



Career Support Services

EMPOWERMENT THROUGH CHOICE

“Discovering Values and Interests to Support Your Professional Development”

Get Noticed!

Tips for Creating Effective Application Materials



Career Support Services Staff

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Application Materials Overview

Many people are confused about what to include in an application form, resume, cover letter and responses to specific supplemental questions. Each of these documents serves different purposes. Below outlines the purpose for each of the application documents along with some tips to maximize the effectiveness of your application documents.

Purpose for Various Application Documents and Tips for Job Candidates			
Job Application Form	Resume	Cover Letter	Supplemental Questionnaire
PURPOSE			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standardized way for employer to obtain complete and detailed candidate information Serves as a legal document in which the candidate acknowledges the information is true and accurate Grants employer permission to conduct background or credit checks, contact references and verify credentials Employer can cross reference information listed in resume, cover letter and responses to supplemental questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Candidate's opportunity to "market" themselves and highlight those qualifications relevant to position 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Candidate's opportunity to explain why he/she is interested in this position and why he/she is the best person for the job Provides employer an insight to the person's personality along with the person's writing skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employer can quickly screen and identify candidates who have key skills and meet experience requirements important to the position
CANDIDATE TIPS			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NEVER say "See resume" Clearly document all experience (paid and unpaid) and education chronologically beginning from current and going backwards. Go back at least 10 years OR as far as necessary to capture <u>related</u> experience Use job titles that others easily understand List duties performed in each job that are related to the position at the top Quantify, i.e. respond to over 100 phone calls/day; manage \$100K operating budget Find a positive way to explain gaps in employment Show the <u>evidence</u> of performing all experiences and skills you mention in your resume, cover and responses to supplemental questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tailor resume to showcase skills, experience, education and achievements <u>directly related</u> to the specific job Make resume visually appealing, easy to read Provide evidence to back up any claims 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain why this job and why this employer Convey enthusiasm and what you offer Organize and communicate thoughts clearly Keep to one page but no more than two DON'T do a one-sized fit all cover letter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read questions carefully and address ALL elements of the question Be concise yet thorough in your responses Organize and communicate thoughts clearly Provides you insight to what is really important to the job and what you need to cover in all your application materials
<p>Make it easy for employer to see how you meet job qualifications. Use same key phrases and terminology provided in job posting. Make a favorable first impression - ensure your materials are clear, complete, and free of typos or other errors.</p>			



Problem-Action-Results (PAR) Accomplishments

Whenever you are conducting a job search process, it is vital to be able to confidently communicate on your resume, cover letter, and during networking opportunities your abilities and accomplishments. However, most people instead focus on listing job duties and end up failing to stand out from all other job seekers who performed those same duties. In order to get noticed, keep your job duty summaries concise and use compelling PAR accomplishments to showcase unique, quantifiable and relevant results you have achieved.

PAR Accomplishments address these key areas:

- **Problem** – A description of the problem or challenge you faced.
- **Action** – Specific action(s) you took to address the problem.
- **Results** –The benefits/value to the organization that resulted from these actions. (Quantify and include percentages, dollar figures, and other metrics whenever possible.)

TIP: To write the PAR accomplishment, it is usually easier to reverse the process by stating the result, the actions you took to achieve the result in response to the problem.

Example:

PROBLEM:	What problem, area of responsibility or situation existed? <i>Company spent a lot of money annually on outside vendors who would provide basic PC skills training curriculum to employees.</i>
ACTION:	What action did you take? <i>Designed from concept to completion a comprehensive basic computer skills training curriculum.</i>
RESULTS:	What were the results of your efforts? Quantify the results whenever possible with percentages, dollars or scope. <i>Company now has basic computer skills training courses that are tailored to the City's needs and can be taught in-house for a fraction of the cost of outside training.</i>
COLLAPSE FOR RESUME:	<i>Saved the Company 35% to 50% in training costs by designing and delivering from concept to completion a comprehensive, low-cost computer skills training that could be delivered in-house to improve basic PC competency skills of employees.</i>

