

Job Applications: What Companies Want

If you've done any interviewing lately, you've no doubt noticed the attention given your employment application by the Human Resources (HR) Department. From the smallest detail of your flight hours to a recitation of each job you've ever held, they want to know it all—and in 3-part harmony! So what's the big deal? Why are they such sticklers for details? Who cares about or even knows the phone number of your long-bankrupt charter employer from 10 years ago?

During our interview and career-counseling sessions, we review applications submitted by our clients and try to give them some idea of what a company looks for when they receive an applicant's paperwork. The first and most obvious concern is the visual impact of your application. If you have previously sent them a resume, that document was your opportunity to impress them with your individuality and special qualifications. Now, as you present your completed application, you're being directly compared to your competition—same form, same requested information—a level playing field, so to speak.

It's part of the job.

Because paperwork and attention to detail are so much a part of the professional pilot's job, this is your first chance

to impress an employer with your ability to fit right in where it counts. Neatness and following instructions to the letter are going to net you points and predispose recruiters to viewing the contents favorably. You want to show them immediately that you possess a number of the qualities they seek, including paying attention to detail, neatness, thoroughness, patience, and the ability to read and write clear, concise English with no misspellings.

Let's spend a moment on that phrase "attention to detail." Perhaps the most frustrating part of reading an application is dealing with missing or incomplete information. When you leave something blank, it sends the message that you either forgot to complete that item or didn't proofread your work. It's amazing how much you can convey through your omissions! A simple N/A would have left the reader with a more favorable impression.

Incomplete items are another annoyance. We typically see these in the education section, where a pilot just assumes the reader will not linger. But education IS important to an employer, and even if your credentials are a bit on the skimpy side, be proud of what you've accomplished and state clearly "high school diploma" (even if it sounds repetitive to you) in the box that says "Degree." Describe all formal education you've received, and if it was obtained outside the United States under a different educational system, add a separate sheet and note how the grade levels there compare to those of an American high school or university.

Is your information detailed and clearly stated?

Clarity is even more important as we consider job descriptions. "Pilot, Part 135 airline" doesn't give the reader any information about your actual job or flight duties. However, "First Officer and Captain on DHC-6 flying scheduled passenger operations in Southern California" provides a complete picture of your job, the environment, and the equipment you flew.

Remember, the more details you provide now, the fewer questions you'll have to answer later. It might help you be specific to imagine the reader is from a foreign country and can't pass your paperwork on for interview scheduling until he understands every item you've included. Don't try to impress him with meaningless verbiage. Instead, provide complete and honest answers to the questions that will convey a clear picture of your employment history and experience.

Don't underestimate or underrate your qualifications. Reticence can cause a recruiter to question your interest in the job or your assertiveness and ability to sell yourself. Show the pride you take in your work by giving yourself credit for your own accomplishments. (One common error we see is describing CFI qualifications using grocery-store terminology. Please, use certificated flight instructor—not certified which is used by government meat inspectors and public accountants.)

Remember that a job application can be much more than a dry rendition of your vital statistics. Spend some time on those job descriptions and make sure they sell your skills to this prospective buyer. Explain any ancillary job duties. Some small detail may be just the quality that will set you apart from other applicants and give you the chance to enrapture the interviewer with your knowledge of antique aircraft parts or volunteer work with the local air scouts.

When you're offered the chance to "tell us anything else you think we should know about you," don't waste this valuable opportunity by leaving it blank. Everyone has something that makes him or her unique. This is a test to see if you'll seize the opportunity to sell yourself! Mediocrity is *not* rewarded, but talented, interesting individuals frequently are—with an interview slot to see if they're as impressive in person as they are on paper.