

## A good cover letter helps in your job search *by Barbara Smith*

Most people agree a resume is an important tool for a job search. But many people don't realize that resumes are often used by employers to screen people out, rather than in. If there are many appli-

cants, the employer can't interview them all. He or she must pick the "best" candidates to interview. Those best-qualified for the job may never be interviewed if they submit poorly written cover letters.

The first person to see your application may be someone from the employer's personnel office, who may not have in-depth knowledge of all the jobs being filled. She may not know technical terms and professional jargon used in resumes. This is one reason why your cover letter is so important.

Your resume may not emphasize what is most important to a particular employer for a particular job. Unless you include a well-written cover letter, your resume may never make it into the hands of the person who does the hiring.

You should write a different cover letter for each job. It should make the reader want to know more about you, to read your resume, and to interview you.

It is easy to customize your cover letter for a particular job. It should be no more than one page. It should specify the job for which you are applying. It may mention how you heard about the job, especially if someone known to the employer suggested that you apply. But most importantly, it should tell why the employer should hire you.

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## Success story *by Joseph Leczel, Medford Reemployment Assistance Office*

Sheldon, 68, injured his lower back while working as a log-truck driver. His injury left him with permanent work restrictions that prevented his return to regular work.

Sheldon was restricted to light work with a maximum lift of 20 pounds. He could sit two hours at a time for a total of four hours in a day and occasionally could squat, climb, and twist. His doctor would not release him for log-truck driving because that job required tossing and tightening load binders, climbing on loads, and walking on uneven ground.

The worker, a valued employee, was offered — and accepted — a new position with the employer-at-injury as a dump-truck driver. This new job, although in need of some modification, no longer required Sheldon to walk on uneven ground, or climb onto and tie down loads.

The Preferred Worker Program, along with Sheldon and his employer, identified the following worksite modifications as necessary to accommodate Sheldon's permanent restrictions.

The Preferred Worker Program assisted in the purchase of a 28-foot-long, 102-inch-wide end-dump trailer. The employer agreed to equip the truck assigned to Sheldon with a hydraulic system to operate the trailer, installed an electric tarping system for the trailer, and provided an air-ride lumbar-support seat. After the worksite modifications were in place, Sheldon successfully returned to work as a dump-truck driver. His employer also received a wage subsidy and other reemployment assistance incentives, including premium exemption and claims-cost reimbursement.

Sheldon and his wife expressed their gratitude in a letter addressed to the Preferred Worker Program: "After Sheldon's injury, we didn't know how he could make a living. Everything seemed to be piling up, with no end to our problems. Then we were told to get in touch with the Preferred Worker Program. Our whole lives have been turned around because of that meeting. I didn't have a clue that Oregon could make available a way to keep working and keep our dignity." ■

## Meet David Onheiber *by Ursulla Bischoff*



David Onheiber is a senior re-employment consultant for the Reemployment Assistance Unit. He provides technical direction to Oregon's injured workers and their employers and facilitates the delivery of work-site modification and other benefits through the Reemployment Assistance Reserve.

David earned his associate's degree in building construction technology from Portland Community College and went on to obtain a

master's degree in English from the University of Wisconsin.

He began his working career as a VISTA volunteer in Atlanta, Georgia. He spent several years working for VISTA in various positions from recruiter to area manager of "action recruitment."

David gained his first experience in the area of workers' compensation when he became a vocational counselor, and then a vocational consultant for the Workers' Compensation Department. He spent six years in this capacity before moving to the Preferred Worker Program in 1990.

David has spent the past 10 years as a re-employment consultant and

has many positive experiences to share with his coworkers.

David said that he feels privileged to work with people who have the creativity and commitment to have developed and maintained a unique program to help Oregon injured workers and their employers overcome return-to-work barriers.

David and his wife Linda live in Tualatin with their two children, Mathew and Katie. In his spare time David enjoys hiking, gardening, music, cooking, reading, and being involved in the ongoing development of his children.

David's email address is david.j.onheiber@state.or.us. ■

## Did you know? *by Barbara Smith*

- You can call the Reemployment Assistance Unit to find out how much time you have left to use your Preferred Worker benefits.
- You can use your Preferred Worker benefits with your employer-at-injury, a new employer, or both.
- You can use each kind of obtained employment purchase twice, once each with two different employers — for things like tools, clothes, and tuition that you need to do your job.
- You can use premium exemption (with or without wage subsidy) with a temporary employment agency. That's one way to avoid losing eligibility if the three-year period on your Preferred Worker Identification Card will soon expire. Your three-year eligibility would begin with the temporary job, and you'd have more time to find a permanent job.

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### **Administrator, Workers' Compensation Division**

John Shilts

### **Reemployment assistance**

Salem office ..... (800) 445-3948

Medford office ..... (800) 696-7161

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### **Preferred Worker Adviser is a quarterly publication of the Oregon Workers' Compensation Division.**

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The *Adviser* is printed on recycled paper and is recyclable.