Other Possible Results

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• decrease errors• solve a problem• be the first• meet quotas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• meet deadlines or timelines• increase customer retention• receive recognition or award• be accident free	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• improve the organization's reputation• simplify a work process• accomplish more with less• obtain positive media coverage
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EXAMPLES OF PAR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Make Money

Accelerated profit margins by 30% with projected sales of \$400M by launching seven innovative insurance and POS products in just three years

Save Money

Cut expenses incurred by temporary staffing agencies by \$1M by designing and implementing a transitional duty program for our insured workers

Save Time

Reduced receivables from 45 days to 30 days by analyzing accounting system and then designing and implementing a new process

Improve a Process

Streamlined 10,000-user email list to significantly improve distribution and accuracy of mailings

Reverse an Existing Problem

Reduced product imperfections by 500% by implementing more stringent controls to improve fabric and product quality; achieved ISO 9002 status

Build Relationships/Brand Identity

Garnered \$13,000 in grant and donation money and free publicity for *Furnish Coop* by forging partnership with Corcoran Realtors

Attract New Business

Grew female customer base from 15% to 60% by repositioning merchandising strategy and offering high margin apparel, home, health and beauty products.

REMEMBER THE "SO WHAT?" FACTOR

How do you know if you've written a good PAR ACCOMPLISHMENT?

Ask "SO WHAT?" at the end. If you have an answer to "SO WHAT?" you probably have a good PAR ACCOMPLISHMENT.



Quantifying Job Duties & Communicating Value

Getting noticed and standing out from your competition will be keys to any successful job search process. In addition to showcasing your PAR accomplishments, another way to be miles ahead of your competition is to quantify aspects of your job duties and communicate your value.

The table below illustrates how to transform a typical description of job duties into one that is more powerful.

Simple Description of Job Duties	Enhanced Description of Job Duties (Quantifying and Adding Value)
<p>Administrative Specialist</p> <p>As the administrative specialist with the training section, I register participants into the training database; proofread, compile and copy training materials and handle logistics for all classes.</p>	<p>As the administrative specialist for the training section for the past two years, I support eight professional staff and the section manager. I am responsible for registration, proofreading and copying course materials, and coordinating logistics for 75 courses each year with a total of up to 5,000 participants.</p> <p>Value: My keen attention to detail, strong technology skills and talent for organizing and multi-tasking, enabled the 75 courses we offered this past year to happen smoothly and without issues.</p>
<p>Custodian:</p> <p>As a custodian, I clean office spaces, hallways and stairwells; clean/sanitize lunch rooms and bathrooms; and collect and dispose of all garbage in the building.</p>	<p>I work effectively as part of a four person custodial team where we are responsible each day for collecting and disposing of garbage for over 1000 employee office spaces; cleaning, sanitizing and restocking 16 restrooms and 8 lunchrooms; and keeping the building's 200,000+ square feet of floors, carpets and stairwells clean.</p> <p>Value: In the four years I have worked as a custodian, I have always accomplished my work within established timelines and, according to my supervisor; I perform my duties exceptionally well. In fact, of the 20 custodians employed in my current company, I was selected as one of three custodians to train new hires.</p>
<p>Recruiter:</p> <p>As a recruiter, I work closely with hiring managers to develop and implement a recruiting and selection plan to fill their job vacancies.</p>	<p>As a recruiter for the past three years, I provide support to 20 hiring managers in developing and implementing recruiting and selection plans for approximately 40 administrative, technical, professional and trades positions each year that are represented by six different labor unions.</p> <p>Value: I worked as part of a team to research best practices, create checklists, stream-line processes and train all of our hiring managers in effective employment processes. As a result of using these new tools and processes, I have seen an improvement in the quality and quantity of our applicant pool, been able to fill jobs in half the time and have seen a 20% improvement in our new hire retention rate.</p>



