HIRING SUCCESS STORY

“Claire Kohlman,” Ph.D., French, 2009

Hired in 2010 as Associate Editor for a Small Educational Technology Company

Included here (scroll down):

Narrative, resume, cover letter, job posting, follow-up email, CV for comparison

I had completed my degree in December, and by March was in serious job-hunting mode. Every morning, I tabbed through craigslist.com, indeed.com, the regional HERC.org, and linkedin.com, searching for jobs with the key-words “teaching,” “publishing,” “international education,” and “French.” I kept my job-search wide. I was interested in anything that would let me capitalize on my passion for and skills in foreign language and education. When the posting at [Small Educational Technology Company] popped up in my linkedin searches for teaching, publishing and French, I decided to apply.

Despite my interest in the position, I had a difficult time preparing my resume. The job posting asked for experience in either teaching or publishing/editing. Although I initially considered tailoring a resume to focus on just one of the fields, after toying with a few options, I decided to send a resume that showed my breadth of experience. I submitted a chronological resume because I had been told that educational technology companies dislike functional resumes. Since the job posting had asked for over 5 years of teaching experience, I specifically used the resume summary to describe myself as a teacher with 7+ years of experience. I knew that [Small Educational Technology Company] specialized in online learning media, and so I also made certain that my summary mentioned my interest in that field.

In my cover letter, I tried to provide the focus that my resume lacked, clearly targeting both fields mentioned as desired experience. I began with my teaching experience. The job posting told the candidate, “It is essential to put yourself in the place of the student and instructor.” In my cover letter, I noted that “my experience has allowed me to consider material both as a student and an instructor.” When writing about my editing experience, I also followed the posting. “Any familiarity with copyediting would be beneficial,” it said, so I wrote, “[I have] copyedited content for clarity, consistency and conformity to a given style guide.” Throughout the cover letter, I tried to use the same vocabulary used throughout the job posting.

Before sending in my cover letter and resume, I poked through my linkedin network to see if I knew anyone with a connection to the company. I also asked my colleagues at [Small Language School], where I was working part time. With no connections in sight, I simply followed the posting instructions and e-mailed my cover letter and resume as directed. Then I waited a week. At exactly the one-week point, I sent a follow-up e-mail to the same address. The follow-up email was short and to the point, summarizing the main theme of my qualifications. A hiring manager had once told me that a call should be the last resort; if I hadn’t heard at the end of two weeks, I intended to call the company as a final follow-up.
Happily, I soon received an e-mail inviting me to take a job-based test. The job-based test was a godsend. It gave me a sense of the work that I would be doing, and the instructions helped me to better understand what the company was looking for in a candidate. I made sure to send the test back before the deadline. To prepare for the interview, I researched the company, used their products so that I could talk about them knowledgeably, and read a fantastic book by Peter Veruki, *The 250 Job Interview Questions you’ll most likely be asked ... and the answers that will get you hired!* (Adams Media, 1999). The book really helped me to develop my sixty-second pitch.

Sure enough, the first question in the interview was, “Tell me a little bit about yourself.” As Veruki suggested, I had developed themes to turn to – I worked to describe my strengths and enthusiasm in the areas I already had targeted in my cover letter: teaching and editing. Having a tight focus made the interview questions easier to answer. I was offered the position a week later. By referring to the themes I had developed during the interview, I successfully negotiated to change the job title.

It’s been only a few weeks that I’ve held the position of Associate Editor at [Small Educational Technology Company]. So far, I love it. The job allows me to focus on many of my interests -- publishing, editing, teaching and foreign languages. It is much broader in scope than academic positions I had considered. Before getting this job, I had several informational interviews, networked as best I could, applied to over 85 positions in less than 5 months, and had a few dismal interviews for other jobs. What made this application and interview work where others didn’t? Luck was certainly part of it. The big difference on my end, though, was that throughout the process I knew exactly why I wanted the position, and I knew exactly why I thought I would be perfect for it. Having a clear narrative of “why me” and concrete themes to back it all up made the cover letter easier to write, and the interview a smooth conversation.

