

Personnel Manager
Every Company in Australia
PO Box 123
Healthy Suburb, State, 1234

To Whom It May Concern,

I wish to apply for the position advertised by your company. You will find enclosed my résumé outlining my skills and experience, all of which are impeccable. As you will see, they portray a highly intelligent, multi-skilled, proficient employee who can perform any task set. I work well as part of a team or alone, being equally motivated in either case.

I could keep going in this manner, selling myself and my expertise, as a good job applicant does. But like most résumés and applications, they don't show the whole picture. They are an illusion cleverly weaved over fibres of the truth, however strong those fibres may be. Just as job advertisements do not fully or accurately inform the applicant about the job, management, the organisation or any prejudices or politics operating within.

I have been told, when applying for jobs, that your application needs to stand out from the crowd, due to the multitudes received. I believe mine will do just this as I give you a more truthful, whole and accurate picture of who I am, my experiences with the world and with other firms alike. Each and every résumé you have received will be full to overflowing with the skills you need. On paper, everyone looks perfect. But we both know that this is not the case and there is more to a good employee than the skills listed on their résumé. By me being honest with you, this sets the platform for a more open and truthful dialogue during interview, on the matters I reveal. I will also have some very candid questions for you before I could consider taking a position with your company. This way, we are not wasting either of our time.

You see, I have a mental illness. Chronic Major Depression with elements of anxiety, to be accurate. And while mental health is everybody's business¹, I have not found this to be the case in previous employment. My illness, as with many other conditions, finds me experiencing periods of time whereby I am quite unwell. It may require time off for treatment or even hospitalisation. Even during times of relative wellness and stability, I must continue to manage my condition with regular appointments to my specialist team. Whilst my legitimate use of sick leave should not be in question, at previous employment it was the reasons they used to force me to leave. A leading bank, during a period of hospitalisation, demanded I return to work or leave. Decision needed now as 'this wasn't good for their reputation'. I had supposedly voided part of my employment agreement about bringing their reputation into ill repute. A doctor made a similar 'request' of me when I needed time off, despite me not having taken a sick day in 3 years and my work not suffering at all (he did concede to this). Yes, you did read correctly. A Doctor of Medicine. Apparently he could not have unreliable and unproductive employees in his line of work. These are not isolated cases, with one potential employer terminating an interview when I revealed my condition in answer to her question about medical history. No room for explanation or education. Just "leave now, thank you".

Answering job advertisements is as difficult for applicants as it is for employers with résumés, in deciphering what is truth and what is fiction, verifiable qualifications aside. I though, attempt to answer yours.

"Is this a year for change?" Life is full of change, but please don't let my depression return so I am no longer the "dynamic person" this job awaits. Depression being a dark force within, that clouds my view of the world and saps my energy and motivation. Otherwise I am always an "energetic person" looking for "an exciting opportunity" in the "diverse and flexible role" you are offering. I really hope that I do become part of a "supportive team environment" with "approachable and caring management". How much easier and

pleasant my working life would be, eliminating negative stress and providing me with purpose and fulfillment in my life. Factors that promote mental wellbeing in everyone, but are essential to someone suffering from depression. I am agreeable to having a medical as "employment is subject to this", as long as discrimination doesn't rear its ugly head and I become unemployed subject to depression. Having "hours to suit" me is a great aspect of the employment package. Mostly I will want the same regular hours, as a daily routine helps me manage my depression. But during more turbulent times of illness, this will still allow me to come into work, just later in the day. With depression, often it improves as the day goes on. This way I can still be the "reliable" employee you seek, meeting the "monthly deadlines" and gain the full benefits of this "rewarding position". You will be gaining an "experienced and qualified" employee, as my résumé outlines. I am "eager to take this next step in my career" and know I can do the tasks required for this position "to a very high standard". I have a "sharp and intelligent mind", learning quickly anything I do not already know. "Further training and courses" will be eagerly anticipated by me, as I am "hungry for knowledge".

One in five people suffer from a mental illness² at some point in their lives with depression being classed as a mental illness. With 800,000 Australians affected by depression each year³, you will find that many people already in your employ are afflicted, as will be many applicants. They just may not have been as open and honest with you as I have been. Around 20 percent of males and 23 percent of females in full-time employment have lifetime mental illnesses⁴. The figures are similar for part-time employment. In fact, the figures for having a mental illness are significantly higher for those who are unemployed. So depression proves to be no barrier to being a reliable and productive employee. Employment (and productive activity) is actually a major protective factor in maintaining good mental health. These statistics vouch for me, as does my employment history, qualifications and references.

So you have nothing to lose and everything to gain by choosing me for this position with your company. Depression won't interfere with my work quality and the work will actually assist in keeping me well. Our future liaison will be mutually beneficial. And you already know you are getting an honest person, which goes a long way in demonstrating my good character.

I hope you appreciate my honest, complete and comprehensive application. Being a volunteer mental health advocate in my spare time, I have attempted to educate you about mental illness and reduce some of the stigma surrounding it, as part of my job application. I hope I have been successful with this and with my job application, and I look forward to hearing from you with interview times, convenient to us both.

Yours sincerely,

Jane Doe

Footnotes:

1. - NSW Department of Health Initiative
www.health.nsw.gov.au
 - Mental health: everybody's business by Katherine Glover
 - Fifth World Mental Health Conference 2008: Mental Health & Wellbeing: It's Everybody's Business
Melbourne, Vic (Australia)
15-09-2008 to 17-09-2008
 - VicHealth Media Release
<http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/en/Resource-Centre/Media-Centre/Media-Releases/2008/Mental-Health-and-Wellbeing/Mental-health-and-wellbeing-is-everybodys-business.aspx>
 - Catchphrase originating from many sources
 2. Australian Bureau of Statistics
<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mediareleasesbyReleaseDate/DA6169F7642069A8CA2574EA001A160C?OpenDocument>
 3. BeyondBlue – the National Depression Initiative
http://www.beyondblue.org.au/index.aspx?link_id=7.253
 4. National Survey of Mental Health & Wellbeing (2007) as Funded by the Australian Government, Department of Health & Ageing
<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/mentalhealth/publishing.nsf/Content/national-surveys-1>
- Reported by the Australian Bureau of Statistics
<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mf/4326.0>