

COVER LETTERS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of a cover letter is to set forth your reasons for sending a resume to a particular employer. For example: “I would like to inquire about a possible opening for a legal assistant at Any Law Firm.” or “After reading your job listing on your human resources website, I would very much like to interview for the Hospital Administrator position.” In addition, it is your opportunity to expand on the *general* information in your resume, to make it *specific* to the particular position for which you are applying.

A good cover letter:

- describes all of the positive things you bring to a particular job;
- shows your interest in, or ties to, a particular position or geographic area;
- permits the employer to view you as a well-rounded person with good organizational and writing skills;
- is the first writing sample that a potential employer sees.

A good cover letter does the following:

- uses standard business letter format (see attached examples);
- addresses a person rather than a function, with the correct spelling of the person’s name;
- identifies the desired position or type of position specifically and, if applicable, explains the circumstances that lead you to apply;
- focuses upon the writer’s relevant skills, training, or experience, either by highlighting the resume or adding information;
- refers briefly to the resume or any other enclosures;
- requests an interview;
- thanks the employer;
- does not exceed one page, with approximately three fairly brief paragraphs;
- uses the correct firm name and contact name (be aware of this when sending letters to multiple employers);
- is always accompanied by your resume whether you mail it in response to a job notice, or as part of a targeted job search mailing that you initiate;
- is printed on the same paper stock as your resume (and should have matching envelopes, which you can usually purchase with resume paper);
- uses the same heading as on your resume, like a letterhead.

The key to writing a good cover letter is to make it as *personal* as possible, e.g. the letter must be addressed to a particular person. Address the letter to the Director of Human Resources, Hiring Manager or the contact listed on the job posting. If you do not know the name of the proper contact person, call the employer and ask the receptionist for the name of the person in charge of hiring.

LETTER-WRITING STYLE

Be persuasive and creative with your cover letters. Try to put yourself in the employer’s position: s/he has already reviewed fifty letters and resumes in the previous hour. Make your letter

interesting and keep in mind the qualities the employer seeks. How would you respond to the following letter?

Dear Ms. Smith:

I am writing in response to the job posting on your human resources website for the position of State Administrator. I have enclosed a resume for your review and consideration.

I would welcome the chance to meet with you in the near future to discuss employment opportunities. I am available at most any time and may be reached at 555-5555.

*Sincerely,
John Doe*

The letter is bland, fails to tell Ms. Smith why the writer wants to work at her firm, and does not highlight any of the writer's skills which could be important to the firm. It is too passive, and fails to generate any interest in the reader to devour the "enclosed resume."

Be careful to avoid overly flowery or pompous language, legalese and other jargon, and overly intellectual phraseology. Employers have been known to pass around examples of this kind of overwrought writing for office entertainment. A clear, friendly, straightforward approach works best.

Try to keep your letter to three paragraphs.

The first paragraph should grab the reader's attention by explaining why you are writing him or her. An employer wants to know why you have written *his/her* company/firm/organization and how you can contribute. Learn as much as you can about the employer before writing the letter. The information will enable you to demonstrate that the decision to write that specific employer was an informed one, not just because their name appeared on an employer list. If the employer is in another geographic location, mention your connection to that location. For example, you may be applying for positions in your hometown or that of your spouse.

The second paragraph should convince the employer that they should meet and hire you. Present your experience and skills and discuss how your experiences translate into skills that will be useful to the employer. If there is a job description, pay attention to it and carefully echo the language from the job description in your letter. Always keep in mind that they want your skills to match the job they are seeking to fill.

The third paragraph should thank the employer for his/her time and consideration and express your availability for an interview. Include your telephone number and email address so they can easily reach you. If you plan to travel to the area to which you are applying, mention this in the third paragraph. Employers often will take your request for an interview much more seriously if you tell them in your cover letter that you plan to be in their city on a particular day.

A cover letter should contain the following:

- A statement of who you are and what you want, at a minimum. For example: **“I am a recent graduate of Loyola University Chicago School of Law’s MJ in Business Law program, and I am writing to express my interest in your available Compliance Manager position.”**
- A reminder that a resume is enclosed for review. For example: “Enclosed is my resume,” or “As my resume reflects.”
- A statement of your skills and accomplishments. Make sure to be creative and specific about your skills and accomplishments by giving examples. This paragraph is essential to sparking interest in the prospective employer, so make it work for you. For example:

“In management and financial capacities of a prosthetics, orthotics and occupational-therapy products business with branches in multiple states, I directed all phases of operations from leasing office facilities to identifying suppliers, purchasing products, hiring and training, and selling and marketing custom and over-the-counter medical products.”

