



❖ December 7th

Navigating the Federal Job Market

**Presented by Danny Huffman, MA, CEIP, CPRW, CPCC, author, publisher
Education Career Services**

In an environment of uncertainty, seeking and securing employment in the private sector has become one of the most difficult challenges graduates face. With no clear path to resolve an employment situation saturated by the unemployed, where does one go? Invest in a little diligence and the answer becomes clear: The federal government.

Recent legislation is disproving what many think about federal job applications and careers. Truth of the matter is, the federal hiring process is becoming user-friendly as you are about to learn. Take a journey as this session will educate, excite, and promote your student career opportunities within the federal sector. Federal career success does not necessarily require similar employment experience; in fact, most applicants do not have experience in the same position, field, or sector. Here is where your knowledge and preparation will go a long way as student's transition out of college and into the workforce.

❖ **Navigating the Federal Job Market (Slide #2)**

1. Public and Private, transcending career boundaries
2. Change is the **ONLY** constant, building a foundation to deal with contingencies determines success
3. Locating a Federal Job
4. Found a fit, now what
5. Crafting an effective resume
6. Bottom line: Empowering students = Lifelong career success

❖ **Graham Management Group Survey (Slide #4)**

- Targeted focus: 29% did not reveal a targeted/focused clear objective
- Value proposition: 97% had no value/sales proposition
- Measurable accomplishments / Relevancy lacking in all but few
- Spelling and grammar: 70% had errors
- Design and format: 96% nearly identical to common templates found on the Internet, books, and web-based applications

Semantics on the side (Slide #7)

Definitions between the federal government and the private sector can be confusing... here's a quick review of a few key terms:

- **STEP:** Internship type, typically hourly (limited benefits), may incur service time.
- **SCEP:** Mostly for college juniors. Part time while in school with benefits. Must be 360 hours before graduation; automatically forwarded to a full time position.
- **Presidential Management Fellows Program:** Much like a scholarship program; no hiring process; hired as a full-time permanent position.
- **U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM):** This is the federal government's Human Resource department.
- **Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSA):** Whether you are applying for a government job online or through the mail, some job openings require you to respond in writing to several questions regarding your knowledge, skills, and abilities directly related to the position (though the KSA requirement for many positions is being eliminated, you will need to know the basics just in case the second stage of the application requires essay type responses).
- **Status vs. Non-Status:** If the opening is status, **only current** Federal employees can apply. Non-Status means any U.S. citizen can apply. Before getting too involved in the application process, make sure your status qualifies or your work preparing will not find payoff.
- **Open Period:** Shows the opening and closing date of the position. After the closing date, the candidate can no longer submit an application.
- **Series and Grade:** The U.S. Government uses the General Schedule (GS) to determine the job series and pay grade. The GS level that the candidate is placed is in accordance with his or her skills, background, and experience. For example, GS-6 is more entry-level while GS-13 is more experienced or managerial.

Locating a Federal Job (Slide #8)

There are two main ways to enter the federal civil service — through an excepted service appointment or through a competitive process. Regardless of whether you are applying for an excepted or competitive position, what is important to recognize is that it is typical for hundreds and even thousands of individuals to apply to any one position, so take care in reading the details of the application and make sure you are addressing everything that is asked for.

- **Competitive civil** service jobs are filled according to a merit system where the best qualified candidates are chosen based on an application and interview process. Managers can hire a current federal employee (promotion or transfer) or may choose to hire someone from outside the federal government.

In the competitive service, appointment procedures, merit promotion requirements, and qualification requirements are prescribed by law or by the Office of Personnel Management and apply to all agencies. The competitive service includes all civilian positions in the Federal Government that are not specifically excepted from the civil service laws by Statute, by the President, or by the Office of Personnel Management and are not in the Senior Executive Service (SES). It includes primarily positions in the executive branch of the Government.

- **Excepted service** is a special authority used by the federal government, which allows agencies to use a **streamlined hiring process** rather than hiring through the traditional competitive process. This authority allows agencies to help meet an unusual or special hiring need. Agencies can use this authority to individuals with backgrounds in highly needed or hard to recruit areas of government. In the excepted service, only basic requirements are prescribed by law or regulation and each agency develops specific requirements and procedures for its own jobs.