From my months of serious job-hunting, I can offer a few lessons learned:

1. Keep your job search broad. Think about your work experience in terms of skills that you enjoyed developing and would love to use, not strictly in terms of previous (or future) job titles. Be ready to talk about the very applicable skills you have gained from your experience (and they *are* applicable skills!).

2. Tailor every single cover letter and every single resume. Every single one. Even a resume that gives general experience should have a personal summary that hews closely to the job posting. If you don’t personalize, the automated application systems (or HR) will weed you out fast (as I found out from follow-up calls to several companies).

3. Develop a narrative. Know why you want the job you’ve applied for, and why you’re good for that specific job. This seems obvious, right? But when I started applying for jobs, I knew that I wanted to work in editing, or in university administration, or in teaching. I went into a few interviews thinking about a “career in ____” much more than “this job.” Not good enough. You have to know why you want the *specific* job you’re applying for, why you’re a perfect fit for *that* position. Develop a sixty-second pitch expressing your narrative.
SUMMARY: Skilled French language educator with 7+ years of experience in the classroom, special interest in educational technology and online media.

EXPERIENCE

Instructor of French, [Small Language School, Anystate] 07/09 - Present
* Create original curricula for adult learners at all levels of language spectrum.
* Teach private lessons and group sessions.

Dissertation Fellow, Yale University, New Haven, CT 08/03 - 12/09
* Completed book-length doctoral thesis in French literature.
* Wrote successful grant proposals for research funding, receiving over $60,000.
* Conducted yearlong research fellowship in Paris at the École Normale Supérieure.
* Tutored individuals and groups throughout graduate program, 6+ years instruction.

Graduate Teaching Fellow, Yale University, New Haven, CT 08/06 - 05/07
* Evaluated and advised graduate student instructors on best practices.
* Designed and delivered seminars and workshop series on classroom management, and the use of cultural artifacts and new technologies in the modern language classroom.
* Budgeted and organized teaching fair, coordinating over 300 attendees and 60 presenters.
* Wrote and coordinated recruitment material and events.

Instructor of French, Yale University, New Haven, CT 08/05 - 05/07
* Taught four undergraduate courses, from beginning to advanced French language and culture.
* Advised undergraduate students during set office hours, and in independent sessions.

International House Coordinator, Ursinus College, Collegeville, PA 08/02 - 06/03
* Budgeted and coordinated approximately 100 social programs for international student community, from conception through execution.
* Served as resident housing advisor to 50 international and American students.

Administrative Assistant / Web Coordinator, Ursinus College Evening Division Collegeville, PA 05/00 - 06/03
* Performed all maintenance of incoming student files and advising material.
* Managed accounts payable.
* Copy-edited and updated content on the website of the Continuing Education Division.

EDUCATION

Yale University  French  Ph.D.  2009
Ursinus College  French, Secondary Education  B.A.  2003

LANGUAGES: Fluent French; functional Spanish; reading knowledge of Latin and Italian.

SELECTED HONORS: Phi Beta Kappa; Phi Sigma Iota; Who’s Who Among American Women; Who’s Who Among American Colleges and Universities.
Dear Hiring Manager:

As a foreign language instructor, I have been lucky to use [Small Educational Technology Company] activities as a class resource. I am consistently impressed with the quality of those activities. Based on my positive experiences, I am delighted to express my interest in the position of Online Language Book Reviewer with you. I think that the position is a good match with my experience as a teacher, my dedication to technology-based instruction, and my background in writing and editing.

I have worked as a French language teacher at the middle school, high school, college and adult-learner levels. Throughout my time in the classroom, I have been interested in the innovation of teaching and learning methods, especially methods that incorporate technology. In my own language classroom, I make a point to use web-based activities in order to increase the interactive nature of my classes. My experience has allowed me to consider material both as a student and an instructor. I believe that my solid instructional background and my experience in online-based instruction would be an asset to [Small Educational Technology Company].

