

# A Brief Guide to Crafting a Cover Letter

## Goals of a Cover Letter

- 1) Gain attention, create interest, and foster a desire for more information about you from an employer.
- 2) Demonstrate your skills – communication, organization, and writing.
- 3) Win an interview!

## What to Express in Your Cover Letter

- 1) How you can add value to this employer with skills and experience you possess
- 2) Desire for continued communication – interview
- 3) Communication, organizational, and analytical skills
- 4) Some positive personality and professional behavior traits
- 5) Example of specific achievement/project you have done in the past with positive results that relates to this employer
- 6) Interest in THIS employer with specific reason
- 7) How you learned of this employer/job
- 8) Intent to follow-up
- 9) Specifically – how your skills, experience, and particular achievements can add value to an employer.
  - a. Try to find out what the employer's problems and goals are – then let them know how your specific skills, achievements, and experience can solve their problem or meet their goals.
    - i. This is almost like a sales pitch for yourself. Be specific. Use good information, facts, and examples.

## How To Express

- 1) Concise and to the point
- 2) Utilize good action verbs – provides more depth and clarity to your statements.
  - a. Examples:
  - b. Accomplished, advised, budgeted, decreased, encouraged, examined, generated, invented, marketed, overhauled, planned, reduced, repaired, stimulated, trained, upgraded, etc.
- 3) Conversational, yet formal tone
- 4) Use a consistent voice/tense
- 5) NO grammar or spelling mistakes
  - a. Ask a friend to review for you OR
  - b. Use an online service like [JobNow](#)
- 6) Roughly 1-2 pages (try to fit it in one page)
- 7) Avoid pronouns

## Parts of the Cover Letter

- 1) Introductory Line – Catchy statement that discusses your unique interest in this specific employer.
  - 2) 1<sup>st</sup> body section:
    - a. Attention grabbing introduction
    - b. Your interest in the employer – why (facts, quotes, references)
    - c. How you found out about the employer
    - d. Mention the employer as they relate to their field (why you prefer them as oppose to competitors/why they stand out against competitors, etc.)
      - i. Ways of beginning a cover letter:
        1. Offer immediate benefit to employer
        2. Ask a question
        3. Mention a personal referral
        4. Refer to an employer's ad
        5. Refer to news/article about employer
        6. Use offbeat quote/fascinating fact
        7. Use a quotation
        8. State your job objective
- 3) 2<sup>nd</sup> body section:
  - a. Your skills and qualifications
  - b. How you intend to add value to employer
    - i. Specific pitch perhaps (like *Value Added* section of your resume)
  - c. Example of your past work that will help this employer
  - d. Specific project/achievement that demonstrates your abilities

- e. Specific example to show positive personality traits and professional behavior
  - f. This section should be your convincing argument on how you can add value to an employer.
- 4) Final section – strong closing
- a. Your interest in continuing communication – interview
  - b. Intent to follow up – mention exactly when (for example, one week) and how you intend to contact them – email, phone, etc.
  - c. Your strong interest in being employed at this specific employer
  - d. Reminder on how you can be contacted.
  - e. Well-worded closing that leaves the reader looking for more (hence, wants to contact you)
  - f. Final pitch on how you can add value to the employer, why you're the right person for the job, and a desire for an interview.

## **Types of Cover Letters**

- 1) General Cover Letter
  - a. Standard cover letter (*as described above*)
- 2) Executive Briefing
  - a. Utilizes bullet points or table in order to directly relate things the employer is looking for to what you have to offer in each area
  - b. Often used with mailings to several employers (same field)
  - c. Often used to facilitate more communication
  - d. Good for targeting HR departments
- 3) Broadcast Letter
  - a. Designed to be sent out WITHOUT a resume
  - b. Basically, a short cover letter with a description of your skills included
  - c. Why use?
    - i. Not getting good results with your current resume
    - ii. Your resume is not applicable to this job
  - d. Goal
    - i. Try to foster a phone conversation with an employer
    - ii. They will often ask for a full resume at this point
    - iii. Perhaps ask to give in person, but if not, this will give you at least some time to finalize a resume
  - e. Only part of multi-layered approach
- 4) Letters to Employment Agencies and Executive Recruiters
  - a. Designed to be sent to headhunters and job agencies
  - b. Always tell the truth plainly
  - c. Cut right to the chase
  - d. Meant to foster consideration for unknown positions
- 5) Letter of Inquiry
  - a. In this type of query you are enquiring about possible job opportunities that fit your skills. You have to give a general area you are interested in working in.

## **General Tips**

- 1) Consistent font
- 2) Proof read! – consider having a friend review for you
- 3) Quality paper (white, cream) when printed
- 4) Address to a person by name

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