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<http://www.luc.edu/career/>

In addition to your resume, several forms of correspondence are important during your job search. While your resume is your primary marketing tool, these documents are key supporting materials and create an overall picture of who you are. They convey your professionalism and can make the difference in your job search. Whether in traditional letter form or transmitted via e-mail, all correspondence should be professional in language and tone, using traditional business letter formatting. Use the same font as on your resume in a size large enough to be easily read – at least 10 pt.

Correspondence Types

You may use some or all of the following types of correspondence in your job search. Letters should be individually written, not “form” letters. The correspondence includes:

- Cover letter
- Prospecting letter/letter of inquiry
- Thank you letter
- Acceptance, withdrawal and rejection Correspondence

A Word on Email Etiquette

Whenever contacting a prospective employer via e-mail, communicate with the same care as you would in a typed letter or other professional document. E-mail to a prospective employer is not casual and should never just say “see attached resume,” although you may want to be briefer than you would be in a letter. Format an email with appropriate headings, salutations, proper spelling and grammar and a professional signature line.

Some additional rules for using e-mail in your job search:

- In the subject line, make the reason for your e-mail clear: “Application for Analyst Position.”
- Reply to any e-mails from employers within two business days. If you are replying to an e-mail, keep the same subject line as the original e-mail and include the original message in the reply.
- Address your e-mail to a person, if possible, using a proper salutation such as, “Dear Mr. Jones.”
- Introduce yourself the same way that you would in a cover letter; for example, “I am writing with regard to your marketing internship....”
- PROOFREAD! Don’t depend on spell check - it won’t catch words spelled correctly but misused (i.e., “their” instead of “there”). Read your e-mails before sending them for tone and grammar.
- Don’t use emoticons, phonetic spellings such as “ur” for “you’re” or other common e-mail or text messaging expressions. Avoid ALL CAPS, which is interpreted as “screaming” in e-mail, or all lowercase letters, which is overly casual.
- Remember that your e-mail address should also convey a professional tone: “bigpimpin@gmail.com” or “stillhigh@yahoo.com” would not impress potential employers.
- Include your own name in the name of files that you attach to an e-mail. For example, JoeJonesResume.doc, JaneDoeCoverLetter.doc. Many employers save all attached documents to an applicant folder; you want them to locate your documents easily.
- Remember that e-mails can easily be lost or blocked by anti-spam measures. Always follow up with a phone call or regular e-mail, unless the employer specifically requests no phone calls.

Cover Letter

The cover letter introduces you and your resume and is a vital part of the application process. It should be one page long – a letter that is much shorter or longer runs the risk of not being read. A well developed cover letter can get your resume read; conversely, a poorly written or missing cover letter may hinder your consideration for a position. It is important to write in a way that communicates your enthusiasm for the position and the employer. Each letter should therefore be personalized for the organization, individual, and position. **Do not use a template that has not been properly tailored to the specific job.**

A cover letter should be addressed to an individual by name, including correct title, company name, and address. Whenever possible, avoid using Dear Sir/Madam or To Whom It May Concern. You may want to visit the company's website to find the specific contact name. It is also appropriate to call the organization's human resources department to inquire to whom you should direct your letter or the name of the position supervisor. Going this extra step is an easy way of demonstrating your sincere interest in the position.

The body of a cover letter should include the following:

- **Introduction paragraph.** Introduce yourself and specify the position for which you are applying. Indicate how you came to apply to the company: for example, through an online job posting, market research, or a referral by a current employee. Explain what about the organization and position appeals to you – show that you've done your research by mentioning one of the employer's recent accomplishments or projects. Finally, complete the paragraph by stating, in one sentence, why you would make a good candidate for the position.
- **Body paragraph(s).** Summarize your qualifications *in relation to the position for which you are applying*, demonstrating what you have to offer the employer (not what you hope to gain from the position). It may be useful to try to synthesize the information into 2 or 3 useful themes that the employer has stated it is looking for in an applicant. Emphasize what makes you unique. Do not simply restate points from your resume – take this opportunity to explain where you developed the skills the employer is seeking and how you used them to accomplish a notable result. Weave together your academic background, activities, and work experience to provide the reader with a complete picture of what you can bring to the organization.
- **Conclusion paragraph.** Restate your interest in the organization and what you have to offer. Provide your contact information and indicate any next steps you wish to pursue. For example, you may indicate plans to follow up with a phone call at a certain time, or you may request a meeting to discuss the position in detail. Finally, thank the reader for his or her consideration.

It is a good idea to keep copies of all the application materials you send out. If you hear nothing after a couple of weeks, you can follow up with the employer to inquire if any further information is needed and to reiterate your interest.

