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.
June 1, 2016

Pat Cummings  
Director of Social Services  
Any Agency  
456 Any Street  
City, ST 12345

Dear Ms. Cummings:

Upon reading your job listing on www.indeed.com, I wanted to express my interest in interviewing for the Case Manager position. I am proud of my accomplishments to date, all documented on the attached resume, and I would welcome the opportunity to personify the mission of Any Agency. I will build upon my professional experience, which is focused on motivating and guiding at-risk youth and incarcerated clients, as well as helping them achieve academic and personal objectives.

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. All cases were clearly, concisely and professionally tracked and documented, so appropriate groups, including psychologists, teachers, judges and parole boards could review them. Regular interaction with and referrals to social workers and judicial agency professionals are a part of day-to-day efforts. Presentations, reports and meets were, of course, also required of past roles and responsibilities and, I hope, future ones as a Case Manager at Any Agency.

Academically, I earned undergraduate degrees in psychology and sociology as well as a graduate degree in social work at Rutgers University, where I completed a diverse number of courses, projects and practica. I would welcome a meeting to discuss my academic as well as professional background and to learn more about the undertakings of Any Agency. Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Smith

Chris Smith
June 1, 2016

Pat Cummings, Director
Any Agency
456 Any Street
City, ST 12345

Dear Ms. Cummings:

In response to your advertisement on Socialjustice.com, I would like to present my candidacy for the Social Worker position at Any Agency. I am confident you will find my experience and abilities worthy of an interview for this opportunity. As detailed on the enclosed resume, I possess the academic and practical experience required to be a competent, caring and effective professional, serving diverse needs of Any Agency clients. Previewing and reviewing what appears on my resume, I offer the following:

- Capability to serve in comprehensive social-work capacities in school or health-care settings.
- Experience creating and implementing treatment plans for clients with psychosocial, behavioral and health-related disorders.
- Capacity to manage cases, maintain accurate case records and create detailed reports.

My most recent experiences at Baltimore Central School District, Johns Hopkins Children and Teen Clinic, Baltimore County Juvenile Court Clinic and Johns Hopkins University Hospital have all contributed to my development of professional competencies. Academically, I earned a master’s degree in social work from Johns Hopkins and undergraduate degrees in psychology and sociology from Colby College. While a graduate student, I volunteered as a literacy tutor for children residing in a housing project and as a geriatric aide at a day facility for Alzheimer’s patients.

Clearly, I have worked with diverse clients in varied settings, so I am ready to successfully address the needs of those who use Any Agency services. I look forward to speaking personally with you about my motivations and qualifications. Feel free to respond to this e-mail or to call me at the number above.

Sincerely,

Chris Smith

Chris Smith
June 1, 2016

Pat Cummings  
President, New England Offices  
Any Organization  
456 Any Street  
City, ST 12345

Dear Mr. Cummings:

In response to your advertisement on your organization’s human resources website, enclosed is a copy of my resume as well as a letter of recommendation and reference list for your review. When you have evaluated these documents, I trust you will determine my candidacy is worthy of an interview for the position of State Administrator available at Any Organization.

During the past twelve years, I have held diverse and progressively responsible fundraising, development and special-event planning positions for nonprofit service organizations, universities and educational institutions. In these capacities, I have been directly involved in developmental strategies, million-dollar annual fund campaigns, marketing and mailing programs, and media and public relations efforts. While these positions have been challenging, rewarding and broad in scope, I now wish my expertise to be utilized by Any Organization. Your mission to provide lobbying and financial support for those individuals and groups committed to the education of deserving students is one I seek to transform into record-breaking fundraising, dynamic public relations and