

# Wisconsin Park & Recreation Association

## Career Center Tips: Is Your Bad Attitude Hurting Your Job Search



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True Story: I actually received this while working for the Milwaukee County Parks: I was hiring a Park Worker and received a cover letter from a job seeker that began: "I am tired of writing cover letters." Well, rather than picking up the phone and calling the person in for an interview, you can guess where I placed this application!

You may be surprised that the example above is real, and this applicant isn't the only one to inappropriately complain to a prospective employer. Here are some additional examples:

- "Argh! I hate job hunting!"
- "Life isn't fair. I should get paid for looking for a job."
- "I have received zero replies from my resume. It's not me, though. I know that for sure."

While nearly everyone can understand the frustration of a prolonged job search, it's a big mistake to let your negative feelings show. Indeed, remaining positive can help you get hired. Employers want to hire people who are passionate about their work, relate well to others and aren't easily deflated by setbacks.

Here are some guidelines for conveying the right attitude to hiring managers:

### **When in doubt, leave it out**

One individual who applied for a job wrote: "I'm not lazy, but given a choice between working for someone else, following orders and waking up to that awful sound of an alarm clock or doing what I want to do -- wouldn't any intelligent human being choose the latter?" Although few would be as blatant as this person, any amount of venting is likely to turn off a hiring manager. Make sure the focus of your resume or cover letter remains on your qualifications. Specifically, what needs does the park and recreation agency have, and how can you help fill them?

### **Be a team player**

Another candidate had this to say: "I have a problem with dress codes. It will be difficult for me

if I need to wear a formal button-down shirt for work because I don't have many of those types of clothes since I dress cool." Such candor didn't do him any favors because he was perceived as someone who has trouble following rules and interacting with colleagues who may have different opinions than his own.

The simple truth is that people want to hire -- and work with -- people who are easy to get along with and low-maintenance. Don't appear difficult by outlining your pet peeves. This extends to the interview as well, especially if it's over lunch: Don't give an overly complicated order; instead, make your requests simple.

### **Show your enthusiasm for the position**

I have also received a resume from a job seeker who said simply, "I've never been all that excited about working." With an attitude like that, you can bet I wasn't too excited about the candidate, either. Employers want to hire professionals with a true desire to work for their agency. Demonstrate your passion for the position by researching the employer before submitting your application and noting how your skills can meet the agency's unique needs. For example, you may learn that the agency is opening a new center in your area. Your experience helping to launch start-up operations could be valuable to the organization.

### **Impress in person**

If you're called in for an interview, remember your enthusiasm -- or lack thereof -- will show during the meeting. Simple steps, like offering a firm handshake, sitting up straight, smiling and maintaining eye contact with the interviewer, will showcase your positive attitude. Small shifts in body language, like tapping your foot impatiently, or tone, such as sighing under your breath, can undermine your efforts to make a good impression.

### **Check in with others**

If you've hit a roadblock in your job search, it might be worthwhile to get an outside perspective about how you're presenting yourself. Ask someone whose opinion you trust to review your resume, cover letter and any other materials you will be submitting to hiring managers. A subtle negative tone can sometimes seep into your application materials without you noticing.

A job search can be challenging even in a good employment market. If you're feeling discouraged and having trouble getting motivated, share your frustration with close friends and family. Not only can they provide a good shoulder to lean on, those you know may have faced similar challenges themselves and be able to provide valuable advice for keeping your head high.