Keep in mind that just as with resume writing, there is more than one right way to write a cover letter. Solicit feedback from as many people as possible to gain a clearer sense of how you would like to approach yours.

Sample Cover Letter - Full-time position

1300 W. Loyola University
Chicago, IL 60626

May 29, 2007

Ms. Janice Carroll
Human Resources
Evanston Northwestern Healthcare
9200 Ridge Road
Evanston, IL 60201

Dear Ms. Carroll:

I am a recent graduate of Loyola University of Chicago with a degree in communications. I was excited to learn about the Administrative Assistant position at Evanston Northwestern Health Care (ENHC) advertised on your website and have enclosed my resume for your consideration. The opportunity to work with a health care organization that provides such a broad range of services while maintaining a highly integrated network of resources appeals to me greatly. Moreover, my excellent interpersonal and organizational skills make me an excellent candidate for the position.

As a cheerful, friendly, and hard-working individual with over seven years of customer service experience, I believe my qualifications match your requirements. My experience in successfully resolving conflicts as a member of Loyola's Student Judicial Board has given me an ability to handle delicate situations both confidently and confidentially. As a student worker at the Career Development Center, I regularly utilized my excellent communication skills in responding to student questions in a friendly and professional manner. At the same time, the job required me to exhibit significant attention to detail and accuracy in entering employer information into the office's computer system while simultaneously handling other tasks. In both of these positions I demonstrated the ability to work well both independently and as part of a team.

I know that ENHC enjoys an excellent reputation, both among health care providers and its patients, and I believe that I would be a valuable asset to your organization. I can be contacted at cthomas@luc.edu or (773) 555-1212. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

(Handwritten Signature)

Cynthia Thomas

Sample Cover Letter - Internship

Clarence Darrow
6300 N. Winthrop
Chicago, IL 60626

January 7, 2008

Angela Campbell
Human Resources Manager
McDermott Will & Emery LLP
227 W. Monroe
Chicago, IL 60606

Dear Ms. Campbell:

I was excited to learn about the Practice Development Internship advertised online through Loyola University Chicago's eRecruiting website. Currently I am a senior at Loyola earning my degree in Political Science and International Studies and strongly considering attending law school. The opportunity to work at an internationally-recognized law firm such as McDermott in a position that would expose me to the breadth of matters represented by your firm appeals to me greatly. As someone with past experience working for organizations in the legal field, I believe I am an excellent candidate for this position.

I consider myself a sincere, reliable and dedicated individual with a great deal of ambition. During my study abroad year in college, I completed a semester-long internship at the Rome branch of your law firm in addition to my coursework in international studies. There, I used my language skills to translate documents from Italian into English and draft correspondence for members of one of the firm's trial teams, integrating myself quickly and smoothly with the firm's support staff. I have continued to pursue my interest in the law with two internships through the Circuit Court of Cook County. At these positions, I have demonstrated my attention to detail and my thoroughness while preparing trial packets and transcribing subject interviews for a wide variety of cases. I am able to prioritize and handle multiple tasks and work well both independently and as part of a team.

I would be proud to contribute to and again be associated with the McDermott Will & Emery law firm, and I feel that I would be a valuable asset to your organization. I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss this position with you at your convenience. Enclosed is my resume for your review. Please feel to contact me at cdarrow@luc.edu or (773) 555-1212 if you have any further questions. Thank you for your time and consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Clarence Darrow

Prospecting Letter/Letter of Inquiry

A prospecting letter can be an effective way to explore possibilities and gain information about an organization or even uncover hidden job opportunities. A prospecting letter should outline your strongest qualifications. Within the letter be sure to indicate your source of information and do some personal marketing. You can request an interview and should express appreciation for the reader's consideration.

A prospecting letter should include the following:

- Indicate your interest and reveal the source of the information you have about the employer.
- Outline your strongest qualifications. Focus on broader occupational dimensions to describe how your qualifications, experience and motivation match the work environment, demonstrating how you could be an asset.
- Suggest an action plan—request an interview and indicate that you will call during a specific time period to discuss interview possibilities. Express appreciation for the reader's consideration.

Sample Prospecting Letter

849 North Creek Avenue
Skokie, IL 60067

September 29, 2007

Mr. Timothy Ward
Director of Human Resources
National Bank of Chicago
820 N. Michigan Avenue
Chicago, IL 60601

Dear Mr. Ward:

I read your company's description in Loyola University's eRecruiting system and would like to inquire about opportunities in your management training program. I am seeking employment in the banking industry in the Chicago area.

