

Job Hunting in the Electronic Age

Has your household or workplace been hit by the economic down turn? Mine has. For the past year, friends and family members have been typing resumes and cover letters, searching the web for jobs, and filing for unemployment compensation. As a technical communicator, I have been actively and supportively involved in this process. Just this week I was asked an etiquette question on emailing cover letters. This prompted me to check with other writers, including Natalie Segal. Here are some guidelines that cover various aspects of job hunting electronically.

Note: Please email me (donna@stc-ct.org) with any other suggestions. We can post the collaborative results as a resource on our Chapter's jobs page. Also, see Natalie Segal's book review of *The Overnight resume: The Fastest Way to Your Next Job* on page ?.

Cover Letter Etiquette

Appropriate cover letter etiquette depends on whether or not your resume was solicited and if a friend will be referring your resume for a possible bonus.

Solicited Resume

- Mail or FAX a hard copy of cover letter (standard addresses at the top) and resume.
- Email cover letter (standard addresses at the top) and resume as attachments; include a statement in the email body stating that you have sent them as requested.

Unsolicited Resume

- Make the email body the cover letter (w/o standard addresses at the top) and attach the resume.

For Referral Bonus

- If sent by mail or FAX, use referrer's work address, not home address, at the top of the cover letter. Include the referrer's first and last name in the salutation. Make sure the cover letter is dated.
- If sent by email, complete the subject line as follows: Application for Job *X* as referred by *friend's name*. Send a copy to the referrer and print yourself a copy – just in case.

Electronic Posting

Here are some hints on posting your resume.

Mail

- When you mail a cover letter and resume, mail them flat. Some companies now maintain databases of resumes, so your papers might be scanned. Folds are a problem for scanners, even good ones.

Email

- If you're going to send the cover letter as an email with the resume as an attachment, make sure the recipient will be able to open and read your attachment. This suggestion sounds basic, but people often don't think about compatibility until they get the message that their resume was gobbledygook or wouldn't open. Ask before you send. If you have any doubts, put the resume into the email.
- If you send a PDF version, provide a URL to the free Adobe Acrobat reader. Believe it or not, everyone is not using the 4.0 reader. You can also save the PDF file as a 3.0 version using Distiller job options.
- Run the spell checker and proofread any emails you send out, not just the resume and cover letter.

Your Web Site

- Posting your resume on your Web site is OK and provides a chance to show some of your work. Include your website URL in the address on your resume.
- Do more than just post the resume on your Web site. Unless you are a noted speaker or author, you aren't going to get many hits.

Job Boards and Ads

- Post your resume on all of the major job board sites. Headhunters search these sites regularly and can get your resume noticed. Of course, you can and should email directly in response to an employer's ad. But consider how many other people are doing the same thing. No stamps to attach, no trips to the post office, no FAX charges. Unless that company's HR has dedicated staff checking the email, your resume can get lost in a sea of applicants.
- Contact peer organizations. To check on jobs in Florida, I emailed STC presidents in that area for a list of local headhunters and job boards.

Records for State and Federal Reporting

Hard copy records are necessary to comply with State Unemployment programs and to document expenses for refunds on your Federal tax forms.

Track with Print (I know this is the electronic age)

- Print out the job ad to which you submit a resume directly; it may be removed from the web next week.
- Print a copy of your emails when you submit resumes. If you delete your sent messages and then need that information later, you'll be glad you did.
- Date your FAXs and keep a copy.

Deductible Electronic-related Expenses

- A new home computer and basic software. Those with older PCs and Macs are out of the loop when it comes to submitting electronically.
- Cost of internet service provider
- Cost of basic telephone service; cost of long distance FAXs; cost of returning headhunter calls.
- Cost of web site and software to create/maintain it