

Cover Letters

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Your Portfolio

- Personal Attributes and Qualifications
- Cover Letter(s)
- Resume
- References
- Interview Preparation
- Actual Interview
- Salary and Job Offer Negotiation



Cover Letter(s)

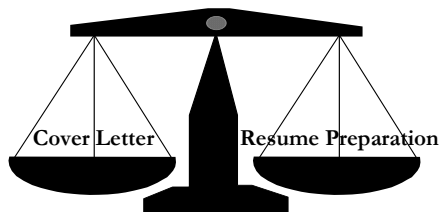
- 76% Employers Eliminate Candidates Based Solely On Quality Of Cover Letter¹
- 43% Respondents Viewed Cover Letter As Important as Resume¹

Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). SHRM.org

Cover Letter Critical Factors

- Way it is organized
- What it says
- How it is stated
- What is included/excluded
- What is highlighted/emphasized

Cover Letter(s) vs. Resume Preparation



Types of Cover Letters

- Letters to Employers
- Letters to Search Firms
- Advertising Response Letters
- Networking Cover Letters
- Resume Letters

Cover Letters to Employers

- Commonly known as "broadcast" letter
- 3-5% Response rate is normal
- Direct broadcast letter to specific individual department or functional program manager
- *Cardinal Rule: Never mail resume to human resources or employment dept.
 - HR only aware of "formal" job openings
 - Hidden, "informal" job opportunities represent 70-80% of entire job market

Value-Added Proposition

- Employers looking for persons who can add "value" to their organization
- Good cover letter emphasizes or highlights the "value" you bring

Identifying Value-Added Employer Areas

- Key, ongoing functional accountabilities for the position you are applying?
- In each of these key functional areas, what are the end results desired by most employers?
- What significant results have you achieved in each of these areas that will convince employers of your value?

Value-Added Approach For Those Just Entering Market

- Key problems you will need to solve if you are successful in this targeted job?
- Key knowledge and/or skills required in order for you to solve these problems?
- Which of these qualifications (knowledge & skills) do you possess?
- What evidence can you give of your ability to apply these qualities

continued...

Value-Added Approach For Those Just Entering Market

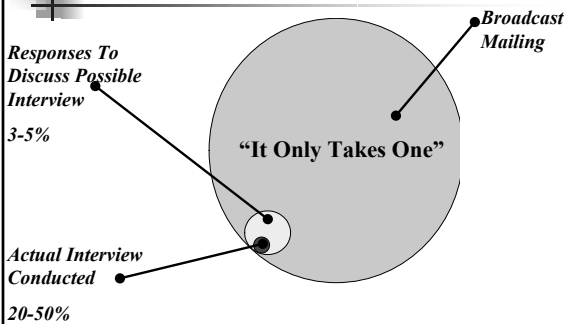
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- What personal attributes are considered important in successfully performing your targeted job?
- Which of these attributes do you possess?
- What evidence can you site regarding these attributes?

Key Elements of Broadcast Letter

- An introductory paragraph that includes a statement of your job search objective
- A brief summary paragraph that summarizes your overall background and experience
- A "selling" (value-added) paragraph that highlights specific results achieved by you in those areas known important to new job role
- A request for action on you candidacy
- A statement of appreciation for the employer's consideration of your employment candidacy

"Broadcast or Direct Mail Expectations"



Cover Letters to Search Firms

- Search firms and employment agencies
- 10-15% of all managerial and professional jobs found by job seeker(s)
- Second most productive method (networking, personal contact, is most successful)
- Direct mail campaign to search firms and employment agencies
- Direct mail campaign response rate 3-5%

Contrasting Cover Letter Purposes

Search Firms, Employ. Agencies

- Primary role to match candidate to employers search agreement
- Most firms skip cover letter and go directly to resume content
- Views cover letter as redundant to resume
- Consumes more of their "search time", often reads resume before cover letter

Employer Needs

- Find uniquely qualified individual who "add value" to their organization
- Reads cover letter more thoroughly
- May also consider candidate for more than one opening
- Routinely reads cover letter before resume

Key Points For Third Party Agency Cover Letter

- Primary purpose of cover letter is "resume transmittal"
- Tend to be brief in comparison to "broadcast" cover letter to employers
- Principal differences between third party agency cover letter and that of employer broadcast cover letter is:
 - Search firm places more emphasis on providing general, overall summary of qualifications
 - Employer's places greater emphasis on specific value-added qualifications

Key Elements of Third Party Broadcast Letter

- First paragraph contains:
 - Statement of job search objective (position sought)
 - Request to be considered for firm's current and future job search assignments
- Second paragraph contains:
 - Educational credentials
 - Relevant work experience
- Third paragraph normally contains a "statement of appreciation" for the firm's review and consideration of the applicant's qualifications

Continued...