Accomplishment-Based Resume Template

NAME (followed by any professional credentials)

City, State, Zip • phone • personal email

TITLE OF JOB OBJECTIVE

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

- Number of years of experience in the field, in a related field and/or using specific skills required for the job objective
- A PAR accomplishment or process improvement that demonstrates how you positively affected the company, your boss, your co-workers, and/or your customers
- Any unique qualities, skills, knowledge, experiences you possess that would be of benefit to the position, company or customer
- A testimonial - what someone would say about you as a recommendation

SKILLS or EXPERTISE

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| • Related types of procedures | • Related technology |
| • Related functional areas | • Related tools or equipment |
-

EXPERIENCE *(Paid or unpaid)*

Job Title

Month/Year – Month/Year

Name of Company, City, State

Brief summary of the purpose of what you do. Highlight aspects of the job that are relevant to the job objective. Quantify wherever you can.

Key Accomplishment/s:

- PAR accomplishment
- PAR accomplishment

Job Title

Month/Year – Month/Year

Name of Company, City, State

Brief summary of the purpose of what you do. Highlight aspects of the job that are relevant to the job objective. Quantify wherever you can.

Key Accomplishment/s:

- PAR accomplishment
 - PAR accomplishment
-

EDUCATION and TRAINING

Degree, Major (if relevant), School, City, State

Relevant class, seminar, or workshop title, Name of Training Organization, City, State

OTHER CATEGORY *(ONLY IF it adds value to your Job Objective)*



Resume Examples

Sarah Jones

206-555-5557

Seattle, WA 98012

Sarah.jones@gmail.com

ADMINISTRATIVE - CUSTOMER SERVICE

Thrives in fast paced, high volume, customer service environments

Highly organized self-starter ♦ Effective multi-tasker ♦ Public Sector ♦ Results-driven

EXPERTISE

- Office & Meeting Coordination
- Cash Handling (\$500K/day)
- Electronic Fund Transfers
- A/R & A/P using Oracle
- Accounts Reconciliation
- Proofread & Track all Section's Documents
- High Volume Customer Service and Call Centers
- De-Escalating Volatile Customer Situations
- Multi-Cultural Awareness
- Maintaining Confidentiality
- PeopleSoft Payroll
- Identifying Efficiencies
- Database Management
- Physical & Electronic Records Management & Archiving
- Policy Administration
- Public Disclosure
- Visio, Adobe, SharePoint
- MS Office Suite 2010

"Sarah is continuously looking for ways to streamline services and has greatly improved office efficiency. She is highly respected by staff and possesses outstanding customer service skill; in fact, she has turned-around several potentially volatile customer situations. I can't recommend her enough!" -- Supervisor

"She is an incredible listener and problem-solver. I always go to her when I need information." -- Customer

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

King County Department of Transportation, Transit Division

Administrative Specialist III

2006 - present

Administrative Specialist II

1999 – 2006

Organize and optimize delivery of a wide variety of administrative and customer support services for a 40 person office and the 100+ walk in customers served daily. Prioritize work of 4 clerical staff to ensure all services are provided timely, accurately and with the highest level of customer service. Support Call Center which receives over 500 calls each day.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Compiled and centralized a list of key information, resources and email templates for use by Call Center staff resulting in a 30% reduction in average hold times for callers.
- Acknowledged by supervisor for ensuring a high level of accuracy, clarity and conformance with King County style guidelines for all documents generated by section.
- Accurately manage three complex databases (each database has up to 20,000 records).
- Accurately balance three cash registers daily totaling up to \$500K/day.
- Earned Customer Service Award in 2010, 2012 and 2013.

