sell* hiring companies.

This book, aimed at virtually every job seeker, is rich with sample letters showing you how to sell companies on the benefits of hiring you. You'll find a wealth of letters to grow your know-how in Chapters 4 through 11.

There's more. After you're hired, you'll want to be rewarded for your valuable work with a boost in money and clout. That's why Chapter 13 contains more sample letters, to help you accomplish your career progression.

## *A Brief Kaleidoscope of Letter Types*

More specifically, you may be amazed at the number of purposes you can accomplish with solid job search letters. The following thumbnail roster summarizes the kinds of career-growing letters that can speed you on your way and that you'll find in the chapters ahead:

- ✔ **Getting hired:** Job ad reply, online cover note, checklist match of qualifications with job requirements, accomplishments sheet, job fit statement, first 90 days work product goals projection, reference commentary,

employee referral memo, contract and job-bidding application, prospecting letter, networking letter, after-interview letter, interview leave-behind supplement, and interest revival letter.

- ✓ **Getting modern:** Mobile text message, social media message, branding brief, bio, profile, online work portfolio, prezi, and video interview.
- ✓ **Getting ahead:** Internal requests for promotion, raise, company job vacancy, and lateral move within company.

Job search letters may be postal mailed, courier delivered, personally hand delivered, or, far more likely, moved by digital computer technology. Digital technology has become the leading method of delivering job search letters, as the following section observes.

## Digital Is Destiny

Digital technology keeps churning out new ways for people to connect and communicate in the job market. Why isn't innovation slowing down or taking a breather?

Three words sum up the answer: *smarter, faster, cheaper*. That's essentially the motivation for recruiters (who pay the bills) and inventors (who sell to recruiters) to continue coming up with new technical twists in the job market.

What's more, digitally native generations represent a growing proportion of the working population. Young adults — who teathed on the Internet and texted most of their messages — represent an increasingly larger share of the labor market.

Among important contemporary categories of recruiting and job search technology are the following four headliners:

1. **Mobile.** The use of smartphones and tablets to job-hunt is spreading across the planet like wildfire, even among workers older than 30. Chapter 2 is devoted to the ins and outs of mobile job search.
2. **Social.** The explosion of social media means more information is available about candidates than ever before; it even elbows in on unfavorable data candidates prefer to keep out of public view. There are two sides to the social digital coin:

Social discovery makes it easier for recruiters to find candidates for specific positions.

- Social communication makes it easier for job seekers to find jobs and references in ways never before possible.

The growth in time spent on social media is largely tied to the skyrocketing spread of smartphones. Chapter 8 looks at letters for social media.

- 3. Search automation.** Until two decades or so ago, job applications were filled with candidate-supplied, or *internal*, information and were kept in filing cabinets. Now they're kept on computers in applicant tracking systems (ATS). Hiring actions include *external* information gathered online in social searching.

Contemporary ATS technologies automate a comprehensive review of candidates that includes both internal and external information by using computer formulas called algorithms.

- 4. Predictive analytics.** In making hiring decisions, predictive analytics means sophisticated software used to predict a candidate's future performance. Statistics in candidate selection add to or complete with human judgment.



When a job change is on your agenda, it's essential to Google your name once a week to see what recruiters are spotting. This exercise means more than searching for embarrassing personal moments. It means updating your old profiles and revising any other data that can disqualify you for the type of job you're chasing.

## Memorable Job Search Letters

The transforming power of digital technology encourages a strategy of writing your way forward with messages that ask for advice and information, help from professional contacts, assistance from a former business coworker, or consideration from a recruiter.

Digital technology makes it practical for you to take another bite of the apple in pitching a hiring manager after a turn-down, asking for a part-time gig, or helping in researching a potential job.

Your letters have to be worth reading, whether by a recruiter, a hiring manager, or an automated system. Three outstanding job letter examples follow.

### *Executive position letter*

Very well-written job search letters are critical when you're chasing highly competitive employment positions, such as senior executive, scientist, technologist, upper-level government employee, college professor, attorney, or other upscale occupation.

The following sample letter by Debby Ellis, Phoenix Career Group in Houston, illustrates quality writing that's always appropriate for an executive position.