Key Elements of Third Party Broadcast Letter

Continued... Optional Paragraphs

- Explanation of reason for making career change
- A "selling" or "value-adding" paragraph citing key accomplishments relevant to job search objective
- Statement of specifying compensation requirements
- Statement specifying geographical preferences
- Statement providing contact instructions

Advertising Response Cover Letters

- Includes advertising found in newspaper, trade/professional journals, or the internet
- Accounts for 10-14% of all jobs found
- Key advantage: applicant knows a lot more of what employer is seeking
- Key strategies for applicants:
 - Understand "key motivators" of the employer to hire
 - Know the employer's needs to "sell" your qualifications to that need (vs. yours)

Cover Letter Technique Advertising Response

Employer's Requirements

- Review & list employer specific requirements within ad content
- Prioritize key requirements
 - "must have"
 - "prefer"
 - "highly desirable"
- Hint: Order each appears in ad usually indicates relativity (most important first, least will be last)

My Qualifications

- Using, your resume, prepare corresponding list of those qualifications you possess that coincide with employer's
- Prioritize key qualifications with key employer requirements
- Simple analysis helps write a very effective cover letter specifically tailored to employer's needs

Advertising Response Cover Letter

Caution: Two Formats

Linear

- Used when applicant wants to highlight he/she matches ALL the employer requirements
- Applicant provides a line-by-line listing of these qualifications
- Facilitates employer's direct comparison with their own requirements
- Systematically leads employer to conclude you are well qualified for an interview

Literary

- Used when applicant does not possess all key qualifications
- Void of possessing all key qualifications, avoid linear format
- As with linear format, parallel is drawn between qualifications and employer's requirements
- Literary format makes it far less obvious that key qualifications are missing from key employer requirements (no interview)

Networking Cover Letters

- The single most productive source finding jobs
- 63-75% of all jobs found via networking process
- Analogous to "chain-letter" concepts
 - Each contact in chain leads to two contacts
 - Each contact is asked to introduce you to 2-3 more
- Extremely powerful when used with Professional Association membership

Networking Cover Letters

Purpose...- Threefold

- Set the stage for a personal introduction
- Transmit your resume
- Acquaint the contact with your qualifications in advance of your networking phone call or meeting

Networking Cover Letter

If done well, will accomplish:

- Make the person whom you are contacting feel comfortable
 - Willing to open up and share valuable information
 - Job leads and names of key contacts
- Provide sufficient information about your qualifications and job-search objectives to allow contact to:
 - Make intelligent recommendations to you
 - Intelligently discuss your qualifications and job interests with others

Key Elements of Networking Cover Letter

- **Personalized opening paragraph contains:**
 - Name of the person who has referred you
 - Nature of your relationship with this person
 - Some personal comments (where appropriate)
- **Explanation of how referral came about (optional)**
- **Reason for job or career change (optional)**
- **Reference to known job opening (if one exists)**
- **Indirect networking approach (if no known job exists)**
- **Brief summary of qualifications (and reference to enclosed resume)**
- **Action statement designed to initiate next action, with networking contact (i.e., phone or meeting)**
- **“Statement of appreciation” (thank you)**

Resume Cover Letters

- A cross between a cover letter and your resume
- Serves to transmit your credentials to the employer
- Actually a replacement for the resume itself and is designed to provide brief synopsis of your employment qualifications
- Resume cover letter both communicates and markets your qualifications to potential employer
- No concrete evidence it is as good as conventional combination cover letter and resume

Resume Cover Letters

Proposed Advantages

- One page letter format more likely to be read than two or three-page letter and resume format
- If written well, provides enough curiosity and interest, not too much, to screen-out candidate
- Providing limited information in resume letter could create enough interest to lead to phone interview
- Because managers and employment professionals often receive high volumes of mail, multi-page resumes are not as appreciated as one-page
- One page "broadcast" mailing less expensive

Resume Cover Letters

Proposed Disadvantages

- One page letter format contains insufficient to effectively determine candidates qualifications
- Lack of detailed information does not allow employer to determine "degree" of qualification
- Insufficient information prevents proper comparison with other qualified candidates
- Busy managers don't want to pick up phone and call candidate to realize candidate is unqualified
- Users of one-page resume letters may be viewed as suspicious, deceptive, or lazy by employer
 - 87% in SHRM survey

Key Components of Effective Resume Cover Letter

- More effective when mailed directly to functional manager rather than Human Resources
- Statement of employment interest
- Statement of job search objective (position sought)
- Broad summary of relevant qualifications
 - Education, Job-related experience, key traits & attributes
- Summary of important job-relevant accomplishments
- Salary and geographical requirements (optional)
- Request for employer action
- Specific contact information (optional)
- Statement of appreciation for consideration

Thank-You Letter

- Always send. Ensures your employment candidacy
- Acknowledges the time and commitment of employer's resource extended
- Besides displaying good manners, offers a great opportunity to further market yourself
- Communicates your degree of interest in position
- Highlights the special value the hiring organization will realize in bringing you on r board

Key Elements of Effective Thank-You Letter

- Basic greeting or salutation
- Expression of appreciation for interview
- Statement of interest in position
- Value statement
- Restatement of appreciation for interview
- Close

