

Cover Letters

While the perfect cover letter does not guarantee you an interview, an imperfect cover letter can quite easily remove you from the interviewing process. Even if the letter is only briefly scanned by an interviewer, imperfections can cost you opportunities. Cover letters are an *enhancement* to your resume which allow you to state your objective, goals and personal fit for a position.

Every chance you get to submit a cover letter is an opportunity to highlight your interest in the company and unique skill set. Many recruiters and hiring managers will not consider an application without a cover letter. Others will never read one. You have an opportunity to stand out with a better than average cover letter, so here's what you should include.

Paragraph 1: The first few sentences of your letter should indicate the position you are applying for, who you know inside the company or who referred you, and why you are interested in working for the company. (What is it about the company or job that interests you and why?)

Paragraph 2: This paragraph should include your top qualifications for the position. Concisely list the top three-four skills or experiences that align with what the job is asking for.

Paragraph 3: Thank the reader for their his/her time and consideration, mention that your resume is attached, and indicate you will follow up in a week.

Cover Letter Template

August 12, 2015

John Doe, General Manager
Acme Fidelity
1000 Broadway
New York, NY 10012

Dear Mr. Doe:

Opening Paragraph: Include your reason for writing. State what position you are applying for and why. Briefly mention how you learned of this opportunity or how you obtained the employer's name – and what interests you about the company/position. Whenever possible, make this first paragraph interesting or unique.

Middle paragraphs/bullets: Provide an overview of your skills, unique strengths and write it in such a way so that you address the value you bring to the company (not what you want). Match your competencies to the needs/requirements of the specific job of the organization.

Closing Paragraph: Thank the reader, state how you may be contacted and what you will do to follow-up.

Sincerely,

Signature

Key Principles of Writing Cover Letters

1. BE READER-CENTERED. This means that you work to keep the focus of your paragraph on what you can do for the employer rather than on what the job will do for you. Certainly a good position will provide you with experience, exposure to solving real world problems, and valuable contacts. There is nothing wrong with mentioning what benefits you'll be receiving, but remember the point of your cover letter is to sell your skills and get them interested in you. You'll be much more successful if you write from your reader's point of view.

2. SUPPORT YOUR CLAIMS. The main weakness in most cover letters is unsupported claims. Writers frequently describe their strongest attributes in glowing terms, but fail to give examples which lend credibility to the statement.

For example, in the sentence,

"I believe my success in logistics and working in cross-functional teams will be a value add to your organization", you have two claims.

The first claim is "success in logistics" and the second is "working in cross-functional teams." However, you have given no concrete proof. This is weak because anyone can say these things about themselves, so the writing is not very persuasive.

Here is an example of how the same idea could be better expressed:

"Your emphasis on logistics and working in cross-functional teams align with my experience with Bolthouse Farms. I coordinated transportation, managed carriers and provided sales and EDI support. I teamed with sales, carriers, customers and operations to maximize trailer fill, review potential lane and backhaul opportunities and minimize rework that led to \$450k in savings for 2013.

Tips To Remember

1. Personalize your cover letters by naming the organization and the specific job you are seeking, by mentioning how you found out about the job and by naming employees with whom you may have contact. This information can be included in your introductory paragraph.
2. Focus the one or two paragraphs in the body of your letter around the one or two abilities or claims about yourself that you think most equip you for the job opening. Fill these paragraphs with professional examples and experiences that prove you possess these abilities.
3. Use a traditional letter format. Include your address, phone number and email address on your resume and cover letter.
4. Proofread and spell check all your written application materials. Research shows that recruiters for businesses notice mistakes in grammar and syntax.
5. Match the font style of your resume to your cover letter.
6. Follow up as promised!

Cover Letter Samples

Date

Name, Job Title

Company

Street Address

City State Zip

RE: Independent Sales Representative

Dear Name:

I recently spoke with James Dean, who recommended I share my interest and qualifications for the [Job Title] position available at [insert name of organization]. This is precisely the type of position I am looking for, as it will allow me to utilize my creative lead generation, business to business sales and outgoing personality. More importantly, I am a past satisfied customer of your service and have been following your mission focused work for several years.

Based on what you are looking for, these are some of my key qualifications:

- Over 10 years' experience in sales roles for business to business sales of services, entrepreneurial spirit and implementing sales strategies.
- Top Territory producer for 2 consecutive years and selected as a President's Club member for exceeding aggressive sales quotas.
- Entrepreneurial spirit honed by working for a SaaS startup early in my career and several side businesses.

Attached you will find my resume, which further outlines my qualifications and passion for the Independent Sales Representative position. I look forward to following up with you on May 23 to see where you are in the review process and what the next steps will be. Thank you so much for your consideration and time.

Sincerely,

Sally Finkel
Sales Representative
555.111.2222
sallyfinkel@gmail.com
www.linkedin.com/in/sallyfinkel

Date

Ms. Jane Johnson
Strategic Planning
Company ABC
Street Address
City, State Zip

Dear Ms. Johnson,

I would like to express my interest in the internship position with the Company ABC's Strategic Planning Group. I have followed your company's movements closely, and am very impressed. I believe that Company ABC has done an impressive job leveraging its unique brand and assets into a relationship with the consumer that generates multiple streams of revenue from a single customer and that it has done extremely well in creating new and profitable business segments for the company. Much of that success I attribute to the Strategic Planning Group, and I would be very excited to use my skills in the development of the next set of strategies that will further strengthen that bond with the customer and produce consistent and profitable growth over the coming years.

I honed my team leadership, strategy development, and analysis skills while working at XXX Bank. I managed a project to boost net profits by \$70 million per year, by identifying dissatisfied customers and designing solutions to address their concerns. To succeed, my team conducted focus groups to understand the reasons for card member complaints, brainstormed ways to address these issues, created detailed cost-benefit analyses of proposed solutions, and ultimately coordinated the various groups necessary to implement our recommendations. The project required a comprehensive strategic vision, tremendous attention to detail, strong analytical skills, the ability to clearly communicate ideas, and the ability to mobilize groups with different agendas towards a common objective. I believe these skills would allow me to contribute to Company ABC by developing, analyzing, and implementing the next generation of business strategies.

I enjoy producing tangible results and tackling tough issues and I am confident I can make significant contributions to Company ABC. I hope you find my background and experience a good fit for your company. I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best regards,

Your name
phone number
email
LinkedIn URL