



## DEMYSTIFYING THE “EMPLOYER”

To an active job-seeker, the term “employer” doesn’t simply refer to a human being who needs to hire another human being. Instead, it refers to a mysterious god-like entity who selects the “good” from the “bad.” Many legal job seekers believe that the key to a successful resume or cover letter lies in a magic phrase, word, format, or font that will immediately land them on the “good” pile. They believe that the hiring partner or recruiter is a proverbial Rumpelstiltskin, waiting for some insightful job seeker to say their name.

Attorney Resume’s clients frequently ask questions such as these:

- Do legal employers prefer justified or left-aligned cover letters?
- Do legal employers like white or off-white paper?
- Do legal employers prefer that a two-page resume be stapled or paper-clipped?
- Do legal employers like bullet points or paragraphs?
- Do legal employers prefer that my heading be centered?
- Do legal employers like letters to be signed in blue or black ink?

When it comes to predicting exactly what legal employers prefer, there is no crystal ball that will tell you. When someone becomes a hiring coordinator, he/she does not enter a giant brainwashing machine that tells him/her to hate long cover letters or to love bullet points. Employers are individuals with their own unique likes and dislikes. While there are definitely some general rules with regard to what legal employers prefer, be aware that there is no secret formula that automatically guarantees success.

You also need to know that the person who puts out a job posting is not an evil monster, rubbing his/her hands together with glee while waiting to crush the hopes and dreams of every person applying for the job.

Here are some prevalent myths that we’ve heard:

- Legal employers will throw your resume out without looking at it if it’s two pages long.
- Legal employers will toss your submission if there’s even one tiny typo.
- Legal employers will contact your employer before speaking to you to find out if you were a good employee.
- Legal employers will disqualify you if you don’t include your GPA.

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Employers want to like you. This might be hard to believe if you've had a frustrating job-hunting experience, but it's true. Legal employers genuinely want to find people who will do a good job, and they are hoping that good candidates will come across their desks. Hiring qualified and competent attorneys is in the employer's best interest. Therefore, if you can impress upon the employer that you can fulfill his/her needs and add value to his/her company or law firm, you will be considered, typo and all.

If there is anything that can approximate a magic resume and cover letter formula, it is this: Legal employers want to know what you can do for them. Adopting this as a mantra will start you on your way to a successful job search. Your goal in finding a job may be to make more money and advance your career, but if you convey this in your marketing materials, you will surely find yourself in the rejection pile.

As you draft your resume and cover letter, make sure you are aware of employers' needs. If you're responding to a job vacancy or job posting, think of it as the employer asking: Is there anyone out there who can help me? You want your resume and cover letter to provide the solution. If you're not responding to a specific job posting, but rather writing to employers on an unsolicited basis, do some brainstorming to figure out what you offer that would be appealing to an employer. By stating how you can be of service, you might save the employer the hassle of having to go through the hiring process.