The excepted service authority is also used to fill a job under a special circumstance; for example, when there is a part-time or temporary job in a remote location or when there is a critical hiring need. U.S. Office of Personnel Management may also use a special hiring authority on a case-by-case basis to make a political appointment. Special hiring authorities can also be used to hire applicants with a special disability.

❖ Competitive civil service and USAJOBS.gov (Slide #9)

USAJOBS.gov posts approximately 95% of all federal positions, is user-friendly; As a result, we will not devote extensive time detailing the application process. →

- Official civil service jobs site of the U.S. federal government
- Created to standardize job announcements
- Search and apply for jobs online
- Receive valuable tips
- Find out the requirements for each position BEFORE working on your application



But what about the other 5%?

❖ Expected services agencies, an often forgotten option (Slide #10)

Most civilian positions in the federal government are part of the competitive service, where applicants must compete with other applicants in open competition under the merit system administered by the Office of Personnel Management. However, some agencies (and some positions within other agencies) are excluded from these provisions. Although they primarily operate on a merit basis also, they have their own hiring systems and evaluation criteria. These agencies are called **excepted service** agencies and such positions are part of the **excepted civil service**.

The primary common denominator of many of these agencies and positions is that they have national security and/or intelligence functions, such as the Central Intelligence Agency, the Department of State, the National Security Agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Homeland security Investigations, and the Secret Service Attorney positions, and Foreign Service positions are examples of positions excepted across-the-board in all Federal agencies. Not all excepted service members serve in sensitive areas—for example, teachers and administrators at DOD schools, both in the U.S. and overseas, are also excepted, as are patent examiners.

Excepted service agencies have consistently claimed that they need the speed and flexibility afforded by being in the excepted service in order to perform their missions and maintain good order and discipline.

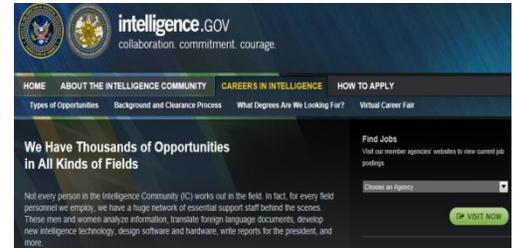


❌ Office of the Director of National Intelligence (Slide #11)



DNI.gov highlights intelligence agencies generally, not appearing on USAJOBS.gov; typically due to the clearance requirement and sensitive nature of the listed positions.

At the top of the home page are several links leading to different sections of the site. Postings will be found at the “Careers in Intelligence” link. This page offers a general overview while offering a tool to search for job positions based upon agency.



After selecting “Find Jobs,” a “Choose an Agency” is offered. We’ll select the “Central Intelligence Agency Jobs.” From here, navigation is straightforward and will lead your student to a “View Jobs” page where job postings are categorized.

For our display, we navigated through and located the

“Contracts & Acquisition” option. From this point, we found a “Contracting Officer” listing... an ideal posting for recent graduates. As we will soon find out, this posting matches our liberal arts student.

Contracting Officer

Work Schedule: Full Time
Salary: \$56,092 – \$136,771
Location: Washington, DC metropolitan area

Contracting Officers serve as members of a team of highly motivated professionals that provide critical support to US National Security. CIA acquisition professionals have the opportunity to apply their business skills to diverse programs such as those for technical collection systems, construction projects and information technology initiatives. Contracting Officers at CIA serve in various program offices alongside their Agency and other Intelligence Community colleagues, working to enable the mission of intelligence. The CIA is a member of the National Contract Management Association (NCMA).

At CIA, only the Contracting Officer is legally authorized to financially obligate the US Government to acquire its products and services. Working in a team environment, our Contracting Officers learn and utilize innovative business practices to streamline the acquisition process and maximize resources. The Contracting Officer manages a wide variety of unique and complex contract types to obtain “best value” on behalf of the US Government.

