

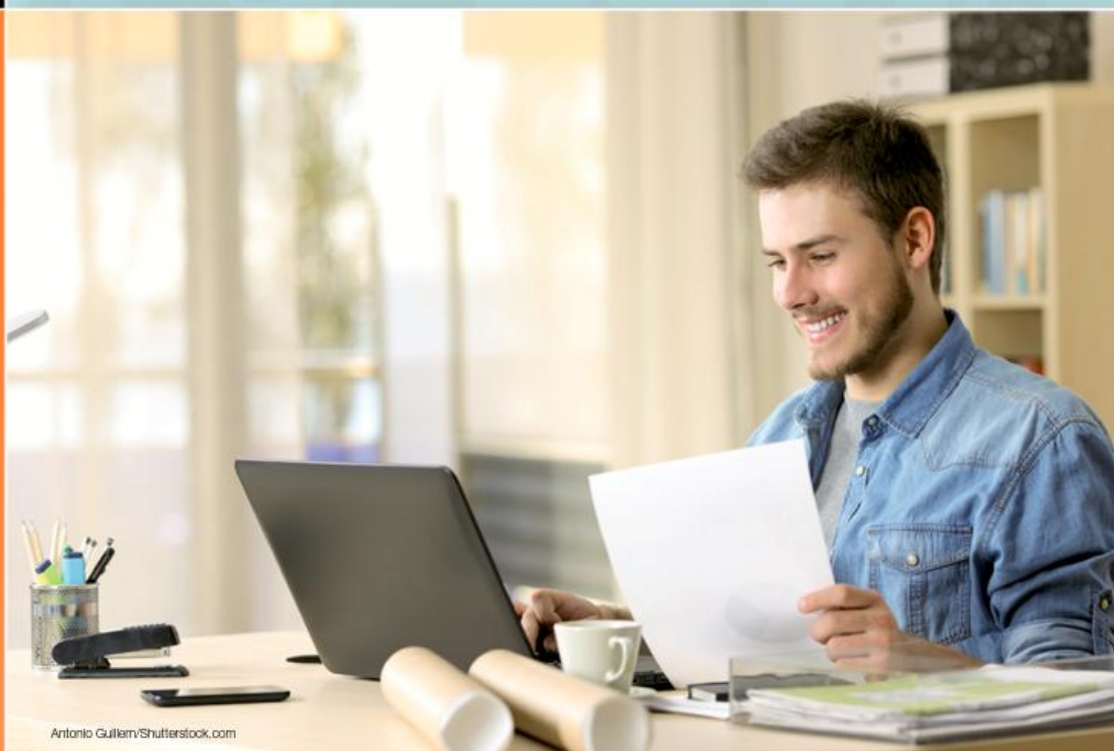
CHAPTER

The Job Search, Résumés, and Cover Letters

OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you should be able to

- 12.1** Prepare for employment by identifying your interests and market requirements.
- 12.2** Use traditional and digital job search techniques in the open and hidden markets.
- 12.3** Organize and format persuasive chronological and functional résumés.
- 12.4** Use social media, video, and infographic résumés as alternatives to traditional résumés.
- 12.5** Write a persuasive cover letter to accompany your résumé.



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12.1 Preparing for Employment

Whether you are applying for your first permanent position, competing for promotion, or changing careers, you'll be more successful if you understand employment communication and how to promote yourself with a winning résumé and related digital tools.

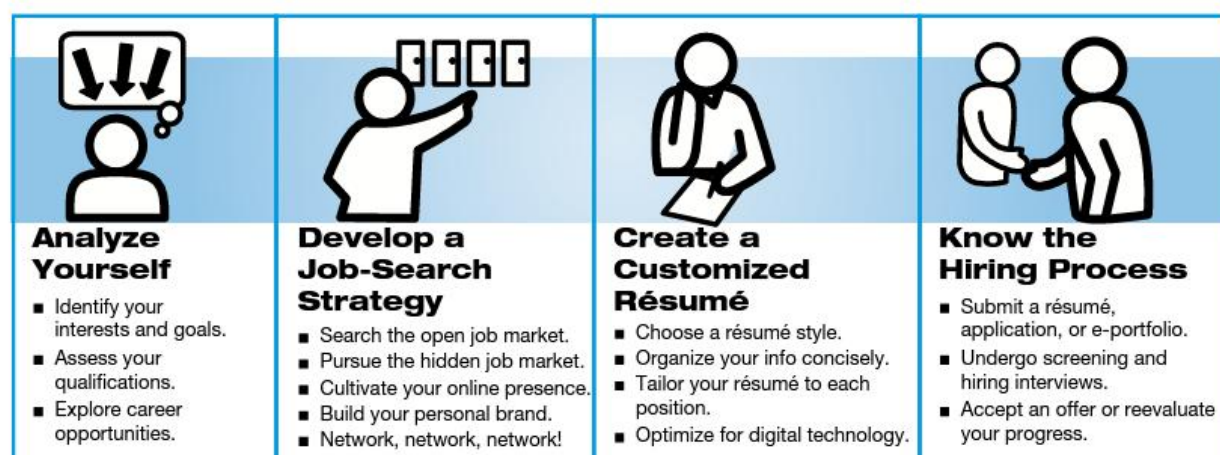
Employers today are most interested in how a candidate will add value to their organizations. That's why successful candidates customize their résumés to highlight their qualifications for each opening. In addition, career paths are no longer linear; most new hires will not start in a job and steadily rise through the ranks. Jobs are more short-lived and people are constantly relearning and retraining.

The résumé is still important, but it may not be the document that introduces the job seeker these days. Instead, the résumé may come only after the candidate has established a real-world relationship. Although we sometimes hear that the "print résumé is dead," the truth is that every job hunter needs one. Whether offered online or in print, your résumé should always be available and current.

It's natural to think that the first step in finding a job is to write a résumé. However, the employment communication process actually begins long before you are ready to prepare your résumé. Regardless of the kind of employment you seek, you must invest time and effort in getting ready. Your best plan for landing the job of your dreams involves following the steps outlined in Figure 12.1.

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FIGURE 12.1 | Job Searching in the Digital Age



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12.1a Identify Your Interests

Begin by looking inside yourself to analyze what you like and dislike so that you can make good employment choices. Career counsellors at your college or university can help you with this process or you can do a self-examination online. For guidance in choosing a field that eventually proves to be satisfying, answer the following questions. You can use your responses to match the description of opportunities you come across in your job search. If a number of your responses appear in a particular job description, there's a good chance it might be a good fit for you.

- Do I enjoy working with people, data, or things?
- How important is it to be my own boss?
- How important are salary, benefits, and job stability?
- What type of working conditions, colleagues, and job stimulation am I looking for?
- Would I rather work for a large or small company?
- Must I work in a specific city, geographical area, or climate?
- Am I looking for security, travel opportunities, money, power, or prestige?
- How would I describe the perfect job, boss, and coworkers?

Finding a satisfying career means learning about oneself, the job market, and the employment process.

Analyzing your likes and dislikes helps you make wise employment decisions.

Answering specific questions can help you choose a career.

12.1b Assess Your Qualifications

In addition to your interests, assess your qualifications. Employers today want to know what assets you have to offer them. Your responses to the following questions will target your thinking as well as prepare a foundation for your résumé. As you'll see later in this chapter, there is room in a résumé to include answers to most of the questions below. Remember that employers seek more than empty assurances; they will want proof of your qualifications.

- What technology skills can I offer? (Name specific software programs and tools.)
- What other hard skills have I acquired in school, on the job, or through activities? How can I demonstrate these skills?
- Do I work well with people? What proof can I offer? (Consider extracurricular activities, clubs, and jobs.)
- Am I a leader, self-starter, or manager? What evidence can I offer?
- Do I speak, write, or understand another language?

Assessing your skills and experience prepares you to write a persuasive résumé.

- Do I learn quickly? Am I creative? How can I demonstrate these characteristics?
- Do I communicate well in speech and in writing? How can I verify these talents?

12.1c Explore Career Opportunities

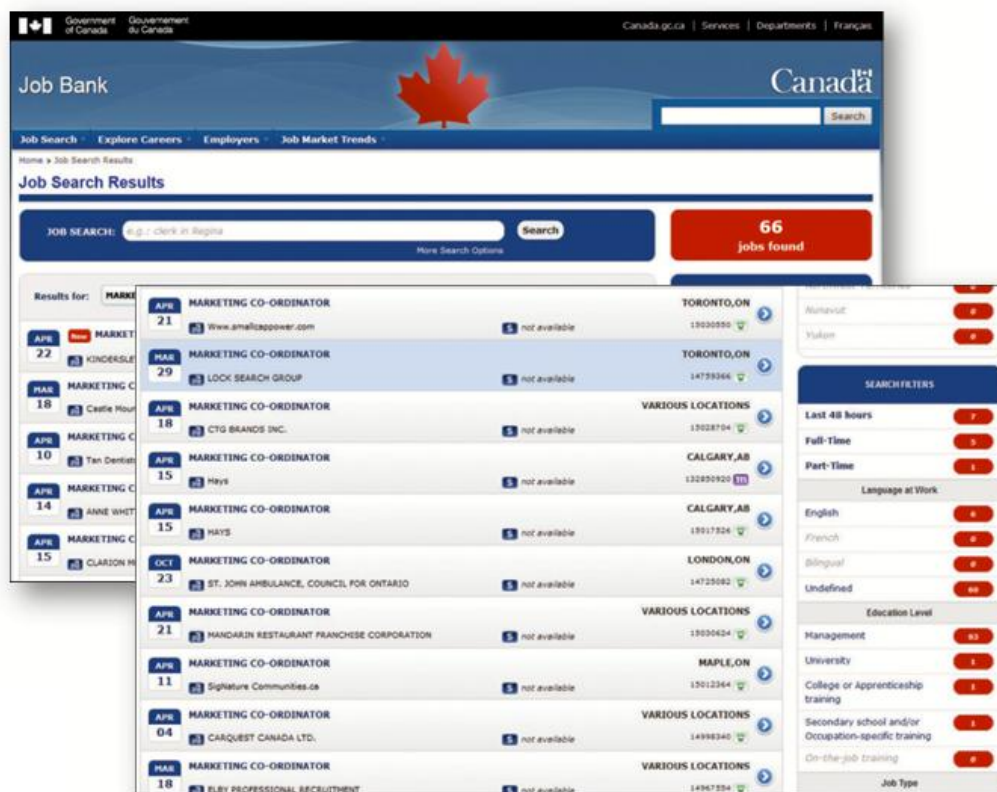
Today's job market is vastly different from that of a decade or two ago. As a result of job trends and personal choices, the average Canadian can expect to change careers at least three times and change jobs at least seven times in a lifetime. As a student, you may not have yet settled on your first career choice; or you may be embarking on a second or perhaps third career. Although you may be changing jobs in the future, you still need to train for a specific career area now. When choosing an area, you'll make the best decisions if you can match your interests and qualifications with the requirements of specific careers. But where can you find career information? Here are some suggestions:

Career information can be obtained at school career centres and libraries, from the Internet, in classified ads, and from professional organizations.

Summer and part-time jobs and internships are good opportunities to learn about different careers.