As a recent doctoral student, I have a firm grounding in writing and editing. While reviewing academic articles and thesis chapters, I copyedited content for clarity, consistency and conformity to a given style guide. I am detail-oriented and quick to learn new editing software. This background would serve to ensure quality in my work at [Small Educational Technology Company].

Because I am passionate about good education, I am excited to apply to join you. In my current position as a language teacher, I am dedicated to increasing student engagement and achievement. I am equally dedicated to language and editing. I would love to bring my enthusiasm for education and for editing to [Small Educational Technology Company].

Thank you for your consideration of my application. Please feel free to contact me at 123-456-7890 or at contacte-mail@mail.com. I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely yours,

“Claire Kohlman”

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Claire Kohlman, Ph.D.
Address Line 1
Address State and Zip
123-456-7890
contacte-mail@mail.com
POSITION ANNOUNCEMENT
Online Language Book Reviewer at [Small Educational Technology Company]

Type: Full-time    Experience: Entry level
Functions: Writing/Editing, Other, Education, Quality Assurance
Industries: Education, Writing and Editing, E-Learning, Online Media

Job Description: [Small Educational Technology Company] Corporation works in partnership with leading educational publishers to convert printed textbooks and workbooks into online books. [Small Educational Technology Company] Books are more than just mere replicas of printed versions; they are fully interactive and incorporate audio, video, and other forms of digital media. Our goal is to make each online book match the printed book as closely as possible, with the exception of changes needed to make our books more suitable for an online environment. We currently specialize in foreign language books and are seeking a reviewer.

Skills
1. Language experience. You must be fluent in one or more of the following languages (although you need not be a native speaker): Spanish, French, German, Italian.
2. Ability to quickly learn new software. In addition to reviewing the language, you will also be expected to learn guidelines used in the development of the books. This includes becoming familiar with our grading features to ensure each question is graded accurately. You will also be responsible for documenting changes to maintain consistency throughout each online book.
3. Detail-oriented. Our goal is for each online book to match the printed book as closely as possible, so the reviewer must evaluate each page in detail. While the job of a reviewer is not to change the content of the printed book, you will be expected to catch occasional errors carried over from the original.
4. Open-minded. Our activities are manually created by our team of Book Developers. You will be expected to evaluate the current format of each activity to determine whether the original purpose of the activity is portrayed online. You will also need to think analytically to consider alternative ways of creating certain activities in ways that will be easier for students to understand. Lastly, exercise answers in printed books are limited, so you will also need to document alternate answers to be included in the exercises.
5. Clear and concise communication. Your job will be to document all errors and recommended changes, so you must be able to communicate clearly.

At least 5 years experience required in one of the following fields:
1. Teaching experience. It is essential to put yourself in the place of the student and instructor in terms of how students will interpret an activity and how instructors will grade each question. Experience teaching language, preferably at the college level, would help immensely.
2. Educational publishing and/or editorial experience. The activities we put online are created by leading publishers, so any familiarity with copyediting would be beneficial. You’ll need to consider what is important to the publishers and what may or may not be necessary to change.
Dear Hiring Manager,

I wrote to you a week ago expressing my interest in joining you at [Small Educational Technology Company] as an Online Language Book Reviewer. I would like to reiterate my interest in the position: as I said in my first e-mail, I have long been an admirer of [Small Educational Technology Company]'s fantastic materials (which I first encountered teaching French at Yale University). With my background in language instruction and in writing/editing, I think I would be a fine match for the position of Book Reviewer.

