

1Q-WORD RESUMES

Brief introductions from fabulous Michiganders looking for work. Hire them.

Foodservice Professional. hands-on food. administrative. supervisory. dept head expertise. cliwak925@aol.com

Multi-Media Professional. Acclaimed and motivated. Looking to expand horizons. mnastos@emich.edu

Coordinator- Will undertake all assignments with enthusiasm, rockywel@hotmail.com

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BOOKKEEPER, proficient with QuickBooks. Several years experience. abkushim@aol.com

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NEXT PAGE



COMING NEXT MONDAY:
A special organization that's poised for growth

Working

Get ahead.
Get hired.
Get inspired.

Only the Best: Customer service

Erhard BMW receptionist relishes role in job that requires positive attitude, patience

Anyone who thinks a receptionist's main job is answering and directing calls would change his or her mind quickly after spending a few hours on the job with Peggy Walk. A typical workday may find Walk, a receptionist with Erhard BMW in Farmington Hills for the past five years, greeting customers, assisting sales staff with showroom traffic, acting as cashier for the sales, parts and service department, assisting in accessory sales or processing new vehicles that arrive at the dealership.

And, yes, she does answer phones - along with baking cookies for the lounge area every day. "I bake them for the customers, so it always smells good in here," says Walk, who lives in New Hudson. "No one can refuse a warm chocolate chip cookie."

Going above and beyond her job description comes naturally to Walk, who has worked in various customer service jobs throughout her career, including a second job she's held for 26 years at Eddie Bauer at Twelve Oaks Mall in Novi.

Walk says the same skills come into play whether she's assisting people who have come to buy a large-ticket item, such as a luxury sedan, or a smaller purchase, such as a sweater.

"What's important is being friendly and listening to the customer and assessing their needs," she says.

Walk considers herself an ambassador of sorts at Erhard BMW, where she often is the first employee a customer sees or speaks with.

"I'm like a private secretary to the entire sales staff and a large part of the clients' experience," Walk says. "Many times, I am

Good to Know

■ Good interpersonal skills are critical for a receptionist. While specific responsibilities vary with the organization, receptionists play an important role in its success because they're charged with the responsibility of making a good first impression.

■ A high school diploma or its equivalent is the most common education requirement. A large number of job openings are expected, with employment expected to grow faster than average.

■ The median hourly wage of receptionists and information clerks in May 2008 was \$11.80. Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

these questions about her career:

What skills are important in your job? "To have a friendly smile, a positive attitude, and always treat people the way you would like to be treated. A positive attitude

and patience goes a long way."

What do you like most about your job? "I love helping people. Everyone is unique, and it makes life interesting. I feel a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment when I can assist clients."

What's one of the more unusual requests you've filled? "A client asked me if I had ice cubes for her Coke. I told her, 'Yes, little ones in my refrigerator.' She was very surprised and pleased. Most days, it's just the little things that make a person's day."

Do you have any advice for those considering a career in customer service? "It's a great career if you like people. You need to have a sense of humor; be friendly, be positive and have some patience."



As a receptionist at Erhard BMW in Farmington Hills, Peggy Walk does much more than answer phones. She also assists sales staff, processes new vehicles, cashiers for the sales, parts and service department, and bakes cookies every day for the lounge.

Paycheck

Boost your savings for retirement

In recent years, traditional pension plans and Social Security have not provided enough post-retirement income for many workers. Longer life spans and rising costs have presented financial challenges for many retirees.

The importance of saving for the future cannot be overstated. Yet, research shows that more than half of all workers in the United States have less than \$25,000 in total savings and investments. If you are in a similar situation, consider the following ways to



Robin Thompson

boost your retirement savings:

Maximize your savings. Contribute as much as possible to your employer-sponsored retirement plan. If you cannot put in the highest amount, get the company match. Take advantage of catch-up contributions if you are older than age 50. This allows you to add \$5,500 to the \$16,500 pretax contribution limit.