- **Visit your campus career centre.** Most centres will have literature on job search techniques, workshops on résumé and cover-letter writing, information about local job fairs, and Internet connections that allow you to investigate any field you may be interested in.
- **Search the Internet.** Many job search sites (e.g., Workopolis, Monster, and Charity Village) offer career planning information and resources. For example, Charity Village's "Tools & Resources" page includes links such as "Career Assessment Questionnaire" and "Practice Interview Questions." A sample job site list of opportunities is shown in Figure 12.2.
- **Use your library.** Consult the latest edition of the Index of Occupational Titles and the Canadian government's National Occupational Classification (<http://noc.esdc.gc.ca/English/home.aspx>) for information about career duties, qualifications, salaries, and employment trends.
- **Take a summer job, internship, or part-time position in your field.** Nothing is better than trying out a career by actually working in it or in a similar area. Many companies offer internships, or may be open to you creating your own internship via networking. They may also offer temporary jobs to begin training students and to develop relationships with them (e.g., Walmart hires thousands of holiday-season workers—a possible entry to a retail management career). These relationships sometimes blossom into permanent positions.
- **Volunteer with a nonprofit organization.** Many colleges and universities encourage service learning opportunities. In volunteering their services to nonprofit organizations in their city or town, students gain valuable experience. Nonprofits, in turn, appreciate the expertise and fresh ideas that students bring and are often happy to provide free training.
- **Interview someone in your chosen field.** People are usually flattered when asked to describe their careers. Once you've settled on your intended career or sector, use LinkedIn and Google to find names of leaders within organizations. Then, send a polite email or voice mail in which you request an informational interview. In the interview, politely inquire about needed skills, required courses, financial and other rewards, benefits, working conditions, future trends, and entry requirements.
- **Monitor job ads.** Early in your postsecondary education career, begin monitoring company websites for job listings. Check job availability, qualifications sought, duties, and salary range. Don't wait until you're about to graduate to see how the job market looks.
- **Join professional organizations in your field.** Organizations like the Canadian Marketing Association (CMA) and the Human Resources Professionals Association (HRPA) are fantastic places to find out about your intended career. Frequently, these organizations offer student membership status and reduced rates for conferences and workshops. You'll get inside information on issues, career news, and possible jobs, as well as the opportunity to meet people who are working in the field you've identified as your future goal.

FIGURE 12.2 | Typical Job Site



Source: Government of Canada Job Bank search results

URL: http://www.jobbank.gc.ca/job_search_results.do?sessionId=70B1BC28180A2852A768194992CF7B49.imnav?searchstring=Canada&button.submit=Search

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12.2 Searching for Jobs in the Open and Hidden Markets

Another significant change in the workplace involves the way we find jobs. Prior to the early 2000s, a job seeker browsed the local newspaper's classified ads, found a likely sounding job listing, prepared a résumé on paper, and sent it out by mail (and later by fax). Today, searching for a job online has become a common, but not always fruitful, approach. With all the publicity given to Internet employment sites, you might think that online job searching has totally replaced traditional methods. Not so!

Although websites such as Workopolis and Monster list millions of jobs, actually landing a job is much harder than just clicking a mouse. In addition, these job sites are facing competition from social networking sites such as LinkedIn and Facebook.¹

Both recruiters and job seekers complain about employment sites. Corporate recruiters say that the big sites can bring a flood of candidates, many of whom are not suited for the listed jobs. Workplace experts estimate that the average large corporation can be inundated with up to 2,000 résumés a day.² Job candidates grumble that listings are frequently out of date and fail to produce leads. Some

Job sites list many jobs, but finding a job online requires more work than simply clicking a mouse.

career advisers call these sites “black holes”³ into which résumés vanish without a trace. Some applicants worry about the privacy of information posted at big sites.

All that said, experts in source of hire (i.e., the study of where and how new hires come about) say that although internal referrals are still the greatest source of hires at about 25 percent, employment sites account for just under 20 percent.⁴ Clearly, a successful job search will come about through a combination of networking with people who already work inside companies, searching employment sites, and searching career sites on company and organization websites.

12.2a Use Leading “Open Market” Employment Sites

Whether or not you end up landing an interview from a referral, corporate site, or employment site, you should definitely learn to use employment sites (if you haven’t already!) to gather job search information, such as résumé, interviewing, and salary tips. These sites can inform you about the kinds of jobs that are available, the skill sets required, and the current vocabulary of both job searching and the area you’re looking in. Start your search at a few of the best-known online job sites:

- **Workopolis (www.workopolis.com).** Workopolis is probably Canada’s leading employment site. It includes thousands of jobs in all major industries. A useful feature on this site is a separate area for Student Jobs, as well as the blog-style “Latest News and Advice” area that offers timely advice and stories about issues in job search. Take some time to learn how to navigate Workopolis if you’ve not already done so—everyone else has!
- **Monster (www.monster.ca).** Monster is similar to Workopolis, but its website is not as effectively designed. Like Workopolis it includes thousands of jobs in all major industries. A differentiator between Monster and Workopolis is that Monster allows you, via Facebook, to access instant, real-time career counselling.
- **Charity Village (www.charityvillage.com).** Charity Village advertises jobs solely in the nonprofit sector. Sometimes overlooked by students and graduates, this site offers a wealth of opportunities in traditional business areas such as accounting, finance, customer service, and marketing.
- **Other employment sites.** If you Google “Canadian employment sites,” you’ll get a number of interesting hits. For example, Indeed and Eluta have simple interfaces. You may also try a more specific search in Google, such as “Hospitality Jobs Canada.” The first hit is Hcareers (www.hcareers.ca), a reputable employment site exclusively targeted to jobs in the hospitality, tourism, and leisure industry. From this site you can also link to job boards in the public service, federally and provincially.

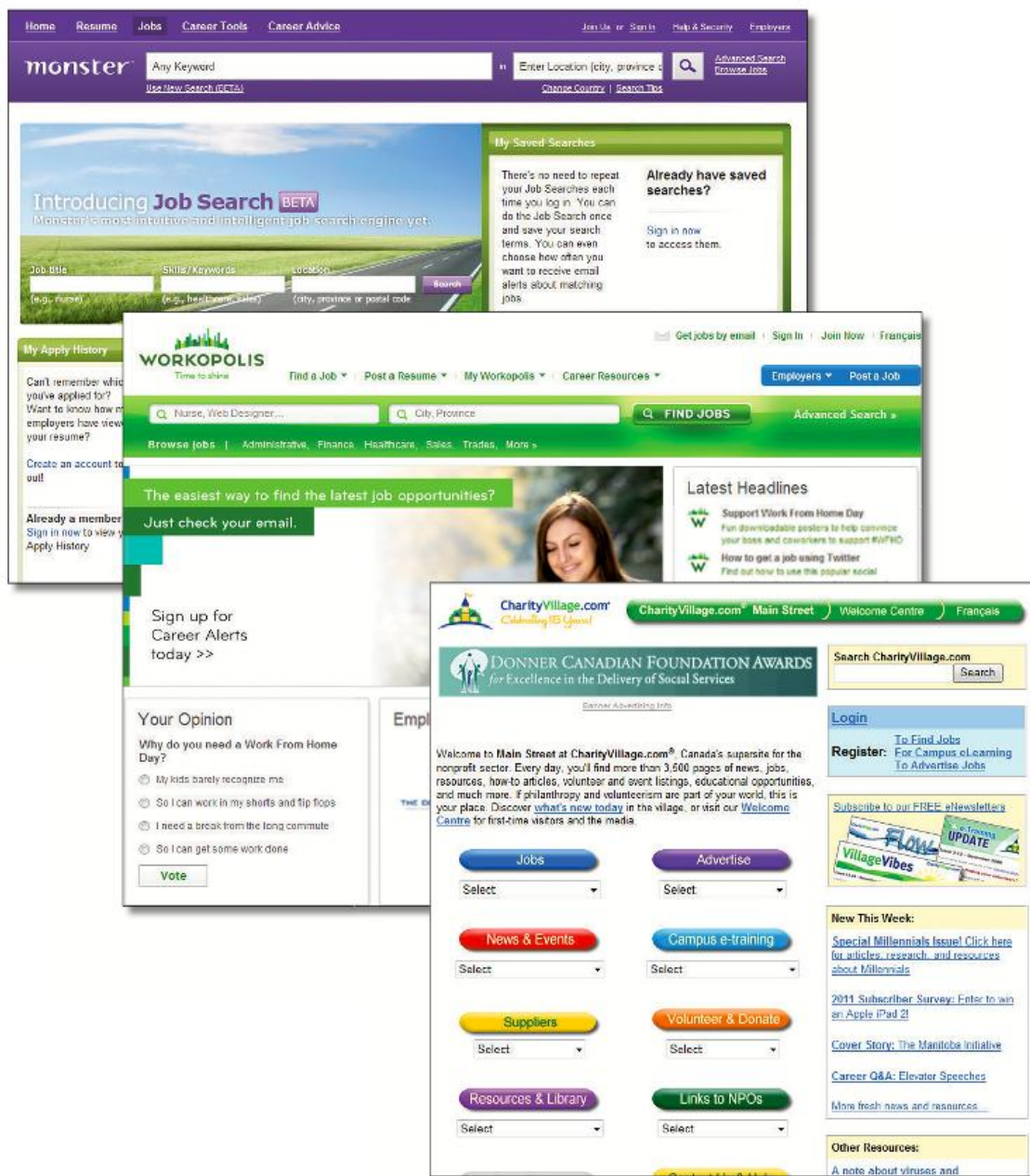
Job prospects may be more promising at the websites of corporations, professional associations, employers’ organizations, niche fields, and, most recently, professional networking sites.

12.2b Go Beyond the Big Employment Sites

As the source-of-hire study cited above shows, savvy candidates also know how to use the Internet to search for jobs at sites such as the following:

- **Company sites.** Next to internal referrals, probably the best way to find a job online is at a company’s own website. Usually jobs are found at a link with the name “Employment” or “Careers” or “Work for us.” One poll found that 70 percent of job seekers felt they were more likely to obtain an interview if they posted their résumés on company sites. In addition to finding a more direct route to decision makers, job seekers thought that they could keep their job searches more private at corporate websites than at big job board sites.⁵
- **Association websites.** Online job listings have proved to be the single most popular feature of many professional organizations such as the Canadian Apparel Federation. If you go to the association’s website at www.apparel.ca you’ll see that one of the six squares on the home page is the job board. Clicking on this link takes you to a job board with positions in apparel (clothing) companies across the country. Even if you have no interest in a career in apparel, why not try a search

FIGURE 12.3 | Three Leading “Open Market” Employment Sites



© Monster / © Workopolis / © CharityVillage Ltd.

for your geographical area and see what jobs exist? You may be surprised. To find a list of several trade associations in Canada, go to the Government of Canada's site on this topic, at www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/ccc_bt-rec_ec.nsf/eng/h_00001.html. You can also enter a job category plus the words “association” and “Canada” and see what comes up, for example “film editor” and “association.” Sometimes job boards at association sites are open only to fee-paying members, and you'll have to decide whether it's a good idea to join your target association, perhaps as a student member.

12.2c Use LinkedIn and Other Social Networking Sites

LinkedIn continues to dominate the world of job searching and recruiting. In a recent poll of 1,843 staffing professionals, 97 percent said they used LinkedIn as a recruiting tool.⁶ At LinkedIn, job seekers can search for job openings directly, and they can also follow companies for the latest news and current job openings. (You will learn more about using LinkedIn in the next section on networking.) Beyond LinkedIn, other social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter also advertise job openings and recruit potential employees. Because organizations may post open jobs to their Facebook or Twitter pages prior to advertising them elsewhere, you might gain a head start on submitting an application by following them on these sites.

When posting job-search information online, it's natural to want to put your best foot forward and openly share information that will get you a job. The challenge is striking a balance between supplying enough information and protecting your privacy.

A traditional job search campaign might include checking classified ads and announcements in professional publications, contacting companies, and developing a network of contacts.

