June 5, 2013

**Cover letter addressing screening criteria**

**Re:** Senior Writer/Editor, Communications (J0513-0160)

**Applicant:** Kimberly Lochhead

To Whom It May Concern:

It is with great enthusiasm that I apply for this role as Senior Writer/Editor at Canada Post. To date, my work experience has been entirely based around writing, editing, proofreading, communications and editorial/production management. I believe I would be well suited to this position for a variety of reasons. Below, I address how my experience relates to each of the qualifications listed in the job posting.

**University degree or college diploma in a relevant discipline such as Journalism, Communications or the Arts, or a minimum of five years of relevant work experience.**

I hold an honours Bachelor of Journalism (double major in history) from Carleton University. The program’s demanding and rigorous nature fostered in me an excellent ability to write and edit corporate material on a wide range of subjects. The program’s emphasis on meeting deadlines and ensuring high quality, error-free writing prepared me well for a career focused on the written word.

**Experience writing about business strategies or corporate or public finance would be a definite asset.**

From August 2011 to February 2013, I was a Project Manager at Ascribe Marketing Communications Inc, where I worked as a writer and editor, while also managing the production flow of the entire company. For a wide variety of clients, I wrote, edited and designed corporate documents such as strategic business plans, annual reports and various pamphlets and brochures. Since the majority of Ascribe’s clients are public sector ones (e.g. Canada School of Public Service, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council), I developed a strong understanding of the plans and priorities of the public service. These clients required service that worked within their internal deadlines, including immediate responses, accurate review and on-time product delivery. When planning, writing and editing their business strategies, annual reports and other planning documents, I analyzed large volumes of research and background material to begin the process. An effective business strategy implements and evaluates cross-functional decisions that allow an organization to achieve long-term goals. It must be clear in its message, focused and accurate, providing a comprehensive direction while specifying the mission, vision, policy, plans, projects and other initiatives. It must also include phases and check points to properly evaluate its effectiveness and overall performance of the organization as it works towards defined goals. Similarly with annual reports, I collaborated with a team to ensure the organization’s successes and challenges were accurately and fairly conveyed. Working with the CEO, COO and other executives, I conducted interviews to extract key messages and strategic information to ensure alignment with communication plans to produce high quality reports.

Additionally, I tracked project details, liaised with clients, supported the team and managed the company’s social media presences. I also wrote and edited branding material including press releases, key messages, brochures and video scripts. My excellent judgment, creative problem solving and strong analytical skills were key to delivering products to clients within tight timelines.

**Successful, proven experience as a writer and editor.**

During my time at Ascribe I gained a great deal of experience writing and editing various technical and legal documents for clients in both the public and private sectors. I often consulted corporate style guides, technical manuals, user guides, information documents and the Canadian Press Style Guide. I am also very familiar with the production process (revisions, approvals, translation, etc.). As a journalist writing and editing feature articles for Ottawa Life Magazine and reporting on politics and breaking news for newspapers, I have extensive experience making editorial recommendations and decisions, as well as managing an editorial production team. I am comfortable working within tight deadlines in high-pressure environments that require stringent attention to detail, clarity, accuracy, relevance and consistency.

At Carleton, I learned the fundamentals of writing, grammar, syntax and editing, all while developing excellent written and verbal communication skills. Later, at The EMC Newspaper and Ottawa Life Magazine, I applied these skills in my writing and editing roles, enhancing my ability to create compelling content and sharp eye for detail. I also became proficient with layout, design, graphics and the production process, which involves additional editing and even rewriting if necessary (using tools such as Adobe Acrobat, Illustrator, MS Office, Teamsite and XML markup editors). Managing the layout and design process ensures a high quality and accurate product that is consistent with an organization’s brand and aligned with its business strategy. From content development to publication, I have experience seeing a project through each step just before it is available to internal employees and/or the public. This provides a product that is also accountable, focused and goal-driven.