Thanks again for considering me. My resume is attached. I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely yours,

“Claire Kohlman”

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Claire Kohlman, Ph.D.
Address Line 1
Address State and Zip
123-456-7890
contacte-mail@mail.com
EDUCATION

Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut

2009  Ph.D. French Literature
      Dissertation: [Good Title].
      Advisor: [Excellent Mentor]

2006  M.Phil. French Literature

2004  M.A. French Literature

Ursinus College, Collegeville, Pennsylvania

2003  B.A. French, Secondary Education
      Summa cum laude, with Departmental Honors
      Thesis: [Good Title].
      Advisor: [Excellent Mentor]

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Instructor, [Small Language School, Anystate]

2009-Present  Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced and Topics in French: all levels of French
               instruction to adult professionals, in both private sessions and group classes.

Instructor (PTAI), Yale University 2005-2007

2007  Intermediate and Advanced French: fourth semester language, emphasis on film
      and other authentic media with literary readings from throughout the francophone world (Gide, Joffo).

2006  Elementary and Intermediate French: second semester language, extensive use of
      audio and video technology, with emphasis on listening and speaking,
      communicative proficiency and cultural insights (Capretz immersion
      method).

Intermediate and Advanced French: third semester language course, emphasis on
      review of fundamental grammatical structures through study of short
      stories, plays, novels, and film (Sartre, Camus, Truffaut).

2005  Elementary French: first semester language, extensive use of audio and video
      technology, with emphasis on listening and speaking, communicative
      proficiency and cultural insights (Capretz immersion method).

Graduate Teaching Fellow and Consultant, the Graduate Teaching Center, Yale University.

2006-2007  Led series of workshop seminars on teaching world languages, and on the use of
           technology in the college world language classroom. Observed, evaluated and
           advised graduate student instructors on best practices both in and out of the
           classroom. Organized logistics for thirty presenters in Teaching Fair, attended by
           over 300 graduate students and faculty.
Spring-Ford Area High School, PA 2002
2002 Student Teaching of 5 courses (full planning and course responsibility assumed), grades 9-12, beginning to advanced French.

Teaching Certification
Connecticut Initial Educator Certification, Endorsement 018, French, Grades 7 Through 12.

ACADEMIC FELLOWSHIPS/POSITIONS
2008-2009 Dissertations Fellowship, Yale University.
2007 Summer Research Fellowship, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.
2006-2007 Representative, Graduate Studies Committee, Department of French, Yale University.
2004-2006 Leader of French Table, Slifka Center, Yale University.
Led weekly conversational French table with students and staff from throughout the university.
2004-2005 Co-Chair of the Graduate Association of French Students, Yale University.
2003 Summer Language Institute Fellowship, Latin, Yale University.
2002-2003 International House Coordinator, Ursinus College.
Coordinated all international student programming, approximately 100 programs throughout the academic year. Acted as resident advisor to forty-five international and American students. Designed and led workshops to establish student mentoring program.
2001-2003 Administrative Assistant / Web Coordinator, Center for Continuous Learning, Ursinus College.
Web maintenance for the continuing education division. Interfaced with the Corporate Connections Outreach program to attract adult learners to the college.

CONFERENCE ORGANIZATION
2007 Organizing and Abstracts Committee, Web Support, Yale Graduate Student Conference, “La volonté de paraître: la culte et la culture des apparences dans la littérature française et francophone.”
2007 Panel Chair, Yale Graduate Student Conference, “La volonté de paraître: la culte et la culture des apparences dans la littérature française et francophone.”
2004 Organizing Committee, Web Support, Yale Graduate Student Conference, “Le Mauvais Usage.”
2004 Panel Chair, Yale Graduate Student Conference, “Le Mauvais Usage.”

SELECTED ACHIEVEMENTS
Honors Societies and Awards
Phi Beta Kappa; Phi Sigma Iota; Who’s Who in American Colleges and Universities; Who’s Who Among American Women.

LANGUAGES
 Fluent English and French; adequate oral and written Spanish; reading knowledge of Latin, Old French and Italian.