

1523 River Lane
Worthville OH 43804
April 6, 2011

Mr Willard Yancy
Director
Automotive Systems
XYZ Motor Company
Product Development Division
Charlotte NC 28202

Dear Mr. Yancy:

Recently I have been researching the leading national companies in automotive computer systems. Your position announcement in the April 6 *National Business Employment Weekly* caught my eye because of XYZ's innovations in computer-controlled safety systems. I would like to apply for the automotive computer engineer opening.

Your advertisement notes that experience in computer systems for machinery or robotic systems would be a plus. I have had extensive experience in the military with computer systems, ranging from a digital communications computer to an air traffic control training simulator. In addition, my college experience includes courses in computer engineering that have broadened my experience. I am eager to apply what I have learned to your company.

My mechanical knowledge was gained from growing up on my family's dairy farm. After watching and learning from my father, I learned to repair internal combustion engines, diesel engines, and hydraulic systems. Then for five years I managed the entire dairy operation.

With my training and hands-on experience, I believe I can contribute to your company. Please contact me at 614/555-2731 if you wish to arrange an interview.

Sincerely,



James M. Sistrunk

Enclosure: Resume

■ Figure 10-1 ■ Job application letter (block style)

How much or how little do they want in the letter? What main points are they hunting for as they scan your resume? This section examines the needs of these readers and gives guidelines for you, the writer.

The Readers' Needs

You probably will not know personally the readers of your job letter, so you must think hard about what they may want. Your task is complicated by the fact that often there are several readers of your letter and resume who may have quite different backgrounds.

One possible scenario follows:

- Step 1:** The letter may go first to the personnel office, where a staff member specializing in employment selects letters and resumes that meet the criteria stated in the position announcement. (In some large employers, letters and resumes may even be stored in a computer, where they are scanned for key words that relate to specific jobs.)
- Step 2:** Applications that pass this screening are sent to the department manager who supervises the employee that is hired. The manager may then select a group to be interviewed. This manager interviews applicants and ultimately hires the employee.

One variation of this process has the human resources department doing an interview as well as screening letters and resumes—before the department manager even hears about any applications. Another variation, as noted earlier, has the employer relying on an online resume service for the initial screening.

Yet sooner or later, a supervisor or manager reads your letter and resume. And most readers, whatever their professional background, have the following five characteristics in common:

>> Feature 1: They Read Job Letters in Stacks

Most search-and-screen processes are such that letters get filed until there are many to evaluate. Your reader faces this intimidating pile of paper.

>> Feature 2: They Are Tired

Some employment specialists save job letters for later reading, but many people who do hiring get to job letters at the end of a busy day, so they have even less patience than usual for flowery wording or hard-to-read typefaces.

>> Feature 3: They Are Impatient

Your readers expect major points to jump right out at them. Usually they will not dig for information that cannot be found quickly.

>> Feature 4: They Become Picky Grammarians

Readers of all backgrounds expect good writing when they read job letters. There is an assumption that a letter asking for a job should reflect solid use of the language. If the letter

does contain a typo or grammar error, the reader may wonder about the quality of writing you will produce on the job.

>> Feature 5: They Want Attention Grabbers but Not Slickness

You want the content of your letter and resume to stand out without the use of gimmicks. For example, white or off-white stationery is still the standard, along with traditional fonts with lots of white space for easy reading.

Of course, likes and dislikes vary. An advertising director, who works all day with graphics, may want a bolder format design than an engineering manager, who works with documents that are less flashy. If you cannot decide, it is best to use a conservative format and style.

The Letter's Organization

Your one goal is to tantalize the reader enough to want to interview you—that is all. With that goal and the reader's needs in mind, your job letter should follow the ABC format on the left.

This pattern gives you a starting point, but it is not the whole story. There is one feature of application letters that cannot be placed easily in a formula. Work hard with your draft to develop a unity and flow that, by itself, sets you apart from the crowd. Your attention grabber engages interest, but the clarity of your prose persuades readers that you are an applicant to be interviewed.



Career Letter 5:
Inquiry displays
effective strategies
for an unsolicited
application.

ABC Format: Job Letters

- **ABSTRACT:** Apply for a specific job
 - Refer to advertisement, mutual friend, or other source of information about the job
 - Briefly state what makes you and outstanding candidate who can uniquely meet the main need of your potential employer
- **BODY:** Specify your understanding of the reader's main needs
 - Provide main qualifications that satisfy these needs (but only highlight points from the resume—do not simply repeat all of the resume information)
 - Address specific qualifications mentioned in a job announcement
 - Avoid mentioning weak points or deficiencies
 - Keep body paragraphs to six or fewer lines
 - Use a bulleted or numbered list if it helps draw attention to three or four main points
 - Maintain the “you” attitude throughout
- **CONCLUSION:** Tie the letter together with one main theme or selling point, as you would a sales letter
 - Refer to your resume
 - Explain how and when the reader can contact you for an interview

Resumes

Resumes usually accompany application letters. Three points make writing resumes a challenge:

1. **Emphasis:** You should select just a *few major points of emphasis* from your academic and professional life.
2. **Length:** You often should use only *one page*. For individuals with extensive experience, a two-page or more resume is acceptable.
3. **Arrangement:** You should arrange information so that it is *pleasing to the eye and easy to scan*. Prospective employers spend less than a minute assessing your application. They may even use computers to scan resumes, taking even less time.

Computers pose a special challenge to a resume writer because they fail to appreciate some of the elegant variations sometimes used to get attention. If you are writing a resume that may be read by a computer, you may want to (1) use white or very