Our Contracting Officers follow a training and development program specifically geared toward their growth and advancement in the field of contracting at the Agency. With a mix of paced, on-the-job experiences and successful completion of related training, our Contracting Officers may obtain technical certifications that enable them to apply for positions of increased responsibility and professional advancement. This career development program enables our Contracting Officers the opportunity to immediately contribute to the mission of the CIA.

Contracting offers the following career progression levels:

Entry – Learn and use innovative acquisitions business practices while gaining contracting experience. Under close supervision, duties include: pre-award planning and documentation; soliciting, planning, negotiating, administration and closeout; acquiring products and services in an efficient, cost-effective manner; and providing administrative support on contracts while developing technical expertise.

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Developmental – Obtain and increase depth and breadth of experience in **fixed price and cost reimbursement** contracts to qualify for contracting positions of greater responsibility. Using innovative acquisitions business practices, conduct acquisitions activities that are vital to national security. Duties are similar to entry level but with **limited guidance**.

❌ Found a Fit, Now What? (Slide #13)

Developing effective material requires diligence, keyword analysis, **data triangulation**, and a well-written final résumé.

First step: Examine job posting for keyword inclusion

Second step: Visualize keywords through TagCrowd...

TagCrowd (Slide #14)

Copy/paste the advertised job posting into the open text. TagCrowd then lists which words/phrases are emphasized. Make sure you include these key works in your documents. Let's evaluate how TagCrowd details our contract specialist position.

TagCrowd.com is a web application platform used to visualize word frequencies by creating what is popularly known as a word cloud, text cloud, or tag cloud.

Once text has been placed and submitted, word frequencies are visualized:



Third step: Examine highlighted terms and the number following each. While not all of these words will be easy to incorporate into your documents, the Word Cloud is still a useful guideline detailing keywords of importance to the position.

- Acquisitions, 4
- Administrative, 4
- Business, 8
- CIA, 5
- Contracting, 15
- Experience, 5
- Innovative, 3
- Management, 3
- National, 3
- Obtain, 3
- Officers, 9
- Practices, 3
- Professionals, 3
- Programs, 3
- Skills, 4
- Technical, 3

Fourth step: Equipped with terms of importance and our job posting which we underlined key elements, we are well under our way of building a foundation.

Merging words from the job posting can place your students at an advantage but TagCrowd is not the only career marketing tool available at your fingertips...

ONETonline.org (Slide #16)

A powerful tool résumé writers have taken advantage of for years. Building effective career materials means communicating value from day one. Value is measured by matching knowledge, skills, and abilities to the job posting, industry expectations, and career goals. →



Supported by your job posting, review what ONETonline.org highlights for a contract specialist.

Multiple options are available, offering a wealth of information. The following highlights general “Tasks” associated with this position:

Summary Report for:
13-1023.00 - Purchasing Agents, Except Wholesale, Retail, and Farm Products Updated 2011
Bright Outlook

Purchase machinery, equipment, tools, parts, supplies, or services necessary for the operation of an establishment. Purchase raw or semi-finished materials for manufacturing.

Sample of reported job titles: Buyer, Purchasing Agent, Procurement Specialist, Purchasing Manager, Purchasing Administrator

View report: **Summary** | Details | Custom

[Tasks](#) | [Tools & Technology](#) | [Knowledge](#) | [Skills](#) | [Abilities](#) | [Work Activities](#) | [Work Context](#) | [Job Zone](#) | [Education](#) | [Interests](#) | [Work Styles](#) | [Work Values](#) | [Related Occupations](#) | [Wages & Employment](#) | [Additional Information](#)

Tasks

- Prepare purchase orders, solicit bid proposals, and review requisitions for goods and services.
- Interview vendors and visit suppliers' plants and distribution centers to examine and learn about products, services, and prices.
- Monitor and follow applicable laws and regulations.
- Attend meetings, trade shows, conferences, conventions, and seminars to network with people in other purchasing departments.
- Research and evaluate suppliers based on price, quality, selection, service, support, availability, reliability, production and distribution capabilities, and the supplier's reputation and history.
- Confer with staff, users, and vendors to discuss defective or unacceptable goods or services and determine corrective action.
- Evaluate and monitor contract performance to ensure compliance with contractual obligations and to determine need for changes.
- Maintain and review computerized or manual records of items purchased, costs, deliveries, product performance, and inventories.
- Arrange the payment of duty and freight charges.
- Analyze price proposals, financial reports, and other data and information to determine reasonable prices.

