

## Resumes

### *"Making the First Cut"*

We recently completed a written resume review process, for a Chief Officers, position in which three of our assessment team members, working independently, eliminated sixty two of seventy three candidates on a "first cut" review. This "first cut" most likely eliminated some very good people, but because of the appearance and organization of their resumes, those people never became candidates to be considered.

In reality, if the appearance and organization of a resume is not appealing and appropriate the candidate's ability to fill that position may never be viewed. There are some additional considerations for preparing electronically submitted resumes but the basics that follow are core concerns in preparing either a written or electronically transmitted resume.

It was not the first time and it will not be the last that qualified people have not been successful in making the "cut". The fact is that candidates eliminated themselves from consideration by presenting information in a manner that eliminated them from further consideration. The importance of a well prepared resume for any competitive position in the fire service is often undervalued by potential candidates.

Employer's job postings should clearly identify the minimal acceptable requirements for the job, and also properly reflect what the job will require. Read the posting carefully and develop your cover letter and resume to address the requirements and demonstrate your understanding of what the job requires.

Before any other consideration remember that that the fire service is a profession where honesty is paramount. Fire service personnel, at every level, are empowered and entrusted by both the people they work with and the people they serve. Be honest and don't over embellish.

**Resumes:** The purpose of a resume is to get an interview or to get considered for the next step in an assessment process. A resume is, in fact, an advertisement that is intended to sell a product. That product is the candidate. "Every picture tells a story". A resume is the picture that tells the candidate's story. Candidates need to submit a document that is attractive and draws attention. Resumes must convey that a candidate understands of the knowledge and skill requirements for the position by clearly presenting evidence that their education and experience and history of accomplishments meet those needs.

- It must effectively provide evidence that a candidate's education and experience, at a minimum, meet the job requirements.
- The resume must succinctly provide evidence that a candidate understands the job and its expectations.

If you intend to move through the ranks, start preparing a portfolio to support your resume early in your career. If you are seeking a Chief Officers position you will wish you had followed this recommendation. Candidates who initiate and maintain a career portfolio will be able to more efficiently and effectively develop resumes. A well prepared and maintained portfolio will provide information and insight on an individual's professional growth and achievements. It will help to focus career professionals on relevant achievements and accomplishments that will best represent their qualifications and work history when completing a resume.

The overall appearance of the "advertisement" is critical. The cover letter and resume together paint a "picture". Both must be; clearly typed, presented in an organized, concise, accurate manner, grammatically correct, and visually attractive. This means word processed with no errors and then printed on high-quality paper.

**Format:** One page for the cover letter and one page for the resume are recommended.

**Name**

**Address**

**Phone**

**E- mail**

**Date Submitted**

**Job Objective:** Match to job description. Be certain to use appropriate matching vocabulary.

**Education:** This may directly follow the job objective or may follow the experience section. If your job experience is more relevant to the position being applied for or if your education or training is not recent place this section after experience. Most recent education should be listed first. Be certain to identify that you have been awarded degrees. Identify special workshops courses and skills that are appropriate to your job objective.

**Experience: (See above for placement consideration)** List by experience and/or jobs performed. State your experience relevant to the job description/requirements (remember to match all requirements). List your most recent, relevant job first and key your successes. It is not important to list dates, unless those dates indicate that you are current and continuous. Avoid full sentences' and use action words. Be certain to focus on words and skills that relate to your job objective that is related to the job description.

**Special Skills/ Awards:** Use this section to include community involvement and volunteer activities. List special awards (community and professional). Community involvement and outside activities are important considerations

**References:** "Available on request" If you have names that will be favorable recognized by the employer, use them but don't let them make an additional page necessary.

- Presented in an organized, concise, accurate manner
- Visually attractive
- Word processed with no errors
- Printed on high-quality paper
- Clearly typed
- *Edit, edit and edit!*

**Cover Letters:** The purpose(s) of a cover letter is/are to state your availability, interest in the position and to introduce your resume. Cover letters are essential. If you want to get out of the game early, don't send one. Keep them to one page. Details count, be careful in determining to whom you address the letter. If possible, address it to a specific person. A standard form letter that is addressed to "Personnel Manager" when there is none or to Dear Sir when that Sir is in fact a female are common errors. Be certain to check the job title and spelling of the person's name.

Keep it short and focused on why you are applying and why you should be considered. Grab attention in the first paragraph by relating a personal job related incident or accomplishment. Use action words. The letter needs to clearly indicate that you have researched the community and job and that you are enthusiastic about applying for it.

Identify what sources you used to find the job and what you know about the position early in your letter.

Show confidence in your ability to do the job and enthusiasm about applying for the position.

- Keep to one page. Use short, clear phrases
- Use (not overuse) relevant jargon
- Address it to a specific person.
- Check the job title and spelling of the person's name.
- Grab attention early on: Avoid being too cute!
- Use action words: *Initiated, led, invented, established, directed.*
- Show confidence and enthusiasm: "*I want this job and I have prepared to do it*"
- Edit, edit and edit.

Preparing a resume is not an emergency response. It is a carefully implemented strategic planning activity. The result of that activity needs to demonstrate that a candidate has the required knowledge, skills, experiences, enthusiasm and confidence to do the job.

