Writing a Cover Letter

The cover letter is a document that accompanies your résumé and serves as an introduction of your qualifications. Its main purpose is to attract employers to review your résumé. The cover letter is extremely important and MUST communicate how you can contribute to the organization in a meaningful way. Forget about your needs: Employers are primarily interested in how your skills can fulfill *their* needs. Remember, a cover letter is a sample of your writing, so a well written cover letter can earn you points!

Cover Letter Writing Tips

- Make sure the margins, font style and size match your résumé.
- Each cover letter should be addressed to a specific person. If after doing some research you find no appropriate name, list a generic title (i.e. "Dear Search Committee" or "Hiring Manager") followed by a colon.
- The cover letter should be short so the information is easy to consume. The length should be no more than four paragraphs and the first sentence of each paragraph must be strong! It is the one that the reader will most likely read.
- Take the time to customize your cover letter for each position you apply for. Specifically, use the required skills found in the job's qualification section within your cover letter. Above all, stress your skills, abilities, and what you can do as a result of your background, training, experience, or education. By stressing accomplishments you emphasize your potential value.
- Avoid flowery phrases about personal growth, challenges, advancement, etc. Instead, speak directly about concrete reasons why the employer should be interested in you.

Formula to construct your cover letter

1st paragraph:

- State what you are applying for.
- Articulate why you are interested in the position and/or company (in one sentence).
- Give some background on who you are (degree, interests, etc.).

2nd paragraph:

- Highlight two to three skills, knowledge areas or abilities that you will bring to the position and provide an example of each.
- For example, "I have excellent written and verbal abilities. Specifically, I have completed and presented on three semester long thesis projects and received an A on each."

3rd paragraph:

- Mention a couple more skills or attributes you will contribute to the position.
- Thank the employer for his/her time.
- Acknowledge what the next step will be.
- Always end the letter with "Sincerely" and type or sign your name.

Sample Cover Letter

Angela Economics
456 Mill Rd., Hagerstown, MD 21740 ● 540-000-0000 ● a.economics@umd.edu ● www.linkedin.com/in/ae

October 18, 20*XX*

Ms. Amy Hernandez
Director of Compliance
International Consulting
1234 Business Drive
College Park, MD 20742

Dear Ms. Hernandez:

I am writing to inquire about the Analyst position at International Consulting that I recently found on the UMD's University Career Center Office. When I researched the top small-size production companies in Maryland, International Consulting emerged as having a creative team, a sound financial base and fiscal outlook, and most of all, a highly praised reputation. This May, I will receive a B.A. in Economics and I am looking forward to working in the field of research.

I have excellent communication, analytical, and leadership skills. Specifically, as a Research Analyst Intern at Decision Tek, I led two of my peers in researching and analyzing over 1,100 lines of statistical data. We presented the information to the CEO and it was used to alter an existing policy. Additionally, through my coursework I have written several research papers where I used SPSS and SATA to analyze multivariate data.

I believe that you will find my research abilities, attention to detail, and flexible work style a match for what you are seeking in the Analyst position. I have attached my résumé. Thank you for considering my request for an interview. I look forward to talking with you soon.

Sincerely,

Angela Economics

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