

Pick me! Pick me!

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HIRED!**

10 Easy Steps
to get the
Job You Want!

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How to Grab a Hiring Manager's Attention

The Canadian unemployment rate is at a thirty-two year low, employment is high, and yet competition for jobs is just getting more and more fierce. In this hot labor climate, how do you make yourself stand out in the eyes of hiring managers? It all starts with your cover letter and resume. A little bit of extra research, planning, and editing can go a long way in buffing you to a shine.

Hiring managers do read cover letters. A recent wwwork! poll found that 88% of respondents use cover letters to assess candidates prior to looking at their resumes. About 29% believe that a good cover letter is indicative of a good candidate. Don't assume that your cover letter will be glossed over, as many candidates do. Most job seekers use a generic cover letter to introduce their resume – but you are not most job seekers. Write unique cover letters which are targeted for the specific job in question. Use short, complete and to-the-point action sentences, and keep it to half a page. Your cover letter should not repeat what's in your resume. Rather, it should introduce who you are, why you are interested in the role, and why the hiring manager should consider you for the job.

What about your resume? Like the cover letter, keep it short. Use bullet points where you can. Unlike your cover letter, you don't have to use complete sentences but you should still use action and power words. Action words enliven a boring list of responsibilities. Another way to spice up your resume is by including your accomplishments, but use numbers to quantify and make them more persuasive (i.e. "Increased sales by 150%" for 2006). Other numbers to add are dates! Include month and year to your job experiences. After adding all the important stuff, your resume should be no more than two pages. The longer it is, the less likely the hiring manager will read it thoroughly.

There are special cases in which you can get away with a longer resume. For example, highly technical jobs in IT and Engineering require that you list your academic credentials along with software, hardware and professional accreditations. These are exceptions to the rule and are restricted to specialized industries.

The last thing you need to do with your cover letter and resume is proofread them. Even if you are the best speller in the world, it always helps to have a trusted friend or family member read and edit your documents. It's worth the peace of mind.

One final way to distinguish yourself from the competition is to follow up on your application. Do so about a week after you've submitted your application. Again, be polite to the hiring manager, sincere in your interest, and cheerful in your inquiry. You want to stay top-of-mind when the hiring manager is in the throes of making a decision. Your "Pick Me! Pick Me!" efforts may well result in you being picked for the job!