Thousands of employment sites listing millions of jobs now flood the Internet. The sobering reality, however, is that landing a job still depends largely on personal contacts. Stanford University sociologist Mark Granovetter found that 70 percent of jobs are discovered through networking.⁷ Job-search consultant Debra Feldman concurs: "More important than what you know is who knows what you know. Make sure you are on the radar of people who have access to the kind of job leads you want."⁸

12.2d Network to Find "Hidden Market" Opportunities

The most successful job candidates try to transform themselves from unknown into known quantities through networking. More jobs today are found through referrals and person-to-person contacts than through any other method. That's because people trust what they know. Therefore, your goal is to become known to a large network of people, and this means going beyond close friends.

BUILD A PERSONAL NETWORK. Building a personal network involves meeting people you don't yet know and talking to them about your respective fields or industries so that you can gain information and locate possible job vacancies. Not only are many jobs never advertised, but some positions aren't even contemplated until the right person appears. One recent college grad underwent three interviews for a position, but the company hired someone else. After being turned down, the grad explained why he thought he was perfect for this company but perhaps in a different role. Apparently, the hiring manager agreed and decided to create a new job (in social media) because of the skills, personality, and perseverance of this determined young grad. Networking pays off, but it requires dedication. Here are three steps that will help you establish your own network:

- **Step 1. Develop a contact list.** Make a list of anyone who would be willing to talk with you about finding a job, including teachers, coworkers, former teachers and employers, neighbours, family members and their friends. Even if you haven't talked with people in years, reach out to them in person or online. Consider asking your campus career centre for alumni willing to talk with students. Also dig into your social networking circles, which we will discuss shortly.
- **Step 2. Make contacts in person and online.** Call the people on your list or connect online. To set up a meeting in person, say, *Hi, _____. I'm looking for a job and I wonder if you could help me out. Could I come over to talk about it?* During your visit be friendly, well-organized, polite, and interested in what your contact has to say. Provide a copy of your résumé, and try to keep the conversation centred on your job search. Your goal is to get two or more

referrals. In pinpointing your request, ask, *Do you know of anyone who might have an opening for a person with my skills?* If the person does not, ask, *Do you know of anyone else who might know of someone who would?*

- **Step 3. Follow up on your referrals.** Call or contact the people on your list. You might say something like, *Hello. I'm Stacy Rivera, a friend of Jason Tilden. He suggested that I ask you for help. I'm looking for a position as a marketing trainee, and he thought you might be willing to spare a few minutes and steer me in the right direction.* Don't ask for a job. During your referral interview, ask how the individual got started in this line of work, what he or she likes best (or least) about the work, what career paths exist in the field, and what problems must be overcome by a newcomer. Most important, ask how a person with your background and skills might get started in the field. Send an informal thank-you note to anyone who helps you in your job search, and stay in touch with the most promising people. Ask whether you could stay in contact every three weeks or so during your job search.

USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO NETWORK. Job searchers have a powerful new tool at their disposal: social media networks. These networks not only keep you in touch with friends but also function beautifully in a job search. If you just send out your résumé blindly, chances are good that not much will happen. However, if you have a referral, your chances of getting a job multiply. Today's expansion of online networks results in an additional path to developing coveted referrals.

If you are looking for a job, LinkedIn is the top social media site for you to use. LinkedIn is where you can let recruiters know of your talents and where you begin your professional networking, as illustrated in Figure 12.4. For hiring managers to find your LinkedIn profile, however, you may need to customize your URL, which is the address of your page. To drive your name to the top of a Google search, advises career coach Susan Adams, scroll down to the LinkedIn "public profile" on your profile page, and edit the URL. Try your first and last name and then your last name and first name, and then add a middle initial, if necessary. Test a variety of combinations with punctuation and spacing until the combination leads directly to your profile.⁹

In writing your LinkedIn career summary, use keywords and phrases that might appear in job descriptions. Include quantifiable achievements and specifics that reveal your skills. You can borrow most of this from your résumé. In the Work Experience and Education fields, include all of your experience, not just your current position. For the Recommendations section, encourage instructors and employers to recommend you. Having more recommendations in your profile makes you look more credible, trustworthy, and reliable.

One of the best ways to use LinkedIn is to search for a company in which you are interested. Try to find company employees who are connected to other people you know. Then use that contact as a referral when you apply. You can also send an email to everyone in your LinkedIn network asking for help or for people they could put you in touch with. Don't be afraid to ask an online contact for advice on getting started in a career and for suggestions to help a newcomer break into that career. Another excellent way to use a contact is to ask that person to look at your résumé and help you tweak it. Like Facebook, LinkedIn has status updates, and it's a good idea to update yours regularly so that your connections know what is happening in your career search.

Employers often use social media sites to check the online presence of a candidate. In fact, one report claimed that 91 percent of recruiters check Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn to filter out applicants.¹⁰ Make sure your social networking accounts represent you professionally. You can make it easy for your potential employer to learn more about you by including an informative bio in your Twitter or Facebook profile that has a link to your LinkedIn profile. You can also make

yourself more discoverable by posting thoughtful blog posts and tweets on topics related to your career goal.

12.2e Building a Personal Brand

A large part of your job-search strategy involves seeing yourself as a brand. You may be thinking, *Who me? A brand?* Yes, absolutely! Even college grads should seriously consider branding because finding a job today is tough. Before you get into the thick of the job hunt, focus on developing your brand so that you know what you want to emphasize.

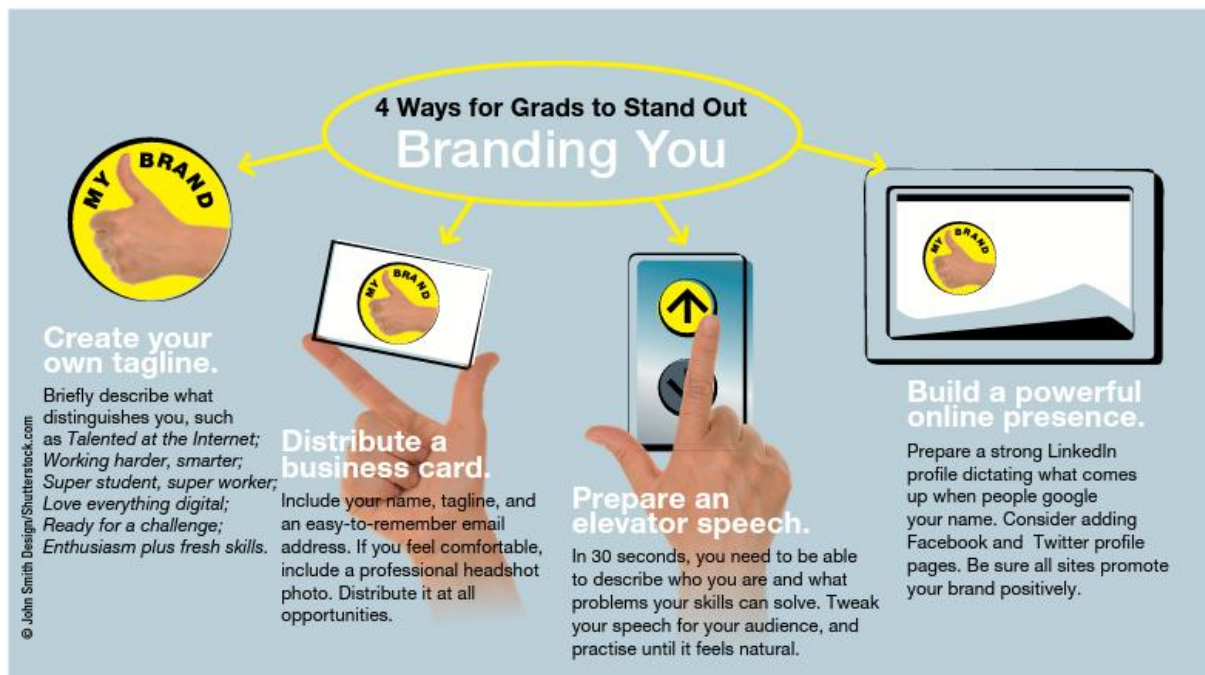
Personal branding involves deciding what makes you special and desirable in the job market. What is your unique selling point? What special skill set makes you stand out among all job applicants? What would your instructors or employers say is your greatest strength? Think about your intended audience. What are you promoting about yourself?

Try to come up with a tagline that describes what you do and who you are. Ask yourself questions such as these: Do you follow through with every promise? Are you a fast learner? Hardworking? What can you take credit for? It's OK to shed a little modesty and strut your stuff. However, do keep your tagline simple, short, and truthful so that it's easy to remember. See Figure 12.4 for some sample taglines appropriate for new grads.

Once you have a tagline, prepare a professional-looking business card with your name and tagline. Include an easy-to-remember email address such as *firstname.lastname@domain.com*.

Now that you have your tagline and business card, work on an elevator speech. This is a pitch that you can give in 30 seconds or less describing who you are and what you can offer, in case you bump into someone who's in a position to hire or recommend you. Tweak your speech for your audience, and practise until you can say it naturally.

FIGURE 12.4 | Branding Yourself to Land a Job



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12.3 Creating Persuasive Résumés

After reviewing employment ads, you can begin writing a persuasive résumé. This document does more than merely list your qualifications; it packages your assets into a convincing advertisement that sells you for a specific job. The goal of a persuasive résumé is to get an interview. Even if you are not in the job market at this moment, preparing a résumé has advantages. Having a current résumé makes you look well-organized and professional should an unexpected employment opportunity arise. Moreover, preparing a résumé early can help you recognize weak areas and give you time to bolster your credentials.

12.3a Choose a Résumé Style

Your qualifications and career goal will help you choose between two basic résumé styles: chronological or functional.

CHRONOLOGICAL. Most popular with recruiters is the chronological résumé, shown in Figure 12.8 (p. 287). It lists work history job by job, starting with the most recent position (i.e., starting in the present and working back to older jobs). Recruiters are familiar with the chronological résumé, and as many as three quarters of them prefer to see a candidate's résumé in this format.¹¹ The chronological style works well for candidates who have experience in their field of employment and for those who show steady career growth. It's also the most honest form: it clearly shows what your work experience includes. Some students or new Canadians who lack extensive local experience may want to try the functional format, which is described below.

Chronological résumés
focus on past employment;
functional résumés
focus on skills.

FUNCTIONAL. The functional résumé, shown in Figure 12.9 (p. 288), focuses attention on a candidate's skills rather than on past employment. Like a chronological résumé, the functional résumé begins with the candidate's name, address, telephone number, job objective, and education. Instead of listing jobs, though, the functional résumé lists skills and accomplishments, such as *Supervisory and Management Skills* or *Retail and Customer Service Experience*. This résumé style highlights accomplishments and can de-emphasize a negative or negligible employment history. People who have changed jobs frequently or who have gaps in their employment history may prefer the functional résumé. Be aware, though, that online employment sites may insist on chronological format. In addition, some recruiters may be suspicious of functional résumés, thinking the candidate is hiding something.

Although the functional résumé of Kevin Touhy shown in Figure 12.9 (p. 288) concentrates on skills, it does include a short employment section because he recognizes that recruiters expect it. Notice that Kevin breaks his skills into three categories. An easier method is to make one large list, perhaps with a title such as *Areas of Accomplishment*, *Summary of Qualifications*, or *Areas of Expertise and Ability*.

12.3b Decide on Length

Conventional wisdom has always held that recruiters prefer one-page résumés. A controlled study of 570 recruiters, however, revealed that while they *claimed* they preferred one-page résumés, they actually *chose* to interview the applicants with two-page résumés.¹² Recruiters who are serious about candidates often prefer a fuller picture with the kind of details that can be provided in a two-page résumé. On the other hand, recruiters are extremely busy, and concise résumés help speed up their work.

Recruiters often choose
to interview candidates
with longer résumés.

