**Cover Letter Writing**

The cover letter should always be included when sending your resume or CV for a possible job interview. This letter of application serves the purpose or introducing you and asking for an interview. A knockout cover letter sells the concept that you're a good fit for the company you're applying to. In order to devise a winning sales pitch for your letter, you need to understand what makes the company tick. Time is money in the business world. You need to grab the employer right away with the first sentence of your letter.

**Effective Cover Letter**

**What makes a Good Cover Letter?**

1. **No spelling or typing errors.** Not even one.
2. **Address it to the person who can hire you.** Resumes sent to the personnel department have a tougher time of it. If you can find out (through networking and researching) exactly who is making the hiring decision, address the letter to that person. Be sure the name is spelled correctly and the title is correct. A touch of formality is good too: address the person as "Mr.," "Ms.," "Mrs.," "Miss," "Dr.," or "Professor." (Yes, life is complicated.)
3. **Write it in your own words** so that it sounds like you - not like something out of a book. Employers are looking for knowledge, enthusiasm, focus.
4. **Being "natural" makes many people nervous.** And then even more nervous because they are trying to avoid spelling errors and grammatical mistakes. If you need a little help with grammar check out the classic work on simple writing.
5. **Show that you know something about the company and the industry.** This is where your research comes in. Don't go overboard - just make it clear that you didn't pick this company out of the phone book. You know who they are, what they do and you have chosen them!
6. **Use terms and phrases that are meaningful to the employer.** (This is where your industry research and networking come in.) If you are applying for an advertised position, use the requirements in the ad and put them in **bold** type. For example: the ad says

*"2 years' experience processing magnetic media (cartridge, tape, disc); interface with benefit plan design, contracts and claims; and business background with strong analytical & technical skills--dBase, Excel, R&R, SQL."*

Make sure your cover letter contains each of these requirements and shows how you measure up.

**Cover Letter Writing Tips**

Here are the keys to writing successful (and dynamic) cover letters. Follow these simple rules and you should achieve success in this important phase of job-hunting.

* Don't ever send your resume without a cover letter.
* Do address your letter to a named individual.
* Don't use a sexist salutation, such as "Gentlemen" when answering a blind ad.
* Don't waste your first paragraph by writing a boring introduction. Use the first paragraph to grab the employer's attention; give the employer the reasons you are qualified for the position.
* Do send an original letter to each employer.
* Don't use such cliches as "Enclosed please find my resume" or "As you can see on my resume enclosed herewith." Employers can see that your resume is enclosed; they don't need you to tell them. Such trite phrases just waste precious space. And don't use pleonasms (wordy phrases), which also waste space.
* Don't depend on the employer to take action. Request action. Request an interview, and tell the employer when you will follow up to arrange it. Then, Do So. It is imperative that you follow up. You will greatly increase your chances of getting interviews if you call the employer after writing instead of sitting back and waiting for a call. Those who wait for the employer to call them will generally have a long wait indeed.
* Don't send a cover letter that contains any typos, misspellings, incorrect grammar or punctuation, smudges, or grease from yesterday's lunch.
* Do use simple language and uncomplicated sentence structure. Ruthlessly eliminate all unnecessary words. Follow the journalist's credo: Write tight!
* Do speak to the requirements of the job, especially when responding to an ad.
* Do keep your letter brief. Never, Never more than one page, and it's best to keep it well under a full page. Each paragraph should have no more than one to three sentences.
* Do tell the employer how you can meet his or her needs and contribute to the company.
* Do distinguish your cover letter from those of other job seekers by quantifying and giving examples that amplify and prove the claims you make in your letter.
* Do try to answer the question that the employer will be asking while reading your letter: "Why should I hire this person?"
* Don't rehash your resume. You can use your cover letter to highlight the aspects of your resume that are relevant to the position, but you're wasting precious space - and the potential employer's time - if you simply repeat your resume.
* Do avoid negativity. Negativity never has a place in a cover letter.
* Do be sure the potential employer can reach you.
* Do use action verbs.
* Don't forget to personally sign the letter, preferably in blue ink.
* Do use e-mailed cover letters, but keep them shorter and more concise.