

**Session Objectives:**

- Qualities of well-written application letters
- Letter Plan

**Qualities of well-written application letters**

**The you-attitude:** An well-written application letter focuses on the needs of the reader rather than that of the writer. This you-attitude adopted by the writer while writing the application letter makes the reader more receptive to the message.

**Example:**

1. I hope that my qualifications and experience would meet the requirements for the post of a marketing manager.
2. A degree in marketing along with my interpersonal skills, makes me the ideal candidate for the "motivating, enthusiastic marketing head" – the post you had advertised for in the Times of India dated 12<sup>th</sup> February 2003.

The second approach reflects the you-attitude of the writer and appears to be more appropriate since it emphasizes the reader's needs, besides highlighting his suitability for the job.

**Length:** The length of the application letter should preferably be of one page and should consist of 4-5 paragraphs. Nevertheless, all the relevant information should be included within the one page letter.

**Addressed to a person not to a title:** Letters should ideally be addressed to the person rather than to a title. This creates a favorable impression on the mind of the reader. However, adequate care has to be taken to ensure that the name of the reader is not misspelt.

**Example:** Addressing a letter to Mr. Sujith Kumar who is holding the post of Manager (Customer Support) at Koir India Limited, is better than addressing the letter to 'The Customer Support Manager', Koir India Limited.

**Knowledge of employer's activities:**

A mention of the prospective employer's activities such as the recent launch of a product, an acquisition of another company, etc. in the application letter creates a favorable impression about the applicant. This reflects the enthusiasm of the applicant to know more about his prospective employer before making a decision.

**Knowledge of job requirements:** The employer is already aware of the job requirements. Hence, there is no need to state them once again in the application letter. If the applicant wants to highlight his skills or suitability for the job, it should be conveyed in an indirect manner rather than directly stating them.

**Example:** Instead of saying 'I don't mind relocating', you could state the nature of your previous job which has required you to relocate several times.

**Reader-benefit information:** A well-written application letter must contain information that will be of use to the reader. It must convey how the applicant can be useful to the reader. If the purpose is to highlight the applicant's suitability for the job, it should be done in a manner that conveys to the reader that hiring the applicant will be advantageous to him.

**Example:** If the employer has advertised for a sales representative, the application letter should highlight the applicant's interpersonal and marketing skills that will make the reader see the benefit in calling the applicant for the interview.

**Organization:** Like all other letters, application letters have to be organized in a particular style. In such letters, the central personality is 'you', and the application letter must highlight your suitability for the job. It is advisable to include the reference to the resume towards the end of the letter. Reference to the resume in the earlier part of the letter may divert the reader's attention and may cause the reader to put aside the application letter and focus on the resume.

**Style:** Application letters should reflect the candidate's confidence. At the same time, it is essential that the application letter does not make the applicant sound like an egotist. Also while writing an application letter, adequate care must be taken to avoid misspelt words, incorrect job titles, typographical errors, grammatical and punctuation errors. The occurrence of such errors in the application letters reflects the careless attitude of the applicant and makes employers reject such applications without further consideration.

**Mechanics:** The physical appearance of the letter must convey a positive impression about the applicant. Mechanics of a letter includes the quality, size and color of the paper used, the font size, margin, style of letter format and arrangement of paragraphs.

### Letter Plan

Like all other formal letters, an application letter too must follow a certain plan or outline to have a favorable impression on the reader.

An application letter must include the following sections:

#### Opening section

The reader's response to an application letter depends on the opening section of the letter. The opening section of the application letter should capture the reader's attention, and make him have a favorable impression about the applicant. Application letters may be in the form of either solicited or unsolicited letters. Solicited letters are in response to a company's advertisement for a particular opening. Unsolicited letters are written even in the absence of a formal announcement by the company regarding a job vacancy. The opening section of the application letter should include the title of the position for which the applicant is applying.

Some methods of presenting the introduction part of an unsolicited letter are:

- Show the reader how your skills would benefit the organization
- Mention the name of person who has referred the job opening
- Make a reference to a few publicized company activities or its accomplishments
- Begin the letter with a question or a catchy line to attract the attention of the reader

#### Middle section

In the middle section of the letter, the applicant should convey his understanding of the job requirements, and provide information on the educational and professional qualifications of the applicant as well as personal information about the applicant. This section is therefore the longest in the letter. In the middle section of the letter, the applicant should focus on his key selling point that would make him stand apart from the rest of the applicants.

Further, while writing the middle section of the application letter, the applicant must provide all the information that has been requested in the job advertisement. Along with other information, the applicant may quote a figure for the salary he expects from the company. A reference to the enclosed resume can be made towards the end of the middle section.

### **Closing section**

In the closing section of your letter, the applicant asks for specific action from the reader. Since asking for an interview may sound too abrupt, the applicant may offer to provide additional information to the reader at the time of interview and indicate the dates when he would be available for an interview.

### **Summary**

"An application letter is a tool using which a candidate can communicate to his prospective employer why he is most suited for the job. It has to have certain desirable qualities and follow a certain outline to brighten the chances of the candidate's selection for the interview.