“As noted on my resume, I have guided at-risk youth as well as inmates through individual counseling and structured programs. This involved extensive case documentation, referrals and goal identification, as well as communication and interaction with boards of trustees, agency personnel and others.”

“Detailed on the attached resume, my expertise is in the supervision of legal support staff and in all phases of research, document preparation and case coordination as required for diverse legal issues. In summary, I possess outstanding research, client relations, document management and writing skills; expertise as a law-office manager, compiling training documents and supervising personnel; as well as interview, negotiation and mediation talents.”

- A conclusion, in which you tell the reader what you would like him or her to do next. For example: "I would welcome an opportunity to meet with you personally at your convenience.”
- If you plan to email your resume and cover letter to an employer, make sure to attach your resume and cover letter as PDFs. This way they will receive a signed version of your cover letter. In the body of the email address the recipient as “Dear Mr./Ms,” and their last name and briefly state that you have attached a cover letter and resume for their review.

Chris Smith

123 Any Street, Apt. 105 • City, ST 12345 • 123-456-7890 • csmith@email.com

June 1, 2016

Pat Cummings
Director of Human Resources
Any Corp
456 Any Street
City, ST 12345

Dear Mr. Cummings:

Please accept this email and attached resume as evidence of my desire to interview for the marketing department position advertised on Jobs.com. As Any Corp's Dealer Representative, I will utilize my thorough knowledge of boating as well as sales, marketing and communication skills to inspire those who sell your products, educate salespersons and promote product lines directly to consumers. As a semiprofessional sailboat racer, I am very familiar with the Any Corp line. The price I have in twice winning national honors and participation in the Cape Cod races will only be matched by accomplishments as a member of your marketing team.

The product knowledge I have gained as an avid recreational boater, who with great equipment and hard work evolved to become a successful competitor, will allow me to promote Any Corp with passion and confidence. Contacts with owners, officials and dealers will also facilitate my efforts.

A career change that will involve a transition from a successful management career to a marketing, promotions and consumer-relations career is most desired. I am confident that my business and boating background will ensure that I have favorable impact on sales, image and continued growth. Please allow me the opportunity to make a great impression via an interview. Thank you for your attention. I do hope that I will have the chance to soon present my qualifications and motivations in person. Please do not hesitate to email or call to arrange a meeting. And, I have asked some of my boating colleagues to contact you regarding their views of my potential. The more you know about me, the easier your decision regarding the search process!

Sincerely,

Chris Smith
Chris Smith

Chris Smith

123 Any Street, Apt. 105 • City, ST 12345 • 123-456-7890 • csmith@email.com

June 1, 2016

Pat Cummings
Director of Human Resources
Any Corporation
456 Any Street
City, ST 12345

Dear Mr. Cummings:

Your advertisement on CareerBuilder.com captured my attention, and I am very interested in interviewing for and pursuing a successful career as a software consultant with Any Corporation. My recent academic and professional achievements, all documented on the attached resume, demonstrate my potential to succeed in the available Business Consultant position. Please allow me to highlight my qualifications as they relate to your stated requirements. The announcement cites that a candidate should possess:

- Experience consulting to and working in small-business environments
- Marketing experience related to services and intangible products
- Technical knowledge and computer competencies

My qualifications and capabilities include:

- ✓ Skills and perspectives gained via graduate business studies, including comprehensive and practical case-study methodology, acting as a consultant, and analyzing and solving business problems.
- ✓ Record of creative, managerial and entrepreneurial success as the founder of Widgetsoft, a software development business.
- ✓ 4.5 years of progressive and profitable marketing experience.
- ✓ Expertise with Word, Excel, Access, PowerPoint, dBase and Internet applications.
- ✓ Programming experience in C++, C+, Fortran and COBOL.
- ✓ Bilingual Spanish-English abilities, knowledge of international business strategies and capacity to expand marketing activities globally.