**Superior communication skills.**

In each of my previous roles, effective written and verbal communications were crucial to creating a high quality product, whether that product was an extensively written business strategy or op-ed, superior communication skills were key. I was tasked with multiple duties necessary to complete a final project or publish a final publication, from newspapers and magazine to reports and other corporate documents. In each case, accurately following instructions and aligning content with business strategies and overall corporate goals was necessary to client satisfaction and my company’s reputation. As Writer/Editor and Project Manager at Ascribe, I received and carried out instructions from my supervisor (the company’s president), and then communicated instructions to staff, ensured they were followed and that projects remained on track. I also communicated deadlines, meetings, project milestones and any unforeseen challenges to clients to keep them updated and aware of any issues. This required professionalism in my communication in-person, through email and the telephone, as well as a knack for providing prompt responses and excellent service.

Through my journalism degree from Carleton, I learned the foundation of writing, editing and the general art of communicating. The program’s emphasis on accuracy and quality allowed me to develop a strong sense of attention to detail, as well as the ability to work well under very tight deadlines. Most importantly, the program developed my ability to communicate both efficiently and effectively; on a fundamental level, I learned how to make writing accurate, clear and consistent. Through my radio and television courses, I also perfected my speaking skills, learning to properly articulate and enunciate script copy. Currently at Rogers TV, I use my excellent communication and verbal speaking skills as a production assistant for Daytime Ottawa and Talk Ottawa with Mark Sutcliffe, contributing to each show’s successful air on live television daily.

**Extensive experience preparing content for important stakeholder groups such as the public, senior officers, directors, government officials, and/or employees.**

In my editorial role at Ascribe Marketing Communications Inc., I wrote and edited marketing material, speeches, op-eds, formal statements, white papers, annual reports and other confidential documents for a range of senior executives, government officials and public employees. These public sector clients included the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, Royal Canadian Mint, Canada School of Public Service, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse. Whether concerning corporate strategic plans or messages targeting the public, these documents were highly technical in language and required referencing corporate style guides as well as large volumes of research material.

For Ottawa Life’s clients including the Professional Institute for the Public Service of Canada, Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers and the Ottawa Catholic District School Board, I interviewed executives and officials to prepare advertorials and op-eds, requiring their review and approval of final content. This involved research into the issues the clients wanted to highlight, including sensitive topics in order to produce an informed and fair piece that promoted the organization’s work, success and message.

**Comfortable producing content suitable for multi-media platforms and varied venues including speeches, annual reports, op-ed styled pieces, blogs, formal planning documents, statements or submissions to government and/or creative briefs.**

I am very comfortable producing content for multi-media platforms and a variety of venues and media. At Ottawa Life, I managed the magazine’s social media presence, including writing tweets, blog posts and Facebook posts about corporate news as well as posts promoting contests and company initiatives. At Ascribe, I wrote tweets about company news and events, including its silver award at the 2012 Ottawa Business Achievement Awards for Professional Service Provider of the Year. To direct the company’s writing team, I wrote creative briefs based on client consultation to provide project guidance.

For Ascribe’s high-profile public sector clients, I wrote and edited speeches announcing government funding and year-end results, op-eds about contentious issues relevant to a corporation’s mandate, blogs on current events and trends and strategic business plans. For Ascribe’s contract work, I completed formal technical proposals and financial bids in response to RFPs. This involved writing formal statements to government clients like the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and its review committee, highlighting the company’s experience serving the public sector, its knowledge of the subject matter at hand, content development and review process and consulting financial information to create a budget. Combing through RFPs for technical detail also ensured the proposal was delivered complete and on-time, with the proper formatting and compulsory amount of copies. My role was critical to the company winning contracts and maintaining its esteemed reputation among public service clients.

**Experience reviewing corporate materials and planning/executing strategies.**

In my capacity at Ascribe, I gained a great deal of experience editing and proofreading various corporate, technical and legal documents for clients in both the public and private sectors (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, DFAIT, Bell Canada, Alcatel-Lucent, etc). It was crucial that these materials aligned with their planning documents and business strategies, which we often prepared and wrote as well. When required, I consulted corporate style guides, technical codes and documents, as well as the Canadian Press Style Guide. I am very familiar with the production process, which can involve many rounds of feedback, revisions, edits and translations before layout, approvals and publication.