EDUCATION

MS Office 2010 Certification, Bellevue College – Bellevue, WA, 2000

AA, Business Administration, South Seattle Community College – Seattle, WA

Allison Smith

Renton, WA 98058 | 206.123-4567 | allison.smith@gmail.com

Project Management – Community Relations

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

High performing manager with 20 years' experience in the corporate, nonprofit, philanthropy, and public sectors

- | | |
|--|--|
| *Excellent project management | *Sound critical thinking and problem-solving |
| *Strong relationship building | *Exceptional written and verbal communication skills |
| *Outstanding budget management | *Politically-savvy |
| *Exceptional operational management and multi-tasking skills | |

“Allison is a results-oriented self-starter whose accomplishments reflect outstanding strategic and tactical expertise. She’s a collaborative team player with excellent analytical, planning, budget oversight, and large scale project management skills that achieve desired outcomes and exceed stakeholder expectations. She has exceptional written and verbal communication skills and strong interpersonal skills.” -Supervisor

EXPERIENCE

King County Department of Transportation, Seattle, WA, 2013-Present
Special Assistant – Strategic Project Initiatives

Served on Leadership Team as the strategic liaison between the Director and the Executive Cabinet, other elected officials, business, civic and industry leaders, and the public.

- Provided strategic leadership and project management of priority projects, including development of the award-winning web application Trip.com, recipient of the 2015 National Association of Counties’ Civic Education and Public Information Achievement Award.
- Managed public relations Request for Proposal and selection of brand management vendor for promotions launch of Trip.com and social media.
- Managed the department’s legislative policy agenda, including 3 bills which resulted in 36 bi-partisan legislator co-sponsors, and hearings in the state Senate and House. Managed relations with state and locally elected officials, committee members, and their senior staff.
- Served on communications team to manage, create, and edit external media and internal communications, including department newsletters and correspondence. Media coverage included major outlets (print, TV, web) resulting in feature stories on KING 5, KIRO TV, and in national magazines and 25+ local weeklies.

Saptema, a Division of Randle Partners, Seattle, WA, 2010-2012
Operations Coordinator

Managed back end operations for the Pacific Northwest Practice, including the Managing Partner and 20+ C-Suite executive partners who provide clients hands-on strategic, financial, and technology leadership.

- Trained and supported 20+ C-Suite executive partners on business operations, corporate policies, and performance management practices contributing to annual revenue of more than \$2 million.
- Managed payroll and client invoices for accuracy and contractual compliance reducing payroll mistakes by 30%, invoice errors by 40+%, and potential lost revenue by \$250,000.
- Successfully managed change during 2 mergers to achieve operational continuity as well as customer and employee satisfaction by proactively soliciting concerns and interfacing with internal subject matter experts to create customized solutions and skills training.

Allison Smith

Renton, WA 98058 | 206.123-4567 | allison.smith@gmail.com

The Los Angeles Times, California, 2000-2008

Corporate Marketing and Sponsorships Manager

Managed a \$3 million budget and 20 employees across 4 departments with 4 direct reports. Departments included Creative Marketing, Client Marketing, Production, and Sponsorships.

- Led key Company brand initiatives resulting in a \$750,000 fleet redesign and rollout, modified logo, and the production of the Company's 110th anniversary media campaign and employee celebrations.
- Negotiated marketing agreements and managed strategic corporate relationships resulting in high profile partnerships with brands such as the Los Angeles Rams, Los Angeles Angels, the Los Angeles Art Museum, and The Los Angeles Times Fund For The Needy nonprofit agency recipients.
- Oversaw and managed the annual Corporate Giving Program to support local causes such as education and the arts resulting in millions of dollars in cash grants and in-kind contributions.

United Way of Los Angeles County, Los Angeles, CA, 1991-2000

Director, Campaign Operations and Director, Trades Group

- Managed a \$1.9 million budget reducing expenditures \$10,000 the first 6 months on the job.
- Provided leadership, supervision, and training to 12 executive leaders, 8 employees, and 42 loaned executives who developed and implemented individualized fundraising strategies for 1,700+ workplace campaigns generating \$11.6 million, an 8% year-over-year increase.

Los Angeles Organizing Committee – 1990 Goodwill Games, Los Angeles, CA, 1989-1990

Community Relations Manager and Assistant Venue Manager

- Delivered 100+ Goodwill Games related speeches, and recruited, trained, and supervised 2 staff and 120 community volunteers who gave an additional 200.