The following highlights general “Details” associated with this position:

Great stuff, now what? (Slide #18)

Equipped with a job posting, ONETonline.org research data, and a visualized keyword chart, the foundation for a public or private sector position becomes a reality.

Packaging and marketing is about filling a need. In order to fill a need, one must know what is needed. Packed with knowing what is needed, the next step is to create a plan to confirm you are the right candidate to fulfill the department need (and even a little more).

Leading us, and our students, to create a needs analysis chart based upon the advertised position and independent research.

View report: **Summary** | Details | Custom

[Tasks](#) | [Tools & Technology](#) | [Knowledge](#) | [Skills](#) | [Abilities](#) | [Work Activities](#) | [Work Context](#) | [Job Zone](#) | [Education](#) | [Interests](#) | [Work Styles](#) | [Work Values](#) | [Related Occupations](#) | [Wages & Employment](#) | [Additional Information](#)

Tasks Save Table (XLS/CSV)

Importance	Category	Task
88	Core	Prepare purchase orders, solicit bid proposals, and review requisitions for goods and services.
88	Core	Interview vendors and visit suppliers' plants and distribution centers to examine and learn about products, services, and prices.
84	Core	Monitor and follow applicable laws and regulations.
84	Core	Attend meetings, trade shows, conferences, conventions, and seminars to network with people in other purchasing departments.
84	Core	Research and evaluate suppliers based on price, quality, selection, service, support, availability, reliability, production and distribution capabilities, and the supplier's reputation and history.
79	Core	Confer with staff, users, and vendors to discuss defective or unacceptable goods or services and determine corrective action.
76	Core	Evaluate and monitor contract performance to ensure compliance with contractual obligations and to determine need for changes.
74	Core	Maintain and review computerized or manual records of items purchased, costs, deliveries, product performance, and inventories.
73	Core	Arrange the payment of duty and freight charges.
71	Core	Analyze price proposals, financial reports, and other data and information to determine reasonable prices.
70	Core	Review catalogs, industry periodicals, directories, trade journals, and Internet sites and consult with other department personnel to locate necessary goods and services.
68	Core	Purchase the highest quality merchandise at the lowest possible price and in correct amounts.
62	Core	Formulate policies and procedures for bid proposals and procurement of goods and services.
62	Core	Hire, train, or supervise purchasing clerks, buyers, and expeditors.
61	Core	Study sales records and inventory levels of current stock to develop strategic purchasing programs that facilitate employee access to supplies.
60	Core	Write and review product specifications, maintaining a working technical knowledge of the goods or services to be purchased.
53	Core	Negotiate, renegotiate, and administer contracts with suppliers, vendors, and other representatives.

✖ Here's the how... (Slide #20)

Revisit each word from the job posting, highlighting key duties, responsibilities, and/or requirements. Refer back to TagCrowd and ONETonline.org for guidance as you support the claim to be the right candidate.

On the left column, state essential requirements as well as the keywords, abilities, skills, and knowledge associated with the position. On the right column, detail your many contributions. This information will be used to build effective career marketing material, strengthen interview skills, and highlight areas of professional development needing attention.

Contracting Officer	
<i>Key Job Post Elements/Phrases/Words</i>	<i>How I Match Up</i>
Business / Technical skills	
Acquisitions / Administrative / Contracting	
Innovative / Management	
Construction projects	
Team environment / Professional advancement	
Pre-award planning and documentation	
Excellent written and oral communications skills	
Bachelor's degree, preferably in business	
Strong analytic and problem-solving skills	
Exceptional customer service skills	

✖ Crafting an effective resume (Slide #21)

All hiring managers seek candidates who will make an immediate impact. The impact you will make becomes credible by highlighting accomplishments.

Despite the changes to help make the hiring process easier in the federal government, the content created for any candidate is the key to any résumé, federal or industry.

An effective method is to highlight results, prove value, and to establish credibility by establishing a strong Goal, Effect, Success statement.