Perhaps the best advice is to make your résumé as long as needed to sell your skills to recruiters and hiring managers. Individuals with more experience will naturally have longer résumés. Those with fewer than ten years of experience, those making a major career change, and those who have had only one or two employers

The parts of a résumé should be arranged with the most important qualifications first.

will likely have a one-page résumé. Finally, some senior-level managers and executives with a lengthy history of major accomplishments might have a résumé that is three pages or longer.¹³ A recent survey by a global staffing firm found that 61 percent of hiring managers now prefer to receive two-page résumés from experienced candidates for management jobs; 31 percent stated that they would accept three pages. Even applicants for low-level staff jobs may opt for two pages, 44 percent of recruiters said.¹⁴

12.3c Organize Your Information Under Headings

A résumé emphasizes skills and achievements aimed at a particular job or company. It shows a candidate's most important qualifications first, and it de-emphasizes any weaknesses. In organizing your information, try to create as few headings as possible; more than six generally looks cluttered. No two résumés are ever exactly alike, but job applicants usually include information under all or some of these headings: career objective; summary of qualifications; education; experience; capabilities and skills; awards and activities; personal information; and references. Besides these headings, a résumé always begins with a main heading.

MAIN HEADING. Keep the main heading of your résumé as uncluttered as possible. (Don't include the word *résumé* or CV; it's like putting the word *email* in the subject line of an email; i.e., it's redundant.) Begin with your name, add your middle initial for a professional look, and format it so that it stands out on the page. Following your name, list your contact information, including your complete address, area code and phone number (voice mail enabled), and email address. Some candidates now add links to their LinkedIn page or to a video résumé they've posted on a site like YouTube. If you do this, make sure these links lead to professional-looking and professional-sounding sites.

The recorded message at the phone number you list should be in your voice, mention your full name, and be concise and professional (e.g., "Thanks for your call. You've reached Casey Jepson. Please leave a message after the beep. I'll reply shortly."). If you are expecting an important recruiting call on your cellphone, pick up only when you are in a quiet environment and can concentrate.

Make sure your email address sounds professional instead of something like *1foxylady@yahoo.com* or *hotdaddy@gmail.com*. Also be sure that you are using a personal email address. Putting your work email address on your résumé announces to prospective employers that you are using your current employer's resources to look for another job. See Figure 12.8 (p. 287) for an example of an effective main heading.

CAREER OBJECTIVE. Career objectives make the recruiter's life easier by quickly classifying the résumé. But such declarations may also disqualify a candidate if the stated objective doesn't match a company's job description.¹⁵ A well-written objective customized for the job opening can add value to a résumé.

Your objective should focus on the employer's needs. Therefore, it should be written from the employer's perspective, not your own. Focus on how you can contribute to the organization, not on what the organization can do for you.

Ineffective: To obtain a meaningful and rewarding position that enables me to learn more about the graphic design field and allows for advancement.

Effective: Position with advertising firm designing websites, publications, logos, and promotional displays for clients, where creativity, software knowledge, and proven communication skills can be used to build client base and expand operations.

Also be careful that your career objective doesn't downplay your talents. For example, some consultants warn against using the words *entry level* in your objective,

Career objectives are most appropriate for specific, targeted positions, but they may limit a broader job search.

as they emphasize lack of experience or show poor self-confidence. Finally, your objective should be concise. Try to limit your objective to no more than two or three lines. Avoid using complete sentences and the pronoun “I.” A good example of a career objective can be found in Figure 12.9 (p. 288).

If you choose to omit the career objective, be sure to discuss your objectives and goals in your cover letter. Savvy job seekers are also incorporating their objectives into a summary of qualifications, which is discussed next.

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS. “The biggest change in résumés over the last decade has been a switch from an objective to a summary at the top,” says career expert Wendy Enelow.¹⁶ Recruiters are busy, and smart job seekers add a summary of qualifications to their résumés to save the time of recruiters and hiring managers. Once a job is advertised, a hiring manager may get hundreds or even thousands of résumés in response. A summary at the top of your résumé makes it easier to read and ensures that a recruiter, who may be skimming résumés quickly, does not overlook your most impressive qualifications. A well-written summary motivates the recruiter to read further.

A summary of qualifications will include three to eight bulleted statements that prove you are the ideal candidate for the position. When formulating these statements, consider your experience in the field, your education, your unique skills, awards you have won, certifications, and any other accomplishments that you want to highlight. Include quantifiable accomplishments wherever possible (e.g., *Over five years’ experience in...*). Target the most important qualifications an employer will be looking for in the person hired for this position. Examples of summaries of qualifications appear in Figures 12.8 (p. 287) and 12.9 (p. 288).

EDUCATION. The next component in a chronological résumé is your education—if it is more noteworthy than your work experience. In this section you should include the name and location of schools, dates of attendance, major fields of study, and certifications received (e.g., diplomas, degrees). Once you have attended college, you don’t need to list high-school information on your résumé.

Although some hiring managers may think that applicants are hiding something if they omit a poor record of grades, others suggest leaving out a poor GPA. Instead, they advise that students try to excel in internships, show extracurricular leadership, and target smaller, lesser-known companies to offset low grades.

Refer to courses only if you can relate them to the position sought. When relevant, include certificates earned, seminars attended, workshops completed, and honours earned. If your education is incomplete, include such statements as *BBA degree expected May 2018*. Title this section *Education*, *Academic Preparation*, or *Professional Training*. If you are preparing a functional résumé, you will probably put the education section below your skills summaries, as Kevin Touhy has done in Figure 12.9 (p. 288).

WORK EXPERIENCE OR EMPLOYMENT HISTORY. If your work experience is significant and relevant to the position sought, this information should appear before your education information. List your most recent employment first and work backwards, including only those jobs that you think will help you win the targeted position. A job application form may demand a full employment history, but your résumé may be selective. Be aware, though, that time gaps in your employment history will probably be questioned in the interview. For each position show the following:

- Employer’s name, city/town, and province
- Dates of employment (month and year)
- Most important job title
- Significant duties, activities, accomplishments, and promotions

Describe your employment achievements concisely but concretely to make what résumé consultants call a strong “value proposition.” Avoid generalities by striving to be more specific.

A summary of qualifications section presents your most impressive accomplishments and qualifications in one concise bulleted list.

The education section shows degrees and grades but does not list all courses a job applicant has taken.

The work experience section of a résumé should list specifics and quantify achievements.

Ineffective: *Worked with customers.*

Effective: *Served 40 or more retail customers a day; Successfully resolved problems about custom stationery orders; or Acted as intermediary among customers, printers, and suppliers.*

Whenever possible, quantify your accomplishments instead of making them sound vague.

Ineffective: *Did equipment study; or Was successful in sales.*

Effective: *Conducted study of equipment needs of 100 small businesses in Hamilton, ON; or Personally generated orders for sales of \$90,000 annually.*

Professional recruiters routinely report that if they don't spot quantifiable results in the first 10 seconds of reading your résumé, they will move on to the next one.

Your employment achievements and job duties will be easier to read if you place them in a bulleted list. Don't try to list every single thing you have done on the job; instead, customize your information so that it relates to the target job. Ensure your list of job duties shows what you have to contribute and how you are qualified for the position you are applying for. Don't make your bullet points complete sentences, and avoid using personal pronouns (*I, me, my*) in them. If you have performed a lot of the same duties for multiple employers, you don't have to repeat them.

In addition to technical skills, employers seek individuals with developed soft skills. This means you will want to select work experiences and achievements that illustrate your initiative, dependability, responsibility, problem solving, flexibility, creativity, leadership, and interpersonal communication strengths. One soft skill employers repeatedly ask for is people who can work together in teams.

Ineffective: *Worked effectively in teams.*

Effective: *Collaborated with interdepartmental five-person team to develop ten-page handbook for temporary workers.*

Statements describing your work experience can be made forceful and persuasive by using action verbs, such as those listed in Figure 12.5 and illustrated in Figure 12.6.

FIGURE 12.5 | Action Verbs to Strengthen a Résumé

COMMUNICATION SKILLS	TEAMWORK, SUPERVISION SKILLS	MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP SKILLS	RESEARCH SKILLS	CLERICAL, DETAIL SKILLS	CREATIVE SKILLS
clarified	advised	analyzed	assessed	activated	acted
collaborated	coordinated	authorized	collected	approved	conceptualized
explained	demonstrated	coordinated	critiqued	classified	designed
interpreted	developed	directed	diagnosed	edited	fashioned
integrated	evaluated	headed	formulated	generated	founded
persuaded	expedited	implemented	gathered	maintained	illustrated
promoted	facilitated	improved	interpreted	monitored	integrated
resolved	guided	increased	investigated	proofread	invented
summarized	motivated	organized	reviewed	recorded	originated
translated	set goals	scheduled	studied	streamlined	revitalized
wrote	trained	strengthened	systematized	updated	shaped

FIGURE 12.6 | Action Verbs to Quantify Achievements

Identified weaknesses in internships and **researched** five alternate programs
Reduced delivery delays by an average of three days per order
Streamlined filing system, reducing 400-item backlog to zero
Organized holiday awards program for 1,200 attendees and 140 workers
Designed customer feedback form for company website
Represented 2,500 students on committee involving university policies and procedures
Calculated shipping charges for overseas deliveries and **recommended** most economical rates
Managed 24-station computer network linking data in three departments
Distributed and **explained** voter registration forms to over 500 prospective voters
Praised by top management for enthusiastic teamwork and achievement
Secured national recognition from Tree Canada for tree project

CAPABILITIES AND SKILLS. Recruiters want to know specifically what you can do for their companies. Therefore, list your skills, including your abilities with any special Internet, mobile app, software, office equipment, and communication technology tools.

Ineffective: *Have payroll experience.*

Effective: *Proficient/competent/experienced in preparing federal, provincial, and local payroll tax returns as well as franchise and personal property tax returns.*

If you can speak a foreign language or use sign language, include it on your résumé. Describe proficiencies you have acquired through training and experience.

Ineffective: *Trained in computer graphics.*

Effective: *Certified in Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator and Web design through an intensive 350-hour classroom program.*

You will also want to highlight exceptional aptitudes, such as working well under stress, learning computer programs quickly, and interacting with customers. If possible, provide details and evidence that back up your assertions; for example, *Led Conflict Resolution workshop through staff development department on 10 occasions for over 200 employees.* For recent graduates, this section can be used to give recruiters evidence of your potential. Instead of *Capabilities*, the section might be called *Skills and Abilities*.

Those job hunters preparing a functional résumé will place more focus on skills than on any other section. A well-written functional résumé groups skills into categories such as *Accounting/Finance Skills*, *Management/Leadership Skills*, *Communication/Teamwork Skills*, and *Computer/Technology Skills*. Each skills category includes a bulleted list of achievements and experience that demonstrate the skill, including specific quantifiable amounts (e.g., *20 seminars*) whenever possible. These skills categories should be placed at the beginning of the résumé where they will be highlighted, followed by education and work experience. The action verbs shown in Figures 12.5 and 12.6 can also be used when constructing a functional résumé.

AWARDS, HONOURS, AND ACTIVITIES. If you have three or more awards or honours, highlight them by listing them under a separate heading. If not, put them with *Activities* or in the *Education* or *Work Experience* section if appropriate. Include awards, scholarships (financial and other), fellowships, dean's list, sports or other team affiliations, and so on.

Emphasize the skills and aptitudes that prove you are qualified for a specific position.

Awards, honours, and activities are appropriate for the résumé.

Ineffective: *Recipient of King Scholarship*

Effective: *Recipient of King Scholarship given by Macdonald College to outstanding graduates who combine academic excellence and extracurricular activities.*

It's also appropriate to include school, community, volunteer, and professional activities. Employers are interested in evidence that you are a well-rounded person. This section provides an opportunity to demonstrate leadership and soft skills. Strive to use specific action statements.