I have recently relocated back to my hometown of Lexington. I hope to soon discuss how the above qualifications will allow me to achieve as an Any Corporation Business Consultant. Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Smith
Chris Smith

Chris Smith

123 Any Street, Apt. 105 • City, ST 12345 • 123-456-7890 • csmith@email.com

June 1, 2016

Pat Cummings, Controller
Any Corporation
456 Any Street
City, ST 12345

Dear Ms. Cummings:

As detailed on the attached resume, I have a record of success managing corporate financial operations for profitable and fast-growing manufacturing companies with multistate and international operations. My sixteen years of progressively responsible experience has included management of all financial and treasury functions. My professional duties have encompassed the fields of corporate real estate, human resources and general operations. Titles and responsibilities have ranged from Chief Financial Officer, Vice-President of Finance, to Cost Accounting Manager. My achievements in directly increasing profits are many and are cited on my resume. Ideally, you will, upon review of my supporting documentation, determine that I am worthy to interview for the Chief Financial Officer position at Any Corporation.

I have been a Certified Public Accountant for over two decades, completing continued professional studies required of updated certification. In addition, I have earned an MBA in Finance and a Bachelor of Arts in Accounting. Most important, I have always supported the educational and professional development of my staff and hired those committed to continued learning and professional excellence.

During initial telephone conversations and in personal discussions, I can learn more about the visions that you and other senior managers have for Any Corporation and about how I can transform visions into realities. Because my interest in joining you and your colleagues, I can offer you references, but I must respectfully request that you only contact those listed.

I sincerely hope to arrange a formal interview at your convenience. Please feel free to contact me at the above-listed phone number or email address. In advance, thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Chris Smith
Chris Smith

Chris Smith

123 Any Street, Apt. 105 • City, ST 12345 • 123-456-7890 • csmith@email.com

June 1, 2016

Pat Cummings
Director of Human Resources
Any Law Firm
456 Any Street
City, ST 12345

Dear Mr. Cummings:

I would like to inquire about a possible opening for a legal assistant at Any Law Firm. As detailed on my attached resume, I have recently earned a Comprehensive Certificate in Paralegal Studies and a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration. My specialized studies have developed my paralegal skills and perspectives. In addition, my general academic knowledge of accounting, tax and finance issues provide a strong foundation upon which I can build an accomplishment-filled legal research, litigation support, project management and paralegal career at Any Law Firm.

As I completed the above-cited studies, I served as a mediation intern with the Attorney General's office during school and in the summers. In these capacities, I fine-tuned my research, mediation, writing, editing, document management and file preparation talents. Also, I have experience in all aspects of administrative support, so I am proud that those considered "support professionals" are critical team members. Please allow me the privilege to join the 30 or so members of the Any Firm team, working on labor, contractual and corporate issues, for esteemed clients including ABC Management, Inc. and Any Corporation. In academic and employment settings, I have completed many projects requiring time management, writing, editing and presentation talents. I certainly wish to do so as a legal assistant at your firm.

I hope that I have the chance to discuss my qualifications with you in person or, if more convenient, by phone. Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Smith
Chris Smith

Chris Smith

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June 1, 2016

Pat Cummings
Director of Human Resources
Any Law Firm
456 Any Street
City, ST 12345

Dear Mr. Cummings:

Eighteen years of experience in paralegal and office management positions have allowed me to develop many qualifications for your recently posted Paralegal Supervisor position. Having recently relocated to the Santa Clara area, I am very motivated to find an opportunity to lead the legal support staff of a firm composed of individuals who aspire to personify excellence for clients and professional peers. In my case, I trust that past achievements in varied legal settings, including Brendan Ellis, where I contributed to annual growth in billings and reputation, will predict future performance at your firm.

Detailed on the attached resume, my expertise is in the supervision of legal support staff and in all phases of research, document preparation and case coordination as required for diverse legal issues. In summary, I possess outstanding research, client relations, document management and writing skills; expertise as a law-office manager, compiling training documents and supervising personnel; as well as interview, negotiation and mediation talents.

I am most anxious to learn more information regarding your firm and the expectations associated with the Paralegal Supervisor position. I do hope you will find my candidacy worthy of consideration and an interview. Because I am available to start as soon as needed, perhaps we could meet soon to discuss my professional accomplishments, related experience and qualifications. I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Smith
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