Proving Value, Creating Claim Credibility (Slide #22)

Now we're getting to the meat of the resume. Everything so far has all been teasing the reader. We've made claims, but we haven't really proven anything yet; now we will. To do so, we're going to be employing strong bulleted proof statements. The following goal/effect/success activity provided by Regina James-Dorsey, Assistant Director, Hegi Family Career Development Center.

Describing "duties" or "responsibilities" in an effective manner can be a tough task. One way to simplify the process is to break tasks into three distinctive components:



1. **Goal:** The objective or purpose of the task
2. **Effect:** The outcome or result of the task
3. **Success:** The benefit of the task and how the contribution positively impacted the organization

As an example, let's consider a common task of answering the phone:

Answered phones? I know what you're thinking: Most three to four year old children can get this right so what's the big deal? As stated, there's nothing special. But if we consider changing the statement by applying the Goal, Effects, and Success process, something comes from nothing.

1. **Goal:** To answer the phone and direct to appropriate staff
2. **Effect:** Answer the phone quickly and efficiently
3. **Success:** Minimized the amount of time a caller had to wait on the phone

Revised/Final Statement:

- ✓ *Directed callers to appropriate staff quickly and efficiently, minimizing caller wait time.*

Time for students to practice! Describe and revise one simple task using the Goal, Effect, and Success process.

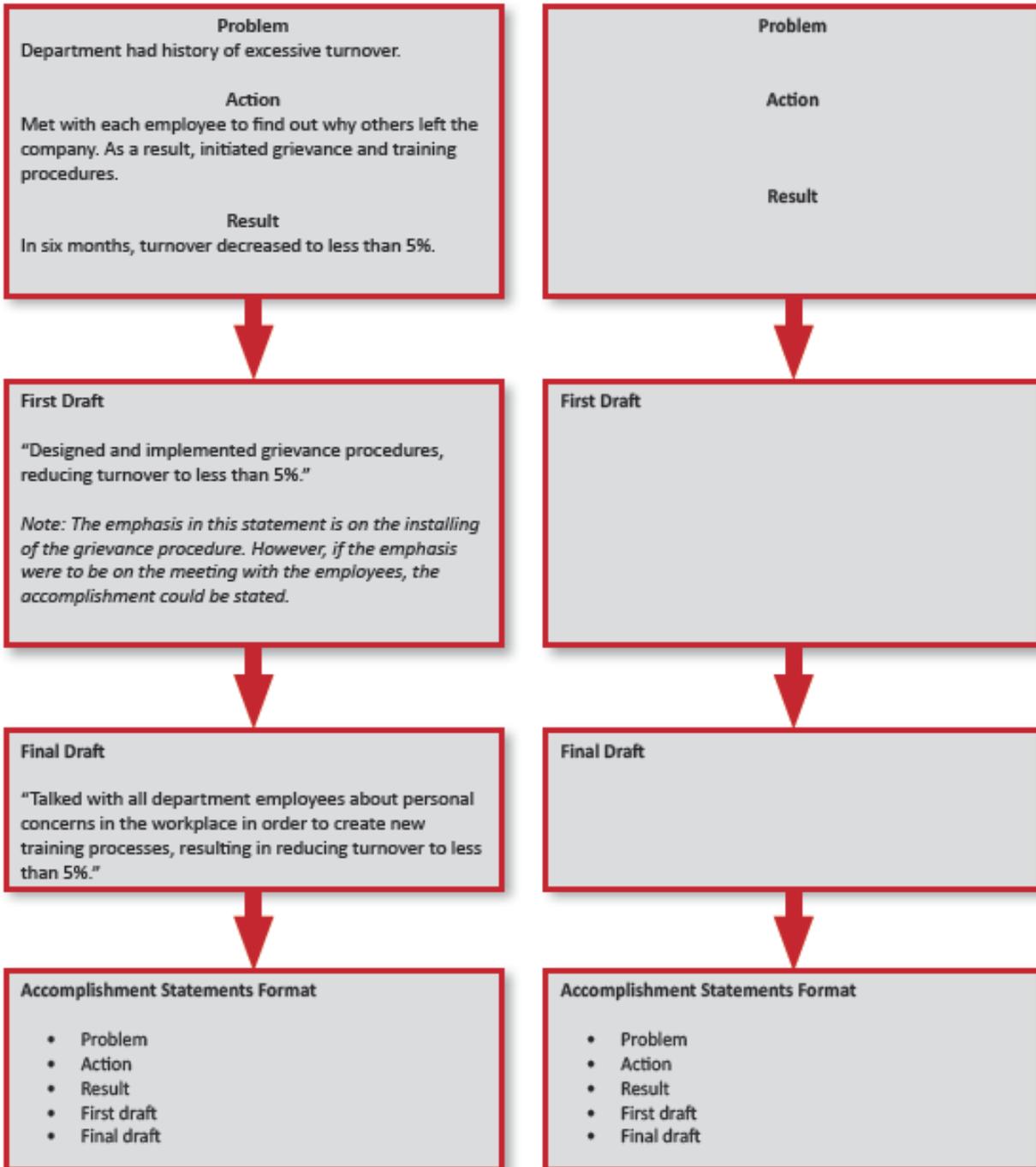
1. **Goal:**
2. **Effect:**
3. **Success:**