With a reputation for excellence and producing work of the highest quality, Ascribe’s seamless and efficient workflow allowed for consistent quality checks at every step of the production process. The company’s strategy for any project included a team approach, where the prime writers were identified and then participated in a brain storming session with the Editorial Director before beginning content development. I was responsible for choosing writers based on their skill, experience and knowledge of the subject material. Using my strong organizational skills, I planned and scheduled all internal and external meetings for each project, managing my own time as well as that of each team member. I managed all the writers and editors, prioritizing their workloads by keeping them aware of upcoming deadlines and shifting assignments if necessary. Depending on the project (e.g. website, annual report, brochure, etc.), I tracked interim steps and kept the client updated until the finished project completely satisfied the client and received approval.

At Ottawa Life, I reviewed corporate materials including advertorials, inserts and each edition of the magazine, giving final approval before printing. This required the ability to write and edit documents in Word format, PDF and design markup throughout the production process, using my sharp eye to correct any spelling and grammar mistakes as well as formatting flaws. I was also instrumental in planning, developing and writing the magazine’s business strategy, including effective steps to reach its annual goals, advertising sales and subscription targets. From my extensive knowledge of the company’s business operations, experience coordinating sales and liaising with clients and staff, I created and executed a strategy that increased revenue, decreased the operating budget and established innovative methods to amplify the publication’s social media presences.

**Excellent writing and editing skills.**

From the roles above and my journalism education, I have gained excellent writing and editing skills in both print media and marketing, delivering high-quality key communications messages, corporate documents and thoroughly researched news reports. Accuracy and precision are essential traits that have fueled my career as a writer, editor and proofreader. With a sharp eye and great attention to detail, I highlight spelling and grammatical errors, poor sentence/paragraph structure and factual inaccuracies. Through planning, researching, determining themes and liaising with writers, editors and subject matter experts, I have reviewed content for treatment of subject, format, style and tone, rewriting as many times as necessary. I have also collaborated with the original content authors to confirm that my proposed revisions are acceptable, on message and target the intended audiences. My strong journalism background has allowed me to develop these skills as well as a keen sense of judgment in extracting key messages and following ethical guidelines.

**Familiarity with research methodologies.**

My former roles in both journalism and marketing have enhanced my strong judgment, analytical skills and ability to provide strategic advice to support decision-making. Research plays a crucial role in providing me with the skill to make informed judgments and decisions – it is the backbone of good journalism and solid writing. At Ascribe, I digested large volumes of research produced by clients including reports on plans and priorities and departmental performance reports, aligning these corporate materials with communication plans and strategies through my Internet research methodologies, while consulting corporate style guides. My journalistic experiences at Ottawa Life and The EMC Newspaper relied heavily on my excellent research skills to produce accurate, fair and balanced feature articles and accounts of news events. Consulting primary and secondary sources, I also verified facts and information to ensure consistency.

**The demonstrated ability to work in a dynamic environment with fellow writers and editors would be an asset.**

Throughout my career I have worked in dynamic and fast-paced editorial and production environments with seasoned writers and editors. From being part of the writing staff as a newspaper reporter to managing an entire team at Ottawa Life Magazine and Ascribe, I am well-versed in all aspects of writing and editing and feel most comfortable collaborating with fellow writers and editors.

As a customer of Canada Post and professional with experience working for and with the public service, I have a good understanding of the communications needs of a government organization. I am well aware of Canada Post’s business and political pressure, as well as its priorities to maintain relevance and excellent service to Canadians, become more competitive, adjust to new technologies and how consumers receive mail and to change its business operations as a commercial enterprise. In today’s digital economy that challenges the mail business, modernizing corporate operations with an effective business strategy are critical. Canada Post has successfully implemented many new initiatives including scanning technology to allow customers to track parcels 24/7, a tracking application accessible on any mobile device, and the e-post system that allows bills to be received through email. As Canada Post continues to redefine its role by understanding its customers’ needs, I can provide communications solutions to its corporate needs.

In summary, I firmly believe that my education, work experience and familiarity with producing corporate documents would render me a choice candidate for this Senior Writer/Editor position.

Many thanks for your time and consideration,

Kimberly Lochhead

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