Omit personal data not related to job qualifications.

Ineffective: *Treasurer of business club*

Effective: *Collected dues, kept financial records, and paid bills while serving as treasurer of 35-member business management club.*

PERSONAL DATA. Résumés omit personal data, such as birthdate, marital status, or national origin. Such information doesn't relate to occupational qualifications, and recruiters are legally barred from asking for such information. Some job seekers do, however, include hobbies or interests (such as skiing or photography) that might grab the recruiter's attention or serve as conversation starters. You could also indicate your willingness to travel or to relocate, since many companies will be interested.

REFERENCES. Recruiters prefer that you bring to the interview a list of individuals willing to discuss your qualifications. Therefore, you should prepare a separate list, such as that in Figure 12.7, when you begin your job search. Ask three of your professors, your current employer or previous employers, colleagues, or other

FIGURE 12.7 | Sample Reference List

Casey J. Jenson
201-1300 John A. Macdonald Blvd.
Kingston, ON K3E 4A5

Home: (613) 555-1926 Cell: (613) 555-8876 Email: cjenson78@gmail.com

Mr. Jeff Schmitz
Branch Manager, TD Canada Trust
940 Sydenham Rd.
Kingston, ON K1A 2H0
(613) 555-1172
jschmitz@tdcanadatrust.ca

Mr. Sandra Ostheimer
Communication Professor
St. Lawrence College
12 Portsmouth Rd.
Kingston, ON K2B 4R4
(613) 555-8009
sostheim@stlawrence.ca

Ms. Susan Winder
Manager, Sears
855 Gardiners Rd.
Kingston, ON K7K 6P8
(613) 555-4335

Prints reference list with name that matches name on résumé

Lists professional, not personal, references

Lists only people who have given permission

Uses parallel form for all entries

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professional contacts whether they would be willing to answer inquiries regarding your qualifications for employment. Be sure to provide them with an opportunity to refuse. No reference at all is better than a negative one.

Do not include personal references, such as friends, family, or neighbours, because recruiters will rarely consult them. One final note: most recruiters see little reason to include the statement *References available upon request* at the end of your résumé. It is unnecessary and takes up precious space.

In Figures 12.8 and 12.9, you will find models corresponding to the two main résumé types. Notice as you study the models that the chronological résumé (Figure 12.8) is for a current student with only one type of experience; the functional résumé (Figure 12.9) is for a recent graduate with largely unrelated work experience; and the third combination-style résumé (Figure 12.10) is for a graduate with significant related experience following her postsecondary education. Use the appropriate model to help you organize the content and format of your own persuasive résumé.

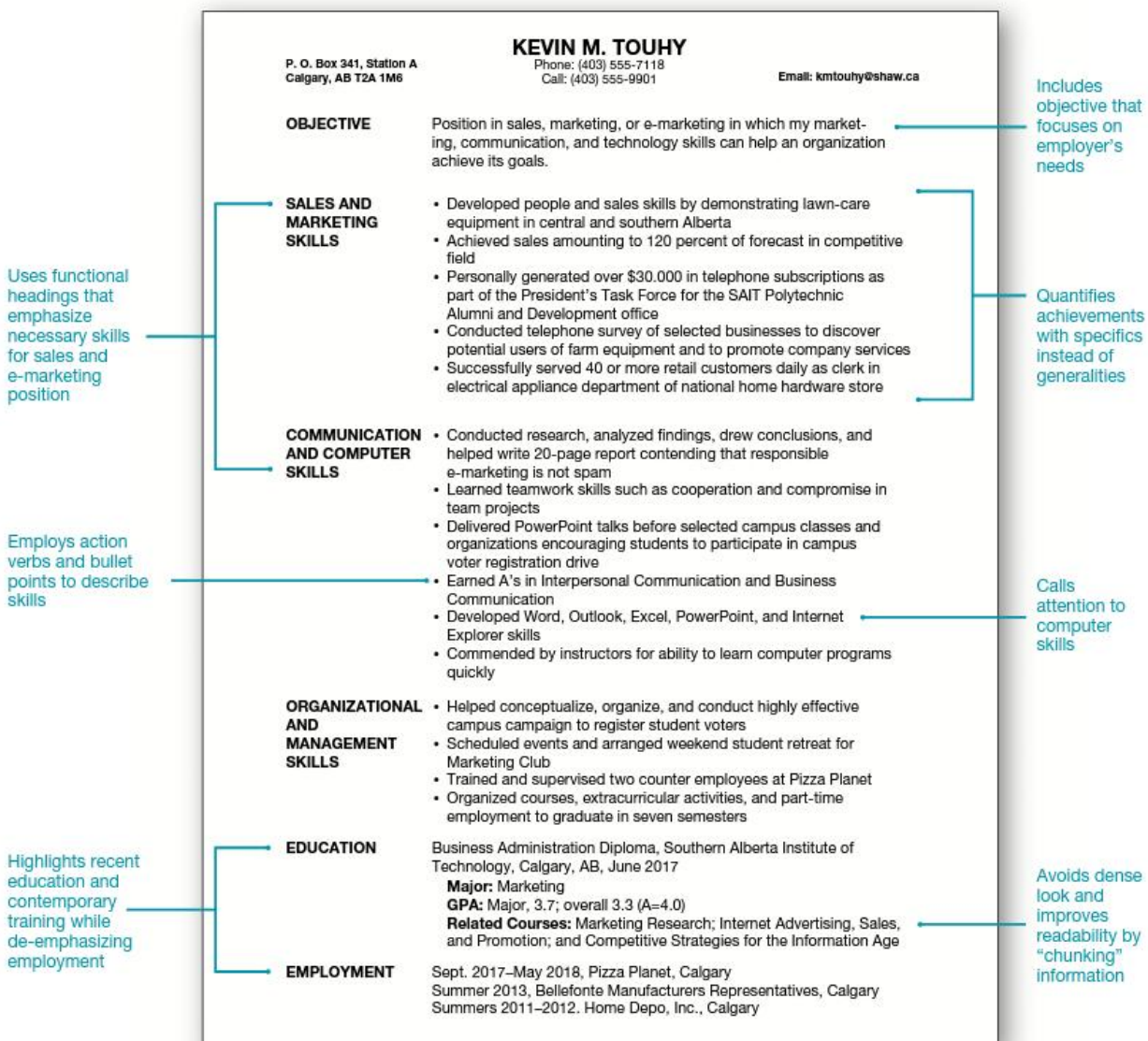
References are unnecessary for the résumé, but they should be available for the interview.

FIGURE 12.8 | Chronological Résumé: Current Student

Casey J. Jepson 201-1300 John A. Macdonald Blvd. Kingston, ON K3E 4A5 Phone: 613-555-8876 Email: cjepson82@gmail.com http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a2L8DHECtNj	
SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS	- Over two years' experience in customer service positions in major organizations - Excellent customer service skills including oral communication, listening, and written communication - Proven teamwork and interpersonal skills including leadership, cooperation, and on-time delivery - Mastery of computer skills (MOS certification) - Strengths in research, proofreading, coaching, and math
EXPERIENCE	Customer Service Representative, Co-op placement St. Lawrence College, Kingston, ON September 2015 - present - Provide friendly, helpful service via face-to-face, phone, email, and messaging channels at a large urban college - File weekly incident/outlier reports - Work effectively in team of 15-20 co-op students and fulltime CSRs Front Desk Representative, part-time TD Canada Trust, Kingston, ON May 2013-June 2014 - Provide friendly, helpful face-to-face service at busy urban bank branch - Replace lost and stolen credit and debit cards for clients - Liaise with branch manager and tellers to increase branch profitability Customer Associate, part-time Sears, Kingston, ON May 2012-June 2012; December 2012 - Manage busy cash desk in women's clothing department - Provide friendly, helpful face-to-face answers to customer queries
EDUCATION	St. Lawrence College, Kingston, ON Major: Retail Management Advanced Diploma Graduation expected June 2016 Current average: A-
ACTIVITIES AND AWARDS	- Member of St. Lawrence Enactus team - Nominated for SLC Ambassador Award (recognizes outstanding students for excellence in and out of classroom) - Volunteer leader at annual student orientation (2014 & 2015)

Includes URL of a video résumé posted on YouTube

FIGURE 12.9 | Functional Résumé: Recent College Graduate With Unrelated Part-Time Experience



Recent graduate Kevin Touhy chose this functional format to de-emphasize his meagre work experience and emphasize his potential in sales and marketing. This version of his résumé is more generic than one targeted for a specific position. Nevertheless, it emphasizes his strong points with specific achievements and includes an employment section to satisfy recruiters. The functional format presents ability-focused topics. It illustrates what the job seeker can do for the employer instead of narrating a history of previous jobs. Although recruiters prefer chronological résumés, the functional format is a good choice for new graduates, career changers, and those with employment gaps.

12.3d Online Résumé Reading Patterns

With increasing numbers of résumés being read online, it's wise for job applicants to know what researchers have found about how people read online text. Eye-tracking research reveals that people read text-based pages online in an F-shaped pattern.¹⁷ That is, they read horizontally from the top of the page, concentrating on the top third and then focusing on the left side as they read downward. This roughly corresponds to the shape of a capital F. Smart applicants will arrange the most important information in the top section of the résumé. Additional significant information should appear at the beginning of each group down the left side.

FIGURE 12.10 | Combination Résumé: University Graduate With Substantial Experience

RACHEL M. CHOWDHRY
 85 New Bedford Rd.
 Halifax, NS B2T 4T2

rchowdhry@eastlink.ca
 (902) 555-9887

OBJECTIVE Senior Financial Management Position

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

PROFESSIONAL HISTORY AND ACHIEVEMENT

- Over 12 years' comprehensive experience in the accounting industry, including over 8 years as a controller
- Chartered Accountant (CA)
- Demonstrated ability to handle all accounting functions for large, midsize, and small firms
- Ability to isolate problems, reduce expenses, and improve the bottom line, resulting in substantial cost savings
- Proven talent for interacting professionally with individuals at all levels, as demonstrated by performance review comments
- Experienced in P&L, audits, taxation, internal control, inventory management, A/P, A/R, and cash management

11/14 to present CFO
 United Plastics, Inc., Dartmouth, NS (extruder of polyethylene film for plastic aprons and gloves)

- Direct all facets of accounting and cash management for 160-employee, \$3 billion business
- Superise inventory and production data processing operations and tax compliance
- Talked owner into reducing sales prices, resulting in doubling first quarter 2009 sales
- Created cost accounting by product and pricing based on gross margin
- Increased line of credit with 12 major suppliers

1/10 to 10/14 CONTROLLER
 Burgess Inc., Moncton, NB (major manufacturer of flashlight and lantern batteries)

- Managed all accounting, cash, payroll, credit, and collection operations for 175-employee business
- Implemented a new system for cost accounting, inventory control, and accounts payable, resulting in a \$100,000 annual savings in computer operations
- Reduced staff from ten persons to five with no loss in productivity
- Successfully reduced inventory levels from \$1.1 million to \$600,000
- Helped develop new cash management system that significantly increased cash flow

8/08 to 11/09 TREASURER
 Kingston Developers, Halifax, NS (manufacturer of modular housing)

- Supervised accounts receivable/payable, cash management, payroll, insurance
- Directed monthly and year-end closings, banking relations, and product costing
- Refinanced company with long-term loan, ensuring continued operational stability
- Successfully lowered company's insurance premiums by 7 percent

Rachel M. Chowdhry

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

4/04 to 6/08 SUPERVISOR OF GENERAL ACCOUNTING
 Levin National Batteries, Dartmouth, NS (local manufacturer of flashlight batteries)

- Completed monthly and year-end closing of ledgers for \$2 million business
- Audited freight bills, acted as interdepartmental liaison, prepared financial reports

Education: Bachelor of Commerce, Dalhousie University, major: Accounting, 2001
Certification: Chartered Accountant (CA), 2002
Personal: Will travel and/or relocate

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Because Rachel has many years of experience and seeks executive-level employment, she highlighted her experience by placing it before her education. Her summary of qualifications highlighted her most impressive experience and skills. This chronological two-page résumé shows the steady progression of her career to executive positions, a movement that impresses and reassures recruiters.

