



"Works Well With Pomegranates"
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Recently, I was cleaning out my office filing cabinet and came across a number of job applications and résumés I had gathered over the years when I owned and operated a small retail gallery. It is remarkable—and sometimes comical—to see just how many applicants load up their cover letters with glib and meaningless clichés that seem to roll off our keyboards when we type as readily as they fall off our tongues when we speak. Most job seekers pack them into paragraphs in the hopes that a familiar one-liner will imply more than its actual words. Upon scrutiny, however, most of these over-used phrases mean very little.

Let's take a look and have some fun with them—they are not made-up, I lifted them straight out of real cover letters:

I work well with people

...as opposed to what? Pomegranates or marsupials?

I multi-task

What on earth does that mean ... you can walk and chew gum, you can handle a variety of tasks at once, or you have difficulty focusing on one thing at a time?

I am good at networking

As soon as I see a good old fashioned noun forced into action mode, I cringe. 'Networking' ... what is that? Schmoozing at cocktail parties, lobbying political groups, or spending too much time on Facebook? Please explain.

I have good communication skills

So far, you have failed to 'communicate' precisely what that means. You can tap out a percussive Morse code, or you talk too much? If you've ever been published, or you've led seminars, now would be a good time to say so.

I am familiar with cash registers

Hey, this is a consumer-driven society, we all shop and we're all very 'familiar' with cash registers!

I am comfortable with computers

Yes, but can you operate one? I'm quite comfortable around aeroplanes, but I have no clue how to fly one!

I know how to meet deadlines

Yes, we all know 'how' to meet a deadline ... the question is, do you?

I love dogs and quiet walks along the beach

On your own time, pal!

There are many, many more, but, you get the idea. All of these convenience phrases are empty promises unless backed up with concrete examples. Whenever you find yourself resorting to an over used cliché, **stop, think** and **substitute**. Insert an example of an action or skill that demonstrates the intent of the phrase instead—it's far more effective than the words alone.

For example: if you believe you 'work well with people', describe a situation in which your ability was apparent—perhaps you headed up an important committee, or were a member of a productive team. Give your potential employer specific examples instead of empty platitudes.

If you are 'comfortable' with computers, let your potential employer know precisely which operating systems and programmes you work with and how your specific knowledge would be an asset to his or her business.

A good way to organise your thoughts is to make a list of the catch phrases you are tempted to rely on and then match each one with an example or two to justify your claim. If you think you are 'well organised', show me!