Your Revised/Final Statement:

Breaking down responsibilities into a goal, effect, success process helps prepare you to develop material as well as gain confidence during interview sessions. Another key element in creating résumés that get you noticed is to express accomplishments as strongly as possible. To help you better organize your contributions, let's examine the following performance, action, and result strategy.

✖ Performance, Action, Result (PAR) in Action (Slide #23)

Think about how you would respond to the request: *Tell me about a challenge you recently experienced and how did you react to it.* It's not easy to answer but expect it to come up. As we just looked at the role goals have when developing a strong bulleted statement, the following provides us with a different way to portray (in writing and during an interview session) value offered. Use the example on the left column as a guide. Use the column on the right to detail your **PAR** in action. For those claiming no problems have been encountered, you are most fortunate but reconsider and think harder.



✖ Begin Before the Beginning (Slide #26)

What's a resume supposed to look like?

- Isn't the question students should be asking

Why is a hiring manager looking at resumes and what does he or she want?

- Is the first question students should ask

How can this person help us?

- Is the hiring managers question

✖ Federal Style Resume: A Traditional Resume on Steroids... (Slide #27)

Although the federal résumé format is flexible, some items are required and, if not presented, you may be disqualified:

- Contact information must include full name, address, phone, e-mail, and SSN.
- The objective must include the specific job title and job posting number.
- Career history must include supervisor's name, phone number, and company's full street address, as well as your ending salary.
- Education must include the school's street address and GPA (if applicable).

Because of the detail and increased competition, it's even more important to write in compelling language. To be effective:

- Write in third-person.
- Use as many key words from the job posting as possible, as well as working on the requirements and KSAs *without* copying them straight from the posting.
Rephrase—preferably brilliantly!
- Use active voice and action verbs.
- Keep it reader-friendly and always interesting
(the person reading your story reads hundreds each month).

✖ Placing the Pieces Together (Slide #28)



Equipped with job position, data triangulation, key word/phrases, a needs analysis T-chart, strong bulleted goal and success statements, several performance, action, result statements, and a working design, putting the pieces together into a unified whole is a simple application.



Developing and drafting effective career marketing materials is a process professional résumé writers have used for years. Granted, most students do not aspire to be professional résumé writers but ALL seek career success

MORGAN HAWAII

304.725.3333 ■ AMUGraduate@email.net ■ 123 East Washington Street ■ Charles Town, WV 25400

Veteran's Preference N/A
Social Security Announcement (Last four digits)-xxxx
Citizenship Contracting Officer
United States

Recent graduate offering a solid moral and ethical code eager to apply a diverse *customer service* and *administrative* background highlighted by strong *analytical* and *problem-solving* skills for the *Central Intelligence Agency*.

