

# Why Letters and Resumes Won't Land You a Job

*Following-up by phone and in person is most important*

BY TAUNEE BESSON

*Editor's Note: This month columnist Taunee Besson addresses a job hunting question posed by an NBEW reader. If you have a question or concern about your job search or career, send it to Ms. Besson at the National Business Employment Weekly, P.O. Box 300, Princeton, N.J. 08543-0300. All names are kept confidential.*

**Question:** *I have been in electronics manufacturing since 1960, during which time I progressed from assembler to director of manufacturing. My job was eliminated in August 1987, and I spent eight months searching for a new position. I'm now working, but at less than half my previous salary of \$72,000.*

*Needless to say, my search for a more rewarding position is continuing. I've tried many tactics, includ-*

## Your resume should list your experience in prioritized order and clearly follow the job description of the open position

*ing sending three different resumes and a sales letter. The resumes haven't been very productive, but the sales letter has produced several interviews and many calls (see the adjacent sample letter). How should I proceed?*

**Answer:** It appears that thus far in your search, you have relied on just two techniques to land interviews—broadcast letters and resumes. As part of an overall campaign, both are useful tools, but only if you follow up by telephone or in person. You

*Ms. Besson, a bimonthly columnist, is president of Career Dimensions, a Dallas-based firm specializing in career development and job search programs for professionals and corporations.*

must recognize that alone, letters and resumes won't uncover the best positions.

A balanced job search campaign should include extensive networking (the single most effective job hunting technique), answering ads (although the competition is extremely stiff), selectively using executive search firms and mailing out concisely worded resumes and broadcast letters. Relying on this last tactic alone can bring many lonely days waiting for a response. According to career and job search expert Richard Bolles, author of "What Color Is Your Parachute," only one person lands a job for every 1,470 resumes sent out. Those are tough odds.

A review of your sales letter reveals how you can improve your chances. The success you've received so far is a testament to the fact that it covers three critical points:

- 1) It explains your expertise in a variety of manufacturing activities.
- 2) It quantifies your results.
- 3) It is succinct and to the point.

While we say in Texas that "if it ain't broke, don't fix it," your letter could be even more effective if you told readers specifically why you are interested in working for their companies and how your experience would be of immediate use. Such additions would require a few hours of library time spent reading trade journals, newspaper articles and business magazines, but your more descriptive letter will be worth the effort.

The same approach works when writing resumes. You have an excellent background to sell, but your resume isn't working probably because you aren't zeroing in on the right target companies and aren't explaining how your skills are relevant to their needs.

Think of your resume as a well-aimed sales tool. It should begin with a specific objective and include a summary of your experience, education and credentials to illustrate how you will successfully accomplish the job. It should list your experience in prioritized order and clearly follow the job description of the open position.

A company in search of a quality control manager, for example, will expect to see your back-

*Continued on Next Page*

## Sample Broadcast Letter

Dear Mr. Smith:

I have extensive background in Electronic Assembly, Testing (both PCBs and Systems), Manufacturing Engineering, Test Engineering, Prototype Testing and introducing new products into the production cycle. Also, I have experience working with material requirements; both manual and computerized systems. In addition, I have experience in Logic Design.

Some of my accomplishments are:

- As Project Manager, decreased failure rate on data communications modems from 50% to 5%.
- As Operations Manager moved a \$4.5 million inventory and 17 people to Anaheim from Mountain View.
- Successful start-up of a Repair and Refurbishment Center, integrating three diverse product lines:

Hard Copy Communications Terminals  
Video Brokerage Terminals  
Computer Controlled Concentrators

- Implemented automatic computer-controlled testing of unstuffed multi-level printed circuit boards, which resulted in an annual cost savings of \$72,000.
- Implemented a flow solder system and attained 5,000 PCB's per month with a 5% rework rate.
- Implemented electronic manufacturing and testing from outside subcontracting. Shipments in that time increased from 5 million to 80 million.
- Created and installed test process to eliminate overtesting of PCB's on incircuit tester. Current yield is 90%.
- Completed Apics Training in capacity control, material requirements planning (MRP), inventory management and production activity shop floor control. Apics certified.
- Implemented just-in-time and SQC methods at current facility, cut down system rejects from an average of 20 to an average of 2.

I am extremely strong in the technical areas of Production Control, Electronic Manufacturing and Testing. A "results oriented" manager, capable of improving the productivity and profits of your organization.

A detailed resume and salary history are available upon request.

# Follow-up

*Cont. from Preceding Page*

ground in quality control as the first listing on your resume. If that means using a functional resume to bring older experiences to the forefront, do it. And while writing three resumes is a good start, you should be able to adapt every resume you send (thanks to personal computers) to the company that receives it.

Your cover letters can also capture employer attention by including three key ingredients:

1) State specifically why you are interested in the particular company. Mention their prominence in the field, their need for quality control experts and that your friend Bob Brown in engineering suggested that you write.

2) Explain why they should meet with you. Write that you have 15 years of experience in manufacturing control and testing and that you have successfully implemented the program that they are about to start.

3) Then make clear that you will follow up with a call to schedule an appointment to discuss potential employment.

If a networking contact doesn't have a specific name for you or if an ad is devoid of a name, call the company to find out who is in charge of the area where you're applying. Then address your letter to that person. Even if it eventually makes its way to human resources, the person who does the hiring will have seen it and may remember you later on.

Once resumes and broadcast letters are out of the way, concentrate on developing personal contacts. Managers want to hire people with whom they are comfortable, particularly at the senior executive level. That's why you must follow up every resume with a phone call. Face-to-face discussion can never be replaced by a piece of paper.

When phoning, be prepared to briefly reiterate your interest and qualifications for the job and your desire to schedule an appointment. Most managers will grant you a meeting following such a call even if you aren't a perfect fit. If they like you, they may offer you the position, create an opening or refer you to someone else who can use your service or offer guidance.

As you follow up on resumes sent, increase your networking efforts with friends, relatives and business associates. They may know of unadvertised openings and can help you extend your contacts beyond people you already know personally or professionally. Don't be afraid to go one step further

Reprinted from Careerjournal.com

by contacting acquaintances within professional organizations, your church, fraternal and civic groups, hobby clubs, fellow volunteers, the instructor and fellow students in a continuing education course, and even those people you read about in the library.

Ask for 30-minute appointments with each contact and make sure to discuss your mutual interests from the very start. If you're a generalist, emphasize your combination of talent and expertise. If the contact is unwilling to meet, ask for names of other people who may be helpful. Once a meeting is scheduled, create a proposal to bring along that outlines how you can help the contact's company.

In your specific case, it may be wise to speak with a few recruiting firms that specialize in manufacturing. Use a directory of recruiters, such as the ones published by Consultants News (Templeton Road, Fitzwilliam, N.H. 03447) and the Association of Executive Search Consultants (17 Sherwood

---

## Once an interview is scheduled, create a proposal to bring along that outlines how you can help your contact's company

---

Place, Greenwich, Conn. 06830), to identify the best prospects. Your experience will likely coincide with one of their searches.

One trap you should avoid—which often plagues long-term job hunters—is lowering your sights because employment has been hard to find. While it's true that director of manufacturing positions are relatively scarce, opportunities below that level may be both counterproductive and more difficult to land. Most companies are afraid to hire people for jobs below their capabilities. If you've been hearing, "We want someone with five to seven years of experience for his position. You're tremendously overqualified," it's a sure sign that you need to aim higher.

Working your way up the ladder from assembler to manufacturing director required real initiative and strong communications skills. Use them now to find a management position that closely matches your abilities and background. ●