Pay down your debt. It's hard to save with a high debt load, so develop a plan to get rid of it. Paying off credit card debt is your first priority. If you

have several cards, start with the card with the highest interest rate. If you cut spending and add the money you "find" to the debt with the highest interest rate, you'll see results much faster.

Start your own business.

Everyone has a marketable skill. You simply need to determine how to use your talent or skill to produce income. Consider starting your own business while keeping your regular job to use the additional income for retirement savings.

Consider relocating or downsizing. Move to an area with a cheaper cost of living and invest the money you save from your mortgage, utilities and maintenance costs. Renting also is an option to save on the cost of property taxes.

Robin Thompson is president of Budget Wise Consulting, a financial education and consulting firm that specializes in cash-flow management concerns. She works with individuals and corporations that have financial-wellness initiatives. To learn more, visit www.budgetwise.net or e-mail robin@budgetwise.net.

Work Smarts

Keep your résumé, cover letter simple

Every day, companies with hiring needs get résumés and cover letters that contain nothing relevant to the position, with some résumés arriving in the form and length of a book report.

A résumé longer than two pages tells the person reading it a few things: You can't prioritize; you don't get to the point; and you will have written communication issues if hired.

Your résumé should clearly and persuasively answer the question, "Why should this company hire me?" Start with

these four steps:

Keep it simple. Concentrate your résumé on the last five to eight years. Never exceed two pages. Page No. 1 should be a cover letter; page No. 2 should be a company-tailored résumé. This is all you need.

Customize. No two companies are alike. Each company has different job needs, and one résumé does not fit all. Take the extra time to write a customized résumé to reflect the needs of each separate hiring company.

Don't be wordy. Eliminate all self-descriptions, such as "passion for customer service," "strategic thinker" and "result-oriented." Replace these phrases with facts and numbers to support your good qualities. An effective résumé should be trendy and



Caree Eason

current. Remove the summary section. This section is overlooked by those hiring because their concern is whether your résumé directly addresses how hiring you can meet the company's current needs.

Make an impact. Your cover letter should demonstrate your ability to impact the company. Research the company, and pinpoint five areas where your skills and experience can benefit the company. A well-written cover letter will in most cases get you a first interview, therefore, use your creative writing skills to position your experience to the job needs of the company.

Caree Eason is a career development and résumé repair expert and director of community outreach for Michigan Expo Experts. Contact her at 734-956-4550 or ceason@jobfairgiant.com, or visit www.JobFairGiant.com.

Career Calendar

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THE BIG EVENT:

Nov. 30 (TUESDAY)
JobsFairGiant.com Wayne County Job Fair
5801 Southfield Fwy., Dearborn, 48228
9 a.m. to noon and 1-3 p.m.
Free
734-956-4550 or www.jobfairgiant.com
Employers that are hiring in the fields of engineering, health care, transportation, sales, finance, retail, restaurant, home health care, and many more will be on-site, along with Unemployment Agency representatives. Free professional résumé critiques also will be available, along with a chance to win free résumé repair services. Attendees also will receive a free listing of 25 extra companies in Michigan that are hiring.

ALSO ON THE CALENDAR:

Nov. 27 (SATURDAY)
How to Prepare a Résumé and Fill Out Online Applications
Detroit Public Library, Main Branch
5201 Woodward Ave., Detroit, 48202
3-5 p.m.
Free
313-833-1000
Learn key tips for compiling your résumé, along with the skills you'll need to help you in today's virtual job market, where those who are able to use technology to their advantage are a step ahead.

Nov. 30 (TUESDAY)

Hot Shots: Career Connections at Melange
314 S. Main St., Ann Arbor, 48104
5-7 p.m.
Free
734-761-9317, www.annarborusa.org or Amy@AnnArborUSA.org
Bring your résumé, and mingle with growing, innovative companies in a fun and relaxed environment at this event hosted by Ann Arbor SPARK. Companies attending include Adaptive Materials, Inc., DNA Software, Inc., ForeSee Results and NetEnrich. Registration opens Nov. 23.

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