



## COVER LETTERS

A cover letter is an essential component of your application package. Anytime you submit a resume to an employer via mail, by fax or over the internet you'll want to include a cover letter. Employers today are often swamped with a high number of applicants. An effective cover letter can entice them into granting you an interview. The purpose of the cover letter is to personalize your resume for an employer, and elaborate more fully on your qualifications as they pertain to that organization.

### PARTS OF THE COVER LETTER

Typically, the cover letter has three parts: introduction, body and closing. The introduction and closing should each be one paragraph while the body could be one or two paragraphs.

- **Introduction**

State why you are writing, indicate your knowledge of the employer and tell what you'll bring to the position (in terms of skills). Tell the reader how you learned about the job. If you are writing as a result of a referral, state that information at the very beginning of the letter.

- **Body**

In this section think about how you can contribute to the organization. Describe your skills, talents, accomplishments, and traits as they relate to the opportunity. If you are a student or recent graduate describe how your coursework, internship, etc., has prepared you. Give examples of how your skills have been demonstrated in the past and describe how your experiences relate to or are transferable to the employer. If possible, quantify your accomplishments.

Many human resource and hiring managers favor the "T-letter format," in which you create a column on the left in which you quote specific qualifications from the employer's ad and on the right you list your corresponding qualifications.

Katherine Hansen of Quintessential Careers, advises, "The two-column format is extremely effective when you possess all the qualifications for a job, but it can even sell you when you lack one or more qualification. The format so clearly demonstrates that you are qualified in so many areas that the employer may be willing to overlook the areas in which your exact qualifications are deficient."

### Example:

#### **Your Requirements**

- Client communication skills
- Microsoft Office Suite
- Financial research skills

#### **My Qualifications**

- Over six years successful client account experience
- MSWord, Excel, Outlook, PowerPoint
- Four years financial research/ analysis- especially strong Internet research skills

- **Closing**

In closing your letter, restate your interest in the position and indicate your follow up plans.

Most employers do not look favorably on cover letters which look mass produced. Here are some suggestions to make your cover letter unique. Visit the Web site or read the annual report of each organization that you intend to apply to. What are their specific challenges? How can your education and experience help fill this need? You probably will not need to re-write an entire new cover letter each time, but you will need to adjust the content so that it is specific to each organization and position.

### **ABOUT EMAIL AND COVER LETTERS**

With the abundance of resumes now being sent via email, your email text can also serve as a cover letter. Remember your online cover letter should be the same quality as if you were mailing it. Avoid getting overly casual and informal. If you plan to attach your resume state in your cover letter the program you used to create the attachment. ("I've enclosed a resume written in *name of software used*). In today's world of computer viruses, you may also want to cut and paste a text version of your resume, in case the reader is unable or unwilling to open your attachment. Do not fill in the recipient's email address until you've finished writing and editing your correspondence. This prevents you from accidentally sending off the message before it is ready.

### **OTHER TIPS**

- The cover letter should not be any longer than one page and should follow the format of a standard business letter.
- Be sure to include an inside address.
- Address the letter to a specific person. If the full name and title are not included in the job posting, contact the organization to obtain this information. If you cannot get the name and title of someone to write to, it's safer to use a generic title like "Dear Human Resources Manager" or simply say "Dear Sir or Madam".
- Clearly specify the job code (if it is provided), and give the reference as to whether you are writing the cover letter in response to an advertisement.
- Keep in mind that this is business correspondence. A colon should follow your greeting -- Dear Ms. Smith: -- , NOT a comma.
- Remember to proofread carefully. Misspellings and grammatical errors can severely compromise your chances as a candidate. Ask a family member or friend to proof your letters.
- Keep copies of all cover letters for referencing during the interview process.
- Quantify your experiences and achievements.
- Minimize use of the personal pronoun "I".
- Conclude the letter by stating your intention to follow up.
- Thank the reader for their consideration.
- Note your calendar and follow up as promised in your letter.