Education

Bachelor of Arts in General Studies, January 2012 **GPA 3.83**
American Military University, New Haven, Connecticut 06520 USA

Primary Areas of Study: *Business (28 hours completed)* *Technical Writing* *Contract Analysis*
Public Policy/Relations Strategic Management *Information Technology*

Key Contributions

- Awarded *Team Hero* title at Target by devising an *innovative training* and *professional advancement* program.
- Earned top recognition for *exceptional customer service* three quarters in a row.
- Successfully *wrote* and presented a comprehensive troubleshooting guide for a major *construction project*.

Professional Profile

Guest Service Team Member – Target **July 2010 – Present**
Supervisor: Clint Harrison: 364-555-1113 Part-time: 20 – 30 hours per week
1122 PD Dr., Wheeling, VA, USA

Supports the customer service department, partnering with ten *team members* to ensure all *general administrative duties* are completed in a timely and *cost-effective* manner. Oversees *closeout* pricing with *limited guidance*.

- Organized a companywide fund raiser to assist a local community after hurricane Elonda displaced ten households.

Writer/Researcher – Unlimited Horizons, Inc. **October 2011 – December 2011**
Supervisor: Ann Hutch: 364-555-4746 Internship: 4th quarter period
9053 Parkway Ct., Wheeling, VA, USA

Researched company/business policies and procedures, translating them into easy-to-understand manuals and guides for employees. Accommodated multiple demands for commitment of time, energy, and resources.

Event Organizer – Habitat for Humanity **May 2010**
Supervisor: Scott Walters: 364-555-2190 Internship: 40 hours
432 Enterprise Way, Wheeling, VA, USA

Documented fixed price and cost reimbursement contracts for the Strawberry Festival, an annual Habitat for Humanity festival. Organized peers and tasks to achieve specific goals. *Planned* scheduling and *negotiated* with outside vendors, *acquiring products and services* under budget, saving the organization over \$550.

Affiliated Organizations and Volunteer Activities

- Student Veterans of America
- Golden Key Honor Society
- USA Freedom Corps
- Corporation for National & Community Service

Bottom line: Empowering students = Lifelong career success (Slide #30)

1. Market Value: To effectively identify and communicate VALUE to prospective employers. In other words, resumes must clearly communicate bottom line results and organizational contributions job seekers can produce and deliver as well, or better, than other qualified candidates.
2. Differential Factor: When students strategically develop resumes, they must define the differential factor (DF). The DF represents highly valuable skills, qualifications, and other “employment assets” that set a job seeker apart from other well-qualified candidates; that make them STAND OUT. When you help your students identify their DF, you’ll provide them with a distinct advantage in landing a job quickly in the toughest of job markets.
3. Confidence Builder: When you help your students design and create their self-marketing resume communicating value and attributes setting them apart from their competition, your students gain a whole new level of confidence in themselves, their ability to promote themselves, and their ability to remain upbeat and positive throughout the job campaign. They will be proud of what they are marketing...namely themselves.
4. Resumes Open the Right Door: Exciting, well-presented resumes open doors of opportunity that otherwise would not open for job seekers with look-alike, blend-in-with-the-other-resumes. Indeed, their resumes will race to the top of the pile because it bellows out to employers, “this is what I can do for you, why I am a good fit for your company, and the best candidate for the job.”
5. Job Seekers Will Become a Stronger, More Effective Interviewer: When students possess resumes with a focus on the interview, they begin developing key messages they’ll eventually want to communicate in an interview to win the job.
6. Career lifecycle habits

Graham Management Group Survey Revisited (Slide #31)

- ✓ Targeted focus
- ✓ Value proposition
- ✓ Relevancy
- ✓ Measurable accomplishments
- ✓ Spelling and grammar
- ✓ Design and format

Danny Huffman is an experienced college instructor, program chair, and dean of academic affairs offering over 12 years as an executive in retail/corporate human capital management. His area of expertise within the career management industry has been shared with audiences ranging from 5 to 500 throughout multiple arenas across the United States, including colleges and universities, national/regional conferences, Workforce Central Florida, and The Florida Diversity Group, just to name a few.

To date, Danny authored over a dozen career management publications, including textbooks, workbooks, and career guides. Visit www.edu-cs.com for a complete listing.

A certified résumé writer, a certified employment interview professional, and a certified career coach, Danny can be reached directly at dhuffman@edu-cs.com and 407-875-3738.

