

Are You Qualified?

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“Are you qualified for this job?” These six words can stop a very capable person in his or her tracks, and cause anyone to question individual worth. The reality is that when an ad is posted, it typically captures what the hiring manager feels is the “essential functions” of the job. Those essential functions can sometimes turn into a wish list. In other words, in a perfect world, if all the stars are lining up correctly, hiring managers hope and pray that they’ll find a candidate who possesses all the qualifications they’ve listed in their ad.

My advice is: if your skills and experience match at least 80 percent of the job requirements listed, you should be sending your resume or completing an application. The other 20 percent you don’t possess can often be overlooked because those skills or experience are not truly necessary for the job, but treated more like an added bonus.

However, employers do not want to spend time looking at resumes and reading cover letters from people who clearly are not qualified for the job. If you can’t find an 80 percent match, move on to another opportunity.

To get a potential employer to take notice of you, and consider the 80 percent or more that does match, you must sell them in writing! Make sure you put together a cover letter that clearly lays out how you are qualified. Focus on where you are a perfect match for the position by preparing a skills grid-style cover letter that highlights the employer’s criteria and matches it to your skills and experience.

Your cover letter might look like this for example:

It was a pleasant surprise to learn that Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas, Inc. is in need of a group Life Underwriter. I’m very familiar with your organization and feel my background fits your needs as recently posted on *Careerbuilders.com*. They Include:

You Require

Healthcare Experience

Bachelor’s Degree

Computer Skills

Customer Service Skills

My Credentials

Over four years experience

BA Degree received in 2000

Proficient in a variety of software packages

Over five years experience providing direct customer service

This kind of comparison accomplishes two things: it clearly demonstrates to the reader in a quick glance how you are qualified and it will almost always guarantee that your resume will get the attention it deserves. Many job seekers who I have coached have reported back that once they got into the interview they were told their skills grid-style cover letter got them in the door.

The average resume and cover letter are glanced at the first time in less than fifteen seconds to decide which pile you will fall into; the “yes” pile or the “no” pile. Make sure that your qualifications are highlighted so you make it into the “yes” pile. And preparing a skills grid will also increase your confidence that you are qualified and will help you sell yourself once you get in the interview door.