Cover Letters

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Objectives

• Review of Cover Letter basics

• Discuss the main parts of a cover letter

• Developing content

• Examples and discussion

• Q & A
Cover Letter Basics

The goal of the cover letter is to capture the reader’s attention:

• Communicates your interest & enthusiasm in Company, products and/or industry
• Customized to the needs of a specific target company / position
• Highlights benefits you can offer company - Value added
• Resume lists skills and their relationship to accomplishments, while the cover letter summarizes them and how they transfer

Make reader want to review your resume
Cover Letter Basics (Continued)

• A cover letter should always accompany a resume (the only exceptions are for on-campus recruiting or “resume only”)

• Cover letters should not repeat the content of your resume

• International students can use brief cover letters to create opportunities that are otherwise not available to them:
  • On-Campus recruiting
  • Networking activities
John Q. College  
896 S. Allen Street  
State College, PA

Target Name  
Title & Company  
Address

Dear Ms. Jones,

**Paragraph 1** tells who you are, who referred you or how you located the job.

**Paragraph 2** describes your value added.

**Paragraph 3** reiterates interest, asks for interview and states follow-up steps.

Sincerely.

John

- Single page (1/2 – 2/3 pref.)
- Quality paper
- 11 – 12 pt. Font
- Minimum 3/4” margins
- Clear & concise sentences
- Written to a specific person
- Standard block format
- Heading same as resume
Preparation

• Research company thoroughly
• Analyze position description to identify core requirements
• Highlight skills and experiences relative to requirements ("fit")
• Clarify your motivation for position and/or company/industry
• Remember reader is eliminating, not selecting, candidates
  • Appearance, format
  • No typos or grammatical errors

Tailor each letter for maximum impact
Three sections of a cover letter

**Goals:**

**Paragraph 1:**
- Grab the reader’s attention (critical)
- Develop Rapport
- State Purpose & source of lead

**Paragraph 2:**
- Outline benefits
- Show how you can add value based on experience

**Paragraph 3:**
- Closing
- Restate Interest / Benefits & desire to interview
- Follow-up steps
Paragraph 1

- Introduce yourself (PSU MBA student, experience)
- State the position you seek
- Convince reader you are a candidate worth interviewing
- Describe connection to decision-maker (network contact)
- Describe your motivation for pursuing position / company
- Source of your lead to position
Paragraph 2

• Outline benefits
• Show how you can add value

• Briefly explain why you are interested in position
• Clearly connect your skills to core position requirements
• Describe how company will benefit
• Past achievements / performance predicts future potential
• State what is impossible to communicate in a resume (“fit”):
  • Personality (motivation, attitude, work ethic, etc.)
  • Character (ethics, integrity, values, principles, etc.)
Paragraph 3

- Closing
- Restate Interest / Benefits & desire to interview
- Follow-up steps

- Summarize or restate interest and benefits
- State desire for interview to further discuss your value added
- State that you will take initiative to make the next contact
- Indicate the timeframe and method for making contact
- Express appreciation for time and consideration
Cover Letter Tips

• Focus on content
• Be brief and concise (avoid lengthy details)
• Avoid negative statements
• Avoid salary issues
• Make yourself easy to contact
• Pay attention to details
• Write your own letter
• Don’t rehash your resume
• Check spelling and grammar (and ask others to)
Cover Letter Summary / Takeaways

• Pay attention to details (first impressions)
• “Grab” the reader in the first paragraph
• Develop content to match core requirements
• Communicate strong interest or enthusiasm
• Stay reader focused (binary decision - be clear & concise)
• Specify method and timing of follow-up
Thank You’s

• Only 10 to 15% of candidates send a thank you
• Are considered in employment decisions
• A demonstration of your Professionalism & Respect
• Use any time someone provides time, information or interview
• Can send either e-mail, letter or hand-written note
• Reinforces a positive impression
Thank You’s

• Be clear and concise
• Express appreciation for time, information or opportunity
• Reiterate some important aspect of meeting or conversation
• Reiterate strong interest in position and/or company
• Highlight some aspect of value you can add
• Indicate any follow-up actions you will take
Mr. Jones,

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me last Tuesday. I found particular value in our discussion of the various career paths one can take toward a career in corporate finance. I have contacted Ms. Smith and will keep you posted on the results of our meeting. Thanks, again, for your time and assistance.

Sincerely,

Jim
Interview Thank You Example

Mr. Jones,

Thank you for the opportunity to interview for the rotational program with IBM. My interest in this position is even stronger than before I met with you and your colleagues. I believe my analytical and problem solving skills will enable me to capitalize on this opportunity, while adding immediate and long-term value to your organizational success. I look forward to hearing your decision.

Regards,

Jim