My interest in finance began in high school and developed through a variety of internships during college. My internship with a local Skokie bank convinced me to pursue a career in banking. When I researched the top banks in Chicago, the National Bank of Chicago emerged as having a strong market position, an excellent training program, and a reputation for excellent customer service. In addition, Samantha Fein's presentation given on Loyola's campus illustrated a match between National's philosophies and practices and my own career goals. I believe you provide the kind of professional environment to which I could consistently contribute.

I have enclosed my resume for your consideration. While my education and experience match your website's list of preferred qualifications for your management trainees, they do not tell the whole story. I know from internship supervisor feedback that I have the financial skills and motivation needed to build a successful career in banking. Through that internship experience I also acquired confidence in my career direction and in my abilities to perform competently and professionally.

Although I know you must have a very busy schedule, I would appreciate a few minutes of your time. I will call you next week to discuss possible employment opportunities at National. In the meantime, if you prefer to contact me, my number is (773) 555-1212. I look forward to talking with you. Thank you very much for considering my request.

Sincerely,

Sydney Bristow

Thank You Letter

It is important to express your gratitude for consideration in a job opening or for the opportunity to learn more about an organization. Always send a thank you letter to individuals who have given you their time and attention. While a typed letter is preferable, a thank you letter can be handwritten (if your handwriting is legible and neat) or emailed. If emailing a thank you letter, format the email just as you would a typed letter with initial caps, proper grammar, and appropriate salutation and signature line. Regardless, this letter should be sent within 24 hours of your contact with the individual – the sooner, the better!

A thank you letter should include the following:

- Keep it brief but warm and personal. Express your sincere appreciation for the interview or other assistance provided.
- Reemphasize your strongest qualifications. Draw attention to the good match between your qualifications and the job requirements.
- Reiterate your interest in the position. Use the opportunity to provide or offer supplemental information not previously given.
- Restate your appreciation for the interviewer's time and consideration.

Sample Thank you Letter

6525 N. Sheridan Road
Chicago, IL 60626

May 29, 2007

Dr. Diane Johnson
Office of Student Life
Northington Junior College
111 College Road
Northington, Illinois 66111

Dear Dr. Johnson:

Thank you for interviewing me yesterday for the Assistant Program Director position. I enjoyed meeting you and learning more about Northington's student programs.

Even before my interview began, I was very impressed with the welcoming atmosphere at Northington. That experience, along with what I learned in my interview, has strengthened my interest in your position. I feel that my academic and internship experiences have given me unique qualifications that are a perfect match for both Northington and the position of Assistant Program Director. My experiences as an intern in the Office of Student Activities have honed my programming, conflict resolution and organizational capabilities that match the job description perfectly. My experiences as a very active member of various student organizations have made me very enthusiastic for the responsibilities you described. And the very warm, positive atmosphere on Northington's campus matches my reputation as a friendly, positive team player.

I am very interested in your position and in working for the Office of Student Life at Northington University. Please feel free to call me at (312) 555-1212 if I can provide you with any additional information.

Once again, thank you for the interview and your consideration.

Sincerely,

James Joyce

Acceptance, Withdrawal, and Rejection Correspondence

These types of correspondence share in common the fact that they are written after you have procured an offer of employment. It is acceptable to send such correspondence via e-mail, but be sure to retain a professional tone in all communication.

Acceptance Letter

An acceptance letter should include the following:

- Confirm, accept, and reaffirm your employment decision.
- Confirm logistics—starting date and time; forms, tests and other correspondence to be completed; salary information.
- Express your appreciation and enthusiasm for the opportunity.

Withdrawal Letter

A withdrawal letter should include the following:

- State your decision, and provide rationale for the choice.
- Express appreciation for the employer's consideration and courtesy. Ask them to keep you in mind for future employment opportunities.

Rejection Letter

A rejection letter should include the following:

- Acknowledge and show thoughtful consideration of the offer. State your decision and provide rationale for your choice.
- Express appreciation for the employer's consideration and courtesy. Keep in mind that in the future you might want to seek employment with this employer. Be professional and leave them with a good impression.

Questions?

At the Career Development Center: Meet with a career counselor for a half-hour appointment or, for quick questions, utilize walk-in hours. Call 773-508-7716 to make an appointment, or view our walk-in schedule online:

<http://www.luc.edu/career/contact.shtml>

Our library also includes several titles on writing strong cover letters – just stop by the office to take a look.

On our Website: Our website includes the most up-to-date information on upcoming events including job fairs and workshops. Be sure to view our Resume Writing Guide as well, accessible at:

<http://www.luc.edu/career/pdfs/resume.pdf>