**Gerald F. Fox**

**Chief Operations Officer**

[Date]

Dennis Paige, Chief Executive Officer  
XYZ Transportation  
3100 Space Center Boulevard  
Houston, TX 77059

Dear Mr. Paige,

America is innovating again. Just one important example is the successful landing of the Mars probe, *Curiosity*. But to be and stay competitive in today's global economy, every manufacturing enterprise is obliged to remain vigilant in their approach to operations ... the challenge, always, is to outperform the competition. This is where I offer the most value.

XYZ Transportation offers everything the next stage in America's technology evolution requires, but it is my belief that to compete successfully and profitably deliver this business, you need an operations leader that can return your high-tech manufacturing to double-digit profitability. I know how it will work, because I've done it before. Specifically, I offer:

- Experience and success building and managing high-value manufacturing organizations.
- Expertise in leveraging lowest-cost supply chain processes to create competitive advantage, improve profits and enhance value.
- Mastery in the seamless setup and integration of globally centralized SAP platforms.
- Extensive experience, advanced degrees and current certifications in engineering, technology and program management.

To demonstrate my level of interest, I have developed a series of presentations outlining my ideas for: Implementing Engineering-Centric Manufacturing Methodologies; Reducing Supply Chain Cost While Maintaining Quality; and Leveraging Information To Improve Efficiency. I will deliver the work samples to your Executive Committee by courier over the next three business days.

If you are interested in discussing more details, I can be reached at 123-456-7890, or you can send me an email, [jerry.fox@gmail.com](mailto:jerry.fox@gmail.com), and I will respond quickly. I appreciate your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

*Jerry Fox*

POB 430, Houston TX 77030 • (C) 123-456-7890 • [jerry.fox@gmail.com](mailto:jerry.fox@gmail.com) • <http://www.linkedin.com/in/jfox> • [jfoxceo](mailto:jfoxceo)

Debbie Ellis, MRW, Phoenix Career Group — Houston, Texas

## *Alumni career fair letter*

*The main idea:* When attending a college career fair, a simple tactic makes you stand out from the fair's endless flow of visitors: Leave your resume at

each booth with a customized cover letter that features a facsimile of your college's logo.

Cast your eyes on the following sample letter from imaginative Atlanta-based resume writer Sharon M. Bowden.



**Frank A. Strickland**  
Nashville, Tennessee 37268  
(310) 555-1212 • Email@email.com

Alumni Career Fair – Wednesday, April 18, 20xx

Thank you for participating in Vanderbilt's Alumni Career Fair. It is good to see [Company Name], such a well respected company, represented today. As a Class of 20xx graduate with a **Bachelor of Science in Accounting**, I have been working as a **CPA** for a small accounting firm for the last few years. While I enjoy my work, I have decided it is time to pursue additional challenges in the area of mergers and acquisitions, for which you are well known. Below are a few accomplishments:

- > Provide comprehensive approach to tax planning for 16 companies with annual revenues that exceed \$50 million
- > Recognized in writing by clients for outstanding achievement in the areas of risk management, compliance and reporting
- > Selected as a member of Vanderbilt's Distinguished Alumni Council

The odds are my financial acumen, discipline, and strong work ethic would be an asset to your organization. Additionally, I am interested in travel as I am fluent in English, French, and Spanish and lived abroad for a number of years. Again, thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to speaking with you in the near future.

Sincerely,

*Frank A. Strickland*

Attachment: Resume

## Letter perfect design, now what?

Employers and various collectors of resumes, applications, and other job search letters use an applicant tracking system (ATS) to automatically read and process job communications and manage the hiring or storage process. All ATSs are not the same; they vary in their degree of sophistication.

You can send your resume letters by postal mail or by e-mail, but when your letter contains graphic design elements, postal mail is the safer choice. Here's why:

Sending design-dependent letters online may create "very ugly cover letters," Jim Lemke explains. Lemke, the technical reviewer for all of my *For Dummies* career books, reports that, while most applicant tracking systems retain the native format (MS Word, for example) for both resumes and cover letters, others do not.