US WEST Communications, 1987-1989

Community Affairs Manager

- Served as a spokesperson and wrote press releases, customer correspondence, and management reports and speeches regarding company projects and service improvements.

AWARDS

- Awarded first ever **Los Angeles** Times Company Non-Circulation Contributor Elite Performance Award
- Presented inaugural United Way of **Los Angeles** County President's Award for Excellence
- Earned national Society of Consumer Affairs Professionals' award for written analysis of US WEST Communications' community involvement programs – first such recognition received by the company

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

BA, Communications, Howard University, Washington, DC, Magna Cum Laude
Leadership Tomorrow, Seattle, WA



Cover Letter Template

YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION

Name
Address
City, State, Zip Code
Phone Number, Email Address

DATE

EMPLOYER CONTACT INFORMATION

Name
Title
Company
Address
City, State, Zip Code

RE: Name of Position (Ref. ID or Job Number)

SALUTATION

Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name,

It's best to address your letter to a specific person, but use "Dear Hiring Manager," if there's no way to find that out. If you do not have a contact name, you can skip the salutation entirely. Avoid stale salutations such as "Dear Sir/Madam:" and "To Whom it May Concern:." If you do not know the gender of your contact, you can write out the person's full name, e.g., "Dear Cory Jackson" or "Dear Jordan Soltez."

BODY OF LETTER

Organize the body of your cover letter as outlined below. Keep letter positive, upbeat and infuse it with your personality.

- **First Paragraph**
Clearly state the position to which you're applying. Include a synopsis of why you are a top candidate for the position. Include the name of a mutual contact, if you have one.
- **Middle Paragraph(s)**
This is your sales pitch. It should describe what you have to offer the employer and what makes you a great candidate. Specifically outline how your qualifications match the job to which you are applying. Stay focused on what you can do for them. Clearly make the connection between your qualifications and the job requirements. Use this section to interpret your resume—don't repeat from it verbatim.
- **Final Paragraph**
Briefly restate why you would be a good fit for the position. Thank the employer for considering you for the position. Express strong interest in an interview. Include information on how you will follow-up.

COMPLIMENTARY CLOSE

Respectfully yours, Best regards, Sincerely,



Cover Letter Example

Sue Smith

2525 – Home Town Road
Seattle, WA 98104

555-555-5555
sue.smith24@gmail.com

[Date]

Ms. Rhonda West
Customer Service Manager
Acme Inc.
123 Corporate Blvd.
Sometown, CO 50802

Re: Customer Service Representative Opening (Ref. ID: CS300-Denver)

Dear Ms. West:

I was excited to see your opening for a customer service representative. My background includes serving as a customer service associate within both call-center and retail environments. Most recently, I worked on the customer service desk for Discount-Mart, where my responsibilities included handling customer merchandise returns, issuing refunds/store credits, flagging damaged merchandise for shipment back to vendors and providing back-up cashiering during busy periods.

Previously, I worked within two high-volume customer-support call centers for a major telecommunications carrier and a satellite television services provider. In these positions, I demonstrated the ability to resolve a variety of issues and complaints (such as billing disputes, service interruptions or cutoffs, repair technician delays/no-shows and equipment malfunctions). I consistently met my call-volume goals, handling an average of 56 to 60 calls per day.

In addition to this experience, I gained considerable customer service skills during my part-time employment as a waitress and restaurant hostess while in high school.

I also bring to the table strong computer proficiencies in MS Word, MS Excel and CRM database applications and a year of college (business major). Please see the accompanying resume for details of my experience and education.

I am confident that I can offer you the customer service, communication and problem-solving skills you are seeking. Feel free to call me at 555-555-5555 (cell) to arrange an interview. Thank you for your time -- I look forward to learning more about this opportunity!

Sincerely,

Sue Smith
Enclosure: Resume