

The Ultimate Cover Letter



*How to have employers
turning the page*

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What is a Cover Letter?

Definition

The Dictionary definition of a cover letter is:

Cover Letter

n. A letter sent with other documents to explain more fully or provide more information. Also called *covering letter*.

Cover letters have traditionally been sent with Resumes and CVs to Recruiters with the purpose of providing a succinct picture of the applicant's qualifications.

Recent surveys of Recruiters suggest that around 50% do not read cover letters; however before we submit a resume we do not know which schools of Recruiter we are addressing. Be on the safe side and send a powerful, strong and letter or email. A well written letter will demonstrate your strengths and the value you will be bringing to the organization.

- Your cover letter is a sales document and should be written as such. Finding your next position is a sophisticated sales and marketing exercise that sells a unique product – **You.**
- Think of your cover letter as a written version of your 30 second 'elevator speech'. Write it as if your future depends on it – **it does!**
- Your personal brand is important and it should come across in your letter.
- When writing the letter think of yourself as the hiring manager reading it, write it in a manner that you think will demonstrate your skills and enthusiasm.
- This is not a copy of your resume.



Writing the Cover Letter

The Basics

- Make sure that your letter contains no spelling or grammatical errors. Check, double check and if necessary ask someone else to cast their eye over it.
- Always include a cover letter, unless told otherwise.
- Make it easy to read, allow for plenty of white space and use short paragraphs where possible
- Send your letter, addressed to a named individual rather than to “To whom it may concern” or “Sir or Madam”. Addressed to “Manager, HR Department” is also inappropriate. Names and titles are available through a number of sources including Jigsaw.com and Zoominfo.com
- Include the precise Job Title and any relevant reference number or code.
- The letter should be no longer than 1 page in length.
- Focus on the employer’s needs and how you can solve any obvious issues.
- Demonstrate your knowledge of the employer’s business.



The Layout

- Each cover letter should provide three sections, the introduction, your experience and value and the closing or action statement.
 - **Introduction** – Your introduction should include the title of the position that you are applying for, also include details of any common connections, for example the name of someone who may have referred you to the company. An immediate comment as to your strengths or key achievement could also be appropriate.
 - **Experience and Value** – While every word in a cover letter is important this section is probably more important than any other. This is selling time, this is the section where you will briefly and concisely describe how you can make a



Grab the reader's attention immediately with a strong opening statement.

difference. Use an example if possible that demonstrates clearly how you can add value. Insure that the key requirement from the job description is highlighted in this section.

- **Closing and Action** – The final paragraph should contain a wrap up and call for action. The call maybe as simple as saying that you will follow up on a specific day by email or telephone or direct as in asking for an interview. Whatever your choice is make sure that you follow through.
- Samples are available at the end of this book and the cover letter writer in available to all VirtualJobCoach clients.

Format and Styles

The Opening

Depending on how long you want your cover letter to be, the opening can be a single sentence or a paragraph in size. The opening has probably the hardest job of the cover letter, because it has to grab the readers' attention, set the tone (which will convey a little about your personality) and the content for the remainder of the letter.

When responding to a job advertisement, you need to refer to the open position and the date and location where you saw the advertisement, unless of course, you already included this in the header section. Follow this with why you would be great in that position.

Example

"When I read your advertisement for a Head Chef in the November issue of the Cookmagic Magazine, I knew this was a position where I could excel, given my 5 years of experience, as a Sous Chef under the expert guidance of two of the top restaurateurs in Manhattan."

Experience and Value

The second section is where you will expand on a few of your skills, experience, achievements and knowledge. Your focus here is to take only a few items to highlight what you can do, how this relates to the position and why you would be a good candidate. The goal is to get the

Choose the style that best demonstrates your skills and abilities.

STAND OUT



reader interested enough in you to read your resume.

There are three formats you can use for the main section:

- Paragraph,
- Bullet point list, or
- "T-style".

Choosing the format will depend on your preference and which style best showcases your skills and abilities as they pertain to this opportunity.

The paragraph format

I am an approachable manager with exceptional communication skills, a proven track record of working in a diverse, highly non- exempt workforce, familiarity with recruiting, training, staff retention, benefits administration, Worker's Compensation, LOA laws and knowledge of Federal & State Employment.

or

As an active member of the Society for Human Resources Management and the New England Human Resources Association, I am acutely aware of the challenges large manufacturing companies face in today's competitive global marketplace, and have developed numerous strategies and tactics to attract and retain top class employees while managing costs, and improving employee satisfaction.

Each style delivers a different perspective

STAND OUT

The "T-style"

Your Needs

Experienced professional with excellent leadership skills
 Good working knowledge of HR law

Manage the company's benefit plans and annual appraisal process.