"Cover letter formatting gets messed up in some systems because the system keeps only the resume in native format and converts cover letters to text," Lemke says.

"You can, of course, call the HR office at a target company where you plan to send a

graphically enriched cover letter and just ask, "Does your applicant tracking system retain cover letters in native format or convert them to text?" Lemke notes, "and to double-check, ask the same question about resumes."

Renowned career coach Ralph Haas (career-doctor.com) offers yet another reason for using postal mail: "After you have submitted your credentials through appropriate web-based channels, consider printing your resume and cover letter on high-quality white paper and sending it to an actual human being via snail mail. Your cover letter can refer to the fact that you have — as asked — submitted your resume via appropriate channels, but you hoped that this additional follow-up would underscore your interest in the position."

Career guru Susan Whitcomb (susanwhitcomb.com) advises, "Get your resume into a target company's database, have it hand-delivered by internal contacts in the target company to the hiring manager (not HR), and send it as a follow-up after meeting with networking contacts."

## Networking letter

Countless surveys of job seekers rate networking as indispensable. Chapter 5 offers 15 excellent samples, and here's one more. The following sample, written by resume writer Joellyn Wittenstein Schwerdlin in Worcester, Mass., demonstrates vividly how effective messages can be constructed with brevity and clarity, as well as warmth.

**From:** Connie Anderson  
**To:** Margaret White  
**Date:** [Date]  
**Subject:** Girl Scouts of White Plains, New York

Hi Margaret,

My name is Connie Anderson and I'm in a job search networking group facilitated by Jo Anne Schmidt.

When I mentioned my upcoming interview for the position of "Recruiter/ Memberships" with the Girl Scouts of White Plains, Jo Anne thought you might be able to help me. She said you worked for this region for about two years as a business development consultant.

Of course, I buy Girl Scout cookies every year from neighbors and friends and am familiar with the Girl Scout mission. But I'd love to get an insider's perspective about the organization, to help me prepare for the interview.

Can we schedule a brief phone chat, to discuss further? I would really appreciate any insights you can offer me.

Thanks very much in advance. I look forward to hearing from you soon!

Sincerely,  
Connie Anderson  
c-anderson@anyisp.net  
555-555-5555

*Joellyn Wittenstein Schwerdlin, CCMC, JCTC — Worcester, Mass.*

## Should you use a template?

A cover letter makes your first impression on an employer. Show that your strengths fit the target job like green on grass. When you're tempted to scout the Web for one of those free

cover letter templates for which the only heavy lifting required is filling in the blanks, remember the downside: You risk exchanging time saved for opportunity lost.

## Why Job Letters Are the Future

The word is out about another technological gee-whiz product being tested as this book goes to press: *smartglasses*. Slipping a pair of smartglasses on your face can alert you to jobs in your area while you're moving about. Or as someone has observed, "Get ready for eyewear that brings computing to your corneas." (Personally, I'm holding out for dentistry that brings computing to your wisdom teeth.)

The serious job seeker can't brush off speed-racing of new digital technologies to automate hiring conclusions drawn from massive amounts of data. Just don't mistake the technological medium for the marketing message.

The message is how you communicate your value to employers who will pay you for it. The message is how you communicate your job fit to employers who insist on knowing it.

*It's the message that's important, not the medium that delivers the message.*

The strategy of using effective modern job search messages presents a golden opportunity to own the narrative of why you're a perfect choice for the job you seek. And after you write your way onto a payroll, keep writing your way forward with career-management messages. Please continue reading: You'll find 188 terrific samples to light your way.



Communications skills most people commonly use today for job finding and job growing aren't up-to-speed for the emerging world. If you're in the left-behind category, here's your chance to catch up and zoom into the future.

### Technology meets autotranslation

How can you write your job search letters and resume in language A, your native tongue, but apply in language B for work in another country? The rise of new technology makes it happen.

Google Translate ([translate.google.com](http://translate.google.com)) creates an automated translation of your written job

search docs with a few clicks on a computer. Moreover, a host of jaw-dropping translation apps have descended on smartphones — you merely point your camera at a block of text and see it translated on your phone.