12.3e Polish Your Résumé and Keep It Honest

As you continue to work on your résumé, look for ways to improve it. For example, consider consolidating headings. By condensing your information into as few headings as possible, you will produce a clean, professional-looking document. Ask yourself what graphic highlighting techniques you can use to improve readability: capitalization, underlining, indenting, and bulleting. Experiment with headings and styles to achieve a pleasing, easy-to-read message. Moreover, look for ways to eliminate wordiness. For example, instead of *Supervised two employees who worked at the counter*, try *Supervised two counter employees*.

A résumé is expected to showcase a candidate's strengths and minimize weaknesses. For this reason, recruiters expect a certain degree of self-promotion. Some résumé writers, however, step over the line that separates honest self-marketing from deceptive half-truths and flat-out lies. Distorting facts on a résumé is unethical; lying may be illegal. Most important, either practice can destroy a career. In the Communication Workshop in the MindTap, learn more about how to keep your résumé honest and the consequences of fudging the facts.

12.3f Proofread Your Résumé

After revising your résumé, you must proofread, proofread, and proofread again for spelling, grammar, mechanics, content, and format. Then have a knowledgeable friend or relative proofread it yet again. This is one document that must be perfect. Because the job market is so competitive, one typo, misspelled word, or grammatical error could eliminate you from consideration.

By now you may be thinking that you'd like to hire someone to write your résumé. Don't! First, you know yourself better than anyone else could know you. Second, you will end up with either a generic or a one-time résumé. A generic résumé in today's highly competitive job market will lose out to a customized résumé nine times out of ten. Equally useless is a one-time résumé aimed at a single job. What if you don't get that job? Because you will need to revise your résumé many times as you seek a variety of jobs, be prepared to write (and rewrite) it yourself.

12.4 Increasing Your Chances With Digital Tools

Just as digital media have changed the way candidates seek jobs, they have also changed the way employers select qualified candidates. For example, the first reader of your résumé may very well be applicant tracking system software (ATS). Estimates suggest that as many as 90 percent of large companies use these systems.¹⁸ Applicant tracking systems are favoured not only by large companies but also by job boards such as Monster to screen candidates and filter applications. You can expect to be seeing more of them with their restrictive forms and emphasis on keywords. Savvy candidates will learn to “game” the system by playing according to the ATS rules.

12.4a Get Your Résumé Selected: Maximize Keyword Hits

Job seekers can increase the probability of their résumés being selected by ATS through the words they choose. The following techniques, in addition to those cited earlier, can boost the chances of having your résumé selected:

- **Include specific keywords or keyword phrases.** Carefully study ads and job descriptions for the position you want. Describe your experience, education, and qualifications in terms associated with the job advertisement or job description for this position.
- **Focus on nouns.** Although action verbs will make your résumé appeal to a recruiter, ATS will often be looking for nouns in three categories: (a) a job title, position, or role (e.g., *accountant*, *Web developer*, *team leader*); (b) a technical

WORKPLACE IN FOCUS

A scandal in Canada's largest board of education has shone the spotlight on people who are willing to fudge the facts of their résumé. Chris Spence, ex-director of the Toronto District School Board, decided to resign once it was revealed that he had been plagiarizing (i.e., pretending the writing of other authors was his own) in an article he had written for the *Toronto Star*, in a blog he maintained after joining the school board, and most damagingly—and still the subject of an investigation by the university—in his PhD dissertation. Spence's fall from grace was documented daily in the media and he apologized publicly in a press conference as part of his resignation. *Is the temptation to take credit for work and experiences that you have not actually done worth the potential embarrassment and consequences?*



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skill or specialization (e.g., *Javascript, e-newsletter editor*); and (c) a certification, a tool used, or specific experience (e.g., *Certified Financial Analyst, experience with WordPress*).¹⁹

- **Use variations of the job title.** ATS may seek a slightly different job title from what you list. To be safe, include variations and abbreviations (e.g., *occupational therapist, certified occupational therapist*, or COTA). If you don't have experience in your targeted area, use the job title you seek in your objective.
- **Concentrate on the skills section.** A majority of keywords sought by employees relate to specialized or technical skill requirements. Therefore, be sure the skills section of your résumé is loaded with nouns that describe your skills and qualifications.
- **Skip a keyword summary.** Avoid grouping nouns in a keyword summary because recruiters may perceive them to be manipulative.²⁰

12.4b Expand Your Résumé's Appeal: Add Video

Another way of bolstering your traditional résumé and cover letter is to upload a video that profiles you and your skills to a site like YouTube or Vimeo. These video-sharing sites allow you to broadcast yourself and are incredibly powerful tools—a well-produced video résumé may open doors and secure an interview where other techniques have failed.²¹ They allow candidates to demonstrate their public speaking, interpersonal, and technical skills more impressively than they can in traditional print résumés. Both employers and applicants can save recruitment and travel costs by using video résumés. Instead of flying distant candidates to interviews, organizations can see them digitally.

However, some recruiters are skeptical about video résumés because they fear that such applications will take more time to view than paper-based résumés do. Moreover, a lack of professionalism when creating video résumés can lead to embarrassment.

People who blog and write about video résumés suggest incorporating a number of best practices. These practices include ensuring excellent video quality; taking advantage of multiple authentic locations (your desk, outside a store you once worked at, etc.); using professional language; offering something unique from a traditional résumé; editing the sound and lighting so that there are no distractions;

Study résumé models for ideas on improving your format.

OFFICE INSIDER

It sounds basic, but make sure that your résumé is free of typos and other errors. When applying by email, there is more of a tendency to rush and make careless mistakes. For many employers, this shows a lack of attention to detail and is an easy way to eliminate someone from consideration.

and limiting video length to between three and five minutes.²² Also, if you're satisfied with your video résumé, we suggest that you include a link to it in the heading of your traditional résumé, under your email address.

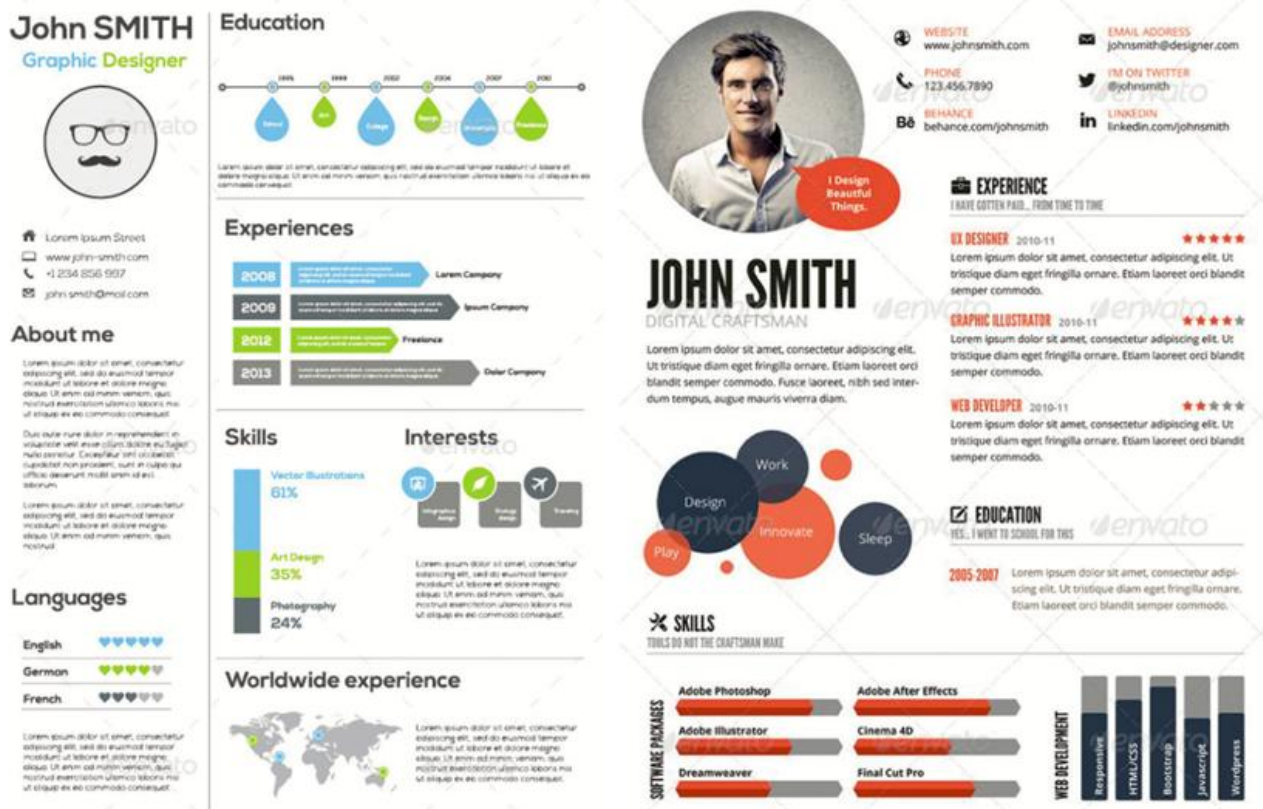
12.4c Translate Into Pictures: The Infographic Résumé

A hot trend in business is the infographic résumé. It uses colourful charts, graphics, and timelines to illustrate a candidate's work history and experience. No one could deny that an infographic résumé really stands out. "Anyone looking at it," says blogger Randy Krum, "is 650% more likely to remember it days later."²³ James Coleman, a graduating senior from the University of Saskatchewan, created an infographic résumé that secured a job. Shown in Figure 12.11, James's résumé uses a time line to track his experience and education. Colourful bubbles indicate his digital skills.

Most of us, however, are not talented enough to create professional-looking infographics. To the rescue are many companies that now offer infographic apps. Vizualize.me turns a user's LinkedIn profile information into a beautiful Web-based infographic, while Kinzaa.com lets you create a slick visual infographic-style résumé.

Will a dazzling infographic get you a job? Among hiring managers, the consensus is that infographic résumés help candidates set themselves apart, but such visual displays may not be appropriate for every kind of job.²⁴ In more traditional fields such as accounting and financial services, hiring managers want to see a standard print-based résumé. One hiring manager pointed out that traditional résumés evolved this way for a reason: they make comparison, evaluation, and selection easier for employers.²⁵

FIGURE 12.11 | Infographics: A Novel Way to Show Education, Experience, and Skills



NEL

12.4d Submitting Your Résumé

If you are responding to a job posting on a company website or a job board, be sure to read the listing carefully to make sure you know how the employer wants you to submit your résumé. Not following the prospective employer's instructions can eliminate you from consideration before your résumé is even reviewed. Employers will probably ask you to submit your résumé in one of the following ways:

- **Word document.** Recruiters will probably ask applicants to attach their résumés as Word documents to an email. Alternatively, you may be asked to upload your Word file directly onto the recruiter's site.
- **PDF document.** For the sake of safety, many hiring managers prefer PDF (portable document format) files. A PDF résumé will look exactly like the original and cannot be easily altered. Save your Word résumé file as a PDF file (check for PDF under Format when you click Save As) and keep it in the same folder as your Word version.
- **Company database.** Some organizations prefer that you complete an online form with your résumé information. This enables them to plug your data into their formats for rapid searching. You might be asked paste your résumé into the form. In this case, save a separate version of the résumé as "Plain Text" before pasting it.
- **Fax.** In rare cases, you may be asked to fax your résumé. When doing so, use at least a 12-point font to improve readability. Thinner fonts—such as Times, Palatino, New Century Schoolbook, Arial, and Bookman—are clearer than thicker ones. Avoid underlines, which may look broken or choppy when faxed.

Whichever method you use to submit your résumé, don't send it on its own. In almost all cases a résumé is accompanied by a persuasive cover letter, which is discussed in the next section.

Send or post your résumé in the format the employer requests.

12.5 Persuasive Cover Letters

To accompany your résumé, you'll send a persuasive cover letter. The cover letter introduces the résumé, highlights ways your strengths will benefit the reader, and helps obtain an interview by personalizing you. In many ways your cover letter is a sales letter; it sells your talents and tries to beat the competition. It will, therefore include many of the techniques you learned for sales letters in Chapter 6.

Human resources professionals disagree on how long to make cover letters. Many prefer short letters with no more than four paragraphs; instead of concentrating on the letter, these readers focus on the résumé. Others desire longer letters that supply more information, thus giving them a better opportunity to evaluate a candidate's qualifications and gauge his or her personality. They argue that hiring and training new employees is expensive and time-consuming; extra data can guide them in making the best choice the first time. Use your judgment; if you feel, for example, that you need space to explain in more detail what you can do for a prospective employer, do so.

Regardless of its length, a cover letter should have three primary parts: (1) an opening that gets attention, (2) a body that builds interest and reduces resistance by explaining why you're the right candidate for the role, and (3) a closing that motivates action.

Cover letters introduce résumés, relate writer strengths to reader benefits, and help obtain an interview.

12.5a Gain Attention in the Opening

The first step in gaining the interest of your reader is addressing that individual by name. Rather than sending your letter to the "Human Resources Department," try to obtain the name of the appropriate individual. Make it a rule to call the organization for the correct spelling and the complete address. This personal touch distinguishes your letter and demonstrates your serious interest.

The opening in a cover letter gets attention by addressing the receiver by name.

Openings for solicited jobs refer to the source of the information, the job title, and qualifications for the position.

How you open your cover letter depends largely on whether your résumé is for a position that is solicited or unsolicited. If an employment position has been announced and applicants are being solicited, you can use a direct approach. If you do not know whether a position is open and you are prospecting for a job, use an indirect approach. Whether direct or indirect, the opening should attract the attention of the reader. Strive for openings that are more imaginative than *I would like to apply for....* Instead, you could say *I'm pleased to submit my application for the X position, to which I am able to bring significant related experience.*

OPENINGS FOR SOLICITED JOBS. Here are some of the best techniques to open a letter of application for a job that has been announced:

- **Refer to the name of an employee in the company.** Remember that employers always hope to hire known quantities rather than complete strangers:

Mitchell Sims, a member of your Customer Service Department, told me that DataTech is seeking an experienced customer service representative. The attached summary of my qualifications demonstrates my preparation for this position.

At the suggestion of Ms. Claudette Guertin of your Human Resources Department, I submit my qualifications for the position of personnel assistant.

- **Refer to the source of your information precisely.** If you are answering an advertisement, include the exact position advertised and the name and date of the publication. For large organizations it's also wise to mention the section of the newspaper where the ad appeared:

Your listing on Workopolis for a junior accountant (competition 15-003) greatly appeals to me. With my accounting training and computer experience, I believe I could serve the City of Richmond well.

The September 10 issue of the *National Post* reports that you are seeking a mature, organized, and reliable administrative assistant (position 15-A54) with excellent communication skills.

Susan Butler, placement director at Carleton University, told me that Open Text Corporation has an opening for a technical writer with knowledge of Web design and graphics.

- **Refer to the job title and describe how your qualifications fit the requirements.** Human Resources directors are looking for a match between an applicant's credentials and the job needs:

Will an honours graduate with a degree in recreation studies and two years of part-time experience organizing social activities for a retirement community qualify for your position of activity director?

Because of my specialized training in accounting at Simon Fraser University, I feel confident that I have the qualifications you described in your advertisement for an accountant trainee.

OPENINGS FOR UNSOLICITED JOBS. If you are unsure whether a position actually exists, you may wish to use a more persuasive opening. Since your goal is to convince this person to read on, try one of the following techniques:

- **Demonstrate interest in and knowledge of the reader's business.** Show the Human Resources director that you have done your research and that this organization is more than a mere name to you.

Since the Canadian Automobile Association is organizing a new IT team for its recently established group insurance division, could you

Openings for unsolicited jobs show interest in and knowledge of the company, as well as spotlighting reader benefits.

use the services of a well-trained Business Intelligence graduate who seeks to become a professional underwriter?

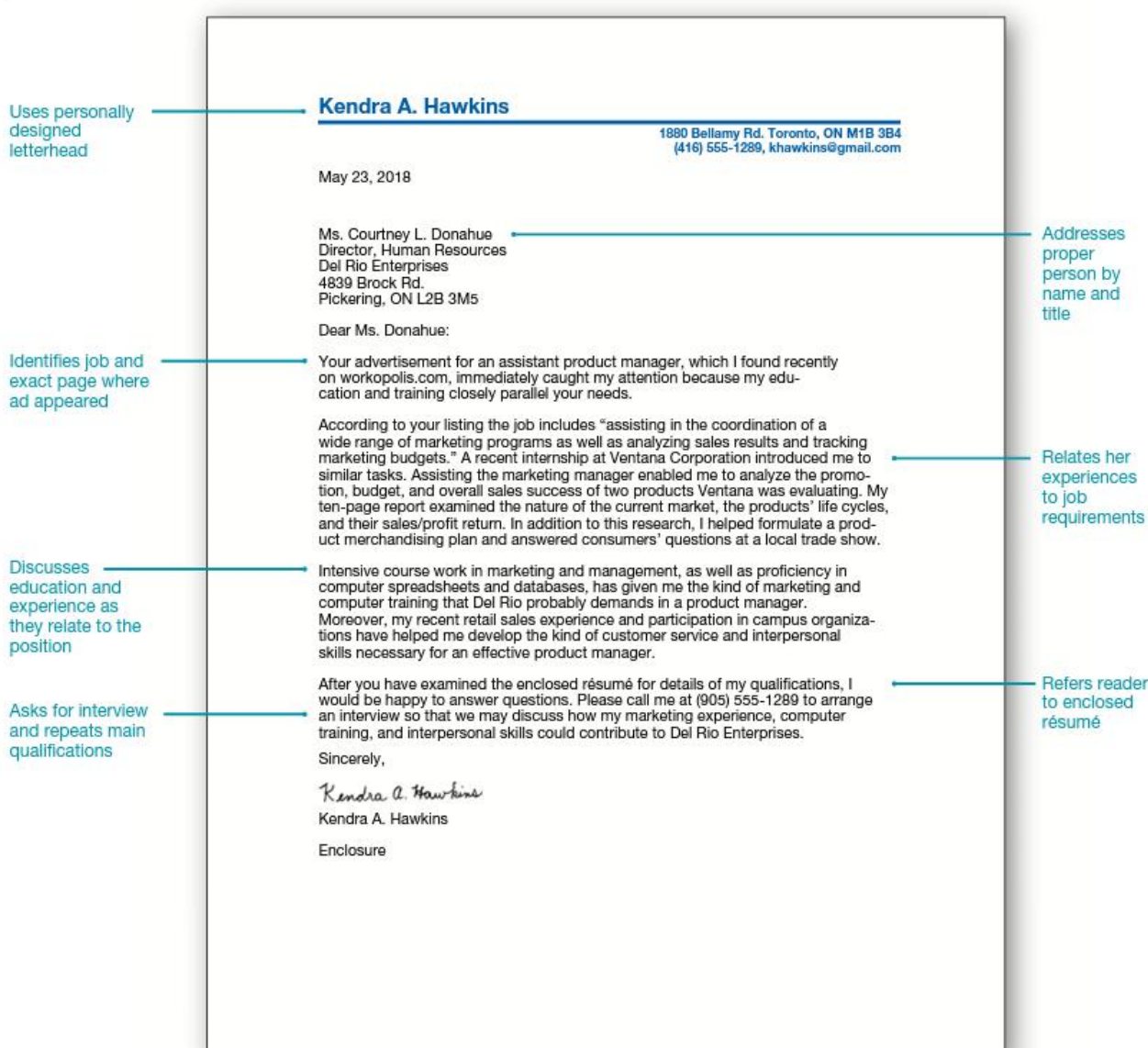
- **Show how your special talents and background will benefit the company.** Human Resources directors need to be convinced that you can do something for them.

Could your rapidly expanding publications division use the services of an editorial assistant who offers exceptional language skills, an honours degree from Brandon University, and two years' experience in producing a school literary publication?

In applying for an advertised job, Kendra Hawkins wrote the solicited cover letter shown in Figure 12.12. Notice that her opening identifies the position and the job board completely so that the reader knows exactly what advertisement Kendra refers to. Using features of Microsoft Word, Kendra designed her own letterhead that uses her name and looks professionally printed.

The body of a cover letter should build interest, reduce resistance, and discuss relevant personal traits.

FIGURE 12.12 | Solicited Cover Letter



More challenging are unsolicited letters of application, such as Donald Vinton's, shown in Figure 12.13. Because he's writing a cover letter where no advertised job exists, he is essentially hoping to create a job. For this reason his opening must grab the reader's attention immediately. To do this, he capitalizes on company information appearing in an online news story. Donald purposely keeps his application letter short and to the point because he anticipates that a busy executive will be unwilling to read a long, detailed letter. Donald's unsolicited letter "prospects" for a job. Some job candidates feel that such letters may be even more productive than efforts to secure advertised jobs, since "prospecting" candidates face less competition. Donald's letter uses a standard return address format, placing his name, street, city, province, and postal code above the date.

Spotlighting reader benefits means matching your personal strengths to an employer's needs.

12.5b Build Interest in the Body

Once you have captured the attention of the reader, you can use the body of the letter to build interest and reduce resistance. Keep in mind that your résumé emphasizes what you have done in the past; your cover letter stresses what you can do in the future for the employer.

Your first goal is to relate your letter to a specific position. If you are responding to a listing, you'll want to explain how your preparation and experience fill the stated requirements. If you are prospecting for a job, you may not know the exact

FIGURE 12.13 | Unsolicited Cover Letter

DONALD W. VINTON
225 92 St. NW, Edmonton, AB T4M 8A9

May 29, 2018

Mr. Richard M. Jannis
Vice President, Operations
Sports World, Inc.
4907 Yellowhead Trail
Edmonton, AB T6G 0A9

Dear Mr. Jannis

Today's *Edmonton Journal* reports that your organization plans to expand its operations to include national distribution of sporting goods, and it occurs to me that you will be needing highly motivated, self-starting sales representatives and marketing managers. Here are three significant qualifications I have to offer:

- Four years of formal training in business administration, including specialized courses in sales management, retailing, marketing promotion, and consumer behaviour
- Practical experience in demonstrating and selling consumer products, as well as successful experience in telemarketing
- Excellent communication skills and a strong interest in most areas of sports (which helped me secure a volunteer position in the marketing department of the Edmonton Oilers organization)

Could we talk about how I can put these qualifications, and others summarized in the enclosed résumé, to work for Sports World as it develops its national sales force? I'll call during the week of June 5 to discuss your company's expansion plans and the opportunity for an interview.

Sincerely yours,
Donald W. Vinton
Donald W. Vinton

Enclosure

Callouts and Annotations:

- Uses personal business style with return address above date:** Points to the sender's name and address at the top.
- Shows resourcefulness and knowledge of company:** Points to the reference to the *Edmonton Journal* and the company's expansion plans.
- Uses bulleted list to make letter easier to read:** Points to the list of qualifications.
- Refers to enclosed résumé:** Points to the mention of the enclosed résumé.
- Addresses proper person by name and title:** Points to the recipient's name and title.
- Keeps letter brief to retain reader's attention:** Points to the concise structure of the letter.
- Takes initiative for follow-up:** Points to the offer to call during the week of June 5.

requirements. Your employment research and knowledge of your field, however, should give you a reasonably good idea of what is expected for this position.

It's also important to emphasize reader benefits. In other words, you should describe your strong points in relation to the needs of the employer. In one employment survey many human resources professionals expressed the same view: "I want you to tell me what you can do for my organization. This is much more important to me than telling me what courses you took in college or what 'duties' you performed on your previous jobs."²⁶ Instead of simply saying what you've done—I have completed courses in business communication, report writing, and technical writing—say how what you've done will be useful in the position for which you're applying:

Courses in business communication, report writing, and technical writing have helped me develop the research and writing skills required of your technical writers.

Choose your strongest qualifications and show how they fit the targeted job. And remember, students with little experience are better off spotlighting their education and its practical applications, as these candidates did:

Because you're looking for an architect's apprentice with proven ability, I've submitted a drawing of mine that won second place in the Algonquin College drafting contest last year.

Successfully transcribing over 100 letters and memos in my college transcription class gave me experience in converting the spoken word into the written word, an exacting communication skill demanded of your legal assistants.

In the body of your letter, you'll also want to discuss relevant personal traits. Employers are looking for candidates who, among other things, are team players, take responsibility, show initiative, and learn easily. Finally, in this section or the next, you should refer the reader to your résumé. Do so directly or as part of another statement, as shown here:

Please refer to the attached résumé for additional information regarding my education and experience.

As you will notice from my résumé, I am graduating in June with a bachelor's degree in business administration.

12.5c Motivate Action in the Closing

After presenting your case, you should conclude with a spur to action. This is where you ask for an interview. However, never directly ask for the job. To do so would be presumptuous and naive. In indirectly requesting an interview, suggest reader benefits or review your strongest points. Be sincere and appreciative. Remember to make it easy for the reader to agree by supplying your phone number, email address, and the best times to call you. And keep in mind that some human resources managers prefer that you take the initiative to call them. Here are possible endings:

I hope this brief description of my qualifications and the additional information on my résumé indicate to you my genuine desire to put my skills in accounting to work for you. Please call me at (416) 488-2291 before 10 a.m. or after 3 p.m. to arrange an interview.

To add a hard-working, experienced strategic communications practitioner to your team, please call me at (604) 492-1433 to arrange an interview. I can meet with you at any time convenient to your schedule.

Next week, after you have examined the attached résumé, I will call you to discuss the possibility of arranging an interview.

The closing of a cover letter should include a request for an interview.

12.5d Avoid “I” Dominance

As you revise your cover letter, notice how many sentences begin with “I.” Although it’s impossible to talk about yourself without using “I,” you can reduce the number of sentences beginning with this pronoun by using two techniques. First, place “I” in the middle of sentences instead of dominating the opening. Instead of *I was the top salesperson in my department*, try *While working in X department, I did Y and Z*, or *Among 15 coworkers, I received top ratings from my managers*. Incorporating “I” into the middle of sentences considerably reduces its domination.

A second technique for avoiding “I” dominance involves making activities and outcomes, not yourself, the subjects of sentences. For example, rather than *I took classes in business communication and data mining*, say *Classes in business communication and data mining prepared me to....* Instead of *I enjoyed helping customers*, say *Helping customers taught me to be patient under stress*.

12.5e Send Your Cover Letter by Email

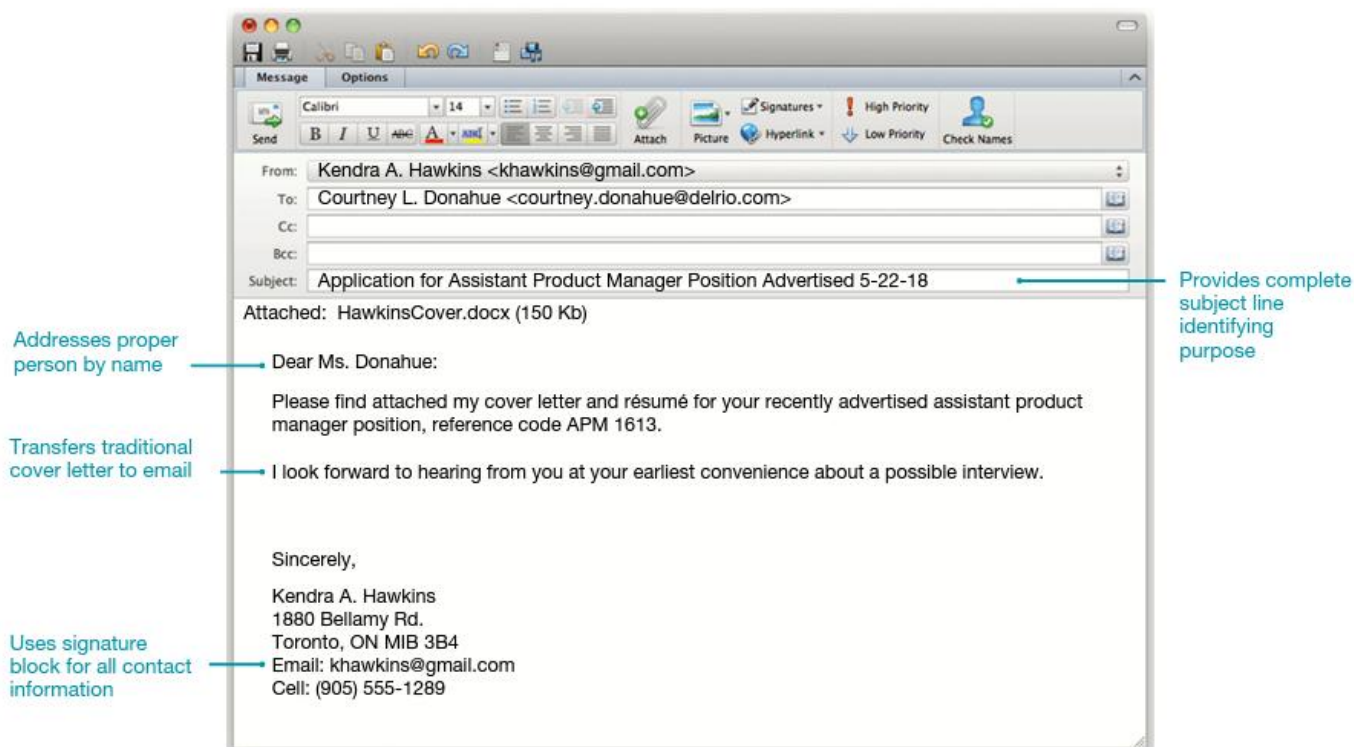
More than 90 percent of résumés at Fortune 500 companies arrive by email or are submitted through the corporate website.²⁷ Some applicants make the mistake of not including cover letters with their résumés when they submit them by email. An application submitted electronically should contain two separate files: a cover letter file and a résumé file. An application that arrives without a cover letter makes the receiver wonder what it is and why it was sent. Recruiters want you to introduce yourself, and they also are eager to see some evidence that you can write. Some candidates either skip the cover letter or think they can get by with one-line email cover notes such as this: *Please see attached résumé, and thanks for your consideration*.

If you are serious about landing the job, take the time to prepare a professional cover letter. As illustrated in Figure 12.14, an electronic application should include a brief cover note, plus the two files mentioned above, as attachments.

Serious job candidates send a professional cover letter even if the résumé is submitted by email, by fax, or through online channels.

A cover letter should look professional and suggest quality.

FIGURE 12.14 | Job Application Sent Electronically



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SUMMARY OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES

12.1 Prepare for employment by identifying your interests and market requirements.

- Searching for a job in this digital age has dramatically changed. Search engines, job boards, and social networks have all become indispensable tools in hunting for a job.
- Emphasis today is on what the employer wants, not what the candidate wants.

Begin the job-search process by learning about yourself, your field of interest, and your qualifications. How do your skills match what employers seek?

- Search the Web, visit a campus career centre, take a summer job, interview someone in your field, volunteer, or join professional organizations.
- Identify job availability, the skills and qualifications required, duties, and salaries.

12.2 Use traditional and digital job search techniques in the open and hidden markets.

- The primary sources of jobs today are networking (46 percent); Internet job boards and company websites (25 percent); and agencies (14 percent).
- In searching the open job market—that is, jobs that are listed and advertised—study the big job boards, such as CareerBuilder, Monster, and Charity Village.
- To find a job with a specific company, go directly to that company's website and check its openings and possibilities.
- Nearly all serious candidates today post profiles on LinkedIn.
- For jobs in specialized fields, search some of the many niche sites, such as Accountemps for temporary accounting positions or Dice for technology positions.
- Estimates suggest that as many as 80 percent of jobs are in the hidden job market—that is, never advertised. Successful job candidates find jobs in the hidden job market through networking.
- An effective networking procedure involves (a) developing a contact list, (b) reaching out to these contacts in person and online in search of referrals, and (c) following up on referrals.
- Because electronic media and digital tools continue to change our lives, you should use social media networks—especially LinkedIn—to extend your networking efforts.
- Effective networking strategies include building a personal brand, preparing a professional business card with a tagline, composing a 30-second elevator speech that describes what you can offer, and developing a strong online presence.

12.3 Organize and format persuasive chronological and functional résumés.

- Because of intense competition, you must customize your résumés for every position you seek.

- Chronological résumés, which list work and education by dates, rank highest with recruiters. Functional résumés, which highlight skills instead of jobs, may be helpful for people with little experience, those changing careers, and those with negative employment histories.
- In preparing a résumé, organize your skills and achievements to aim at a particular job or company.
- Study models to effectively arrange the résumé main heading and the optional career objective, summary of qualifications, education, work experience, capabilities, awards, and activities sections.
- The most effective résumés include action verbs to appeal to human readers and job-specific nouns that become keywords selected by applicant tracking systems.
- As you complete your résumé, look for ways to strengthen it by polishing, proofreading, and checking for honesty and accuracy.

12.4 Use social media, video, and infographic résumés as alternatives to traditional résumés.

- To increase the probability of having your résumé selected by an automated tracking system, include specific keywords, especially nouns that name job titles, technical skills, and tools used or specific experience.
- Consider preparing a career e-portfolio to showcase your qualifications. This collection of digital files can feature your talents, accomplishments, and technical skills. It may include examples of academic performance, photographs, multimedia files, and other items beyond what can be shown in a résumé.
- A video résumé enables you to present your experience, qualifications, and interests in video form.
- A hot trend among creative candidates is the infographic résumé, which provides charts, graphics, and timelines to illustrate a candidate's work history and experience.
- Most candidates, however, should start with a basic print-based résumé from which they can make a plain-text résumé stripped of formatting to be embedded within email messages and submitted online.

12.5 Write a persuasive cover letter to accompany your résumé.

- Although cover messages are questioned by some in today's digital world, recruiters and hiring managers overwhelmingly favour them.
- Cover messages help recruiters make decisions, and they enable candidates to set themselves apart from others.
- In the opening of a cover message, gain attention by addressing the receiver by name and identifying the job. You might also identify the person who referred you.
- In the body of the message, build interest by stressing your strengths in relation to the stated requirements. Explain what you can do for the targeted company.