## Questions and answers by Paul Harrington, Medford Reemployment Assistance Office

- Q** If I activate my benefits with a new employer and I injure myself on the job, will my employer be affected by the new claim?
- A** If you have a new injury during the three-year premium exemption/claims-cost reimbursement period, the claim will be managed by your new employer's insurer, but all costs will be reimbursed when the claim closes. An aggravation of your original injury is the responsibility of the employer where you were originally hurt. In either case, your new employer should not be affected.
- Q** I've been looking for a carpentry job for several months. I know I can do the job if I stay within my restrictions. The moment I tell prospective employers about my injury or mention that I'm a Preferred Worker, they lose interest. One employer told me they can't risk any more injuries. So how can the Preferred Worker benefits help me?
- A** The three-year claims-cost reimbursement period may be your best selling point with employers who are worried about new claims. After softening up the prospective employer with this information, you should mention the premium exemption benefit and you might offer a six-month wage subsidy. In closing, you could point out to the employer that they have nothing to lose by giving you a chance.
- Q** An employer wants to hire me but would like the program to buy my desk and chair. I understand you will buy tools and clothes. Will you buy a desk and chair?
- A** We would not approve these items as obtained employment purchases (OEPs). One criterion for an OEP is that the employer, who does not normally provide the items, requires all workers performing the job to purchase them. A desk and chair are basic items that the employer is expected to provide. Such items may be appropriate for worksite modification, however. This would depend on whether they are needed to overcome your injury-caused limitations: for example, if you need an ergonomic chair. ■

## Cover letter continued from Page 1

One of the best ways to explain why you should be hired is to give a summary of your qualifications that matches the employer's requirements. Present your qualifications in an easy-to-read format, using two columns, as shown in the example.

Your cover letter should be neatly typed and addressed to a specific person whenever possible. It is a good idea to call and ask the name and title of the person who will be doing the hiring.

The letter should be upbeat and confident, and should not repeat information given in your resume.

Be sure to proofread your letter, and correct any spelling or grammar errors. Have someone read your letter and give you feedback.

Does the letter make the reader want more information about you? That is your goal. ■

June 9, 2001

Dear Mr. Jones:

I am writing to apply for your retail management trainee position. John Smith, who knows my skills and employment interests, suggested I apply.

The attached resume gives a general outline of my work history. I spent eight years working in a retail setting, with an emphasis on customer service. I like the challenge of meeting sales objectives and look forward to creating and supervising a competent sales staff.

Based on your description of the work involved, I believe I am well-qualified to grow with your organization. I have listed the specific requirements that you advertised, and my skills in those areas.

Your requirements:

Accurate cash handling

Track record of excellent customer service

Excellent people skills

My qualifications:

Five years' experience handling cash, logging daily receipts, and reconciling books in a retail setting

Received annual "excellence in customer service" award twice

Two years' experience handling customer complaints

Excellent listening skills

I would like to meet with you to discuss my qualifications and how I might contribute to your company goals. I will telephone you next week to set up a time.

Sincerely,  
(your signature)

*A good cover letter can get your resume noticed.*

# Hydraulic tilting mixing bowl

## Worker disability:

A 54-year-old food-service worker sustained bilateral upper extremity injuries. She had permanent limitations in repetitive use of her hands as well as a 15-pound lifting restriction for lifts above the waist.

## Work setting:

The worker is a baker who makes rolls, muffins, cookies, etc. She required a number of modifications to return to her job.

## Obstacle:

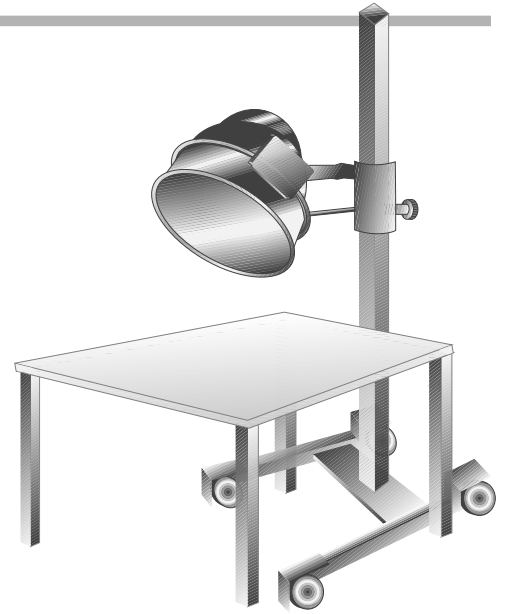
One substantial obstacle was lifting and emptying large mixing bowls of dough or batter weighing 60 pounds or more and requiring a strong grip.

## Modification:

A hydraulic lifting device was purchased to lift and position the large industrial mixing bowls.

## Cost of modification:

The hydraulic bowl lift costs about \$6,000, depending on size. ■



## Did you know? *continued from Page 2*

- Our consultants handle hundreds of worksite modifications every year, and they can help you and your employer figure out what kind of equipment you need to do your job within your medical restrictions.
- You can use wage subsidy twice, once each with two different employers.
- All you have to do to get worksite modification is call. You don't have to have paperwork filled out first.
- If a potential employer wants to know more about the Preferred Worker Program, have him or her call us and we'll explain it.
- Out-of-state jobs and jobs in Oregon that are not under the jurisdiction of Oregon's workers' compensation law may qualify for obtained employment purchases through the Preferred Worker Program.

Call (800) 445-3948 (Salem office) or (800) 696-7161 (Medford office) for assistance or information. ■

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