Good working knowledge of HR best practices and current issues.
 Design and implement HR policies procedures in partnership with the leadership team.

My Abilities

8 years HR experience in a leadership role

Knowledgeable with Workers Comp, LOA, ADA, ADEA and other relevant State and Federal legislation

6 years hands-on experience with benefits administration and annual appraisals.

Active member of SHRM and NEHRA.

Skilled in developing and implementing HR policies and best practices that advance the corporate mission.



The Bullet point list

- An approachable manager with exceptional communication skills
- A proven track record of working in a diverse, highly non- exempt workforce,
- Familiarity with recruiting, training, staff retention, benefits administration, Worker's *Compensation, LOA laws and knowledge of Federal & State Employment.
- Active member of the Society for Human Resources Management and the New England Human Resources Association,
- Developer of numerous strategies and tactics to attract and retain top class employees while managing costs, and improving employee satisfaction.

Closing and Action

When you end your cover letter with *"I look forward to hearing from you"*, or *"please call me to arrange an interview"*, this puts the ball in the readers court, and means you now have to wait on them.

It's always a good idea to keep the initiative with you, and closing with a confirmation you will be in touch in a few days makes sure you keep the ball rolling. Of course, if you have no way of contacting them, or they explicitly state no phone calls, then you have no option but to wait.

Example Closings

I can see a great opportunity for me to contribute to the success of Abacard Corporation and I enclose my resume for your review. I will contact you again in 3 days time to schedule a meeting.

or

If you need more information, I can be reached at 111-111-1111, and I'll be more than happy to discuss how my skills meet your needs. I look forward to hearing from you.

or

I have interested in openings with AnyCo Corporation, and feel this opportunity is a perfect fit for my skills and abilities, I will call you on Oct -18th to confirm you received my resume and to answer any questions you may have

Do Not!

- Make this longer than one page
- Use your age or excessive long periods of experience.
- Tell the employer about your salary and benefit requirements
- Use your resume as a template.



Examples

Paragraph

14 Germantown Rd
Ramsey, NJ 07446
18-August-09

Mary Johansen
VP Human Resources
AnyCo
111 The Alley
Ramsey, NJ 07446

Dear Ms Johansen,

Re: - Director Human Resources

With more than 10 years of successful experience of driving and delivering high quality Human Resource services in a fast paced, technology based industry I bring considerable skills and knowledge to AnyCo.

As an active member of the Society for Human Resources Management and the New England Human Resources Association, I am acutely aware of the challenges organizations such as AnyCo face in today's competitive global marketplace. I have developed numerous strategies and tactics based on best practices to attract and retain top class employees while managing costs, and improving employee satisfaction. In addition I am skilled in the administration of benefits and annual appraisals.

I am confident when you have read my resume you will agree that my experience, skills and capabilities closely match the requirements of AnyCo. I will contact you next Tuesday (the 25th) to schedule a meeting.

Sincerely

Jim Peters

Enc: Resume

T-Style

14 Germantown Rd
Ramsey, NJ 07446
18 August 2009

Mary Johansen
VP Human Resources
AnyCo
111 The Alley
Ramsey, NJ 07446

Dear Ms Johansen,

Re: - Director Human Resources

With more than 10 years of successful experience of driving and delivering high quality Human Resource services in a fast paced, technology based industry I bring considerable skills and knowledge to AnyCo.

Your Needs	My Abilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Experienced professional with excellent leadership skills• Good working knowledge of HR law • Manage the company's benefit plans and annual appraisal process.• Good working knowledge of HR best practices and current issues.• Design and implement HR policies procedures in partnership with the leadership team.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 8 years HR experience in a leadership role • Detailed knowledge of Workers Comp, LOA, ADA, ADEA and other relevant State and Federal legislation• 6 years hands-on experience with benefits administration and annual appraisals.• Active member of SHRM and NEHRA. • Skilled in developing and implementing HR policies and best practices that advance the corporate mission.

I am confident when you have read my resume you will agree that my experience, skills and capabilities closely match the requirements of AnyCo. I will contact you next Tuesday (the 25th) to schedule a meeting.

Sincerely

Jim Peters

Enc: Resume

Bullet

14 Germantown Rd
Ramsey, NJ 07446
18-August-09

Mary Johansen
VP Human Resources
AnyCo
111 The Alley
Ramsey, NJ 07446

Dear Ms Johansen,

Re: - Director Human Resources

With more than 10 years of successful experience of driving and delivering high quality Human Resource services in a fast paced, technology based industry I bring considerable skills and knowledge to AnyCo.

- 8 years HR experience in a leadership role
- Detailed knowledge of Workers Comp, LOA, ADA, ADEA and other relevant State and Federal legislation
- 6 years hands-on experience with benefits administration and annual appraisals.
- Active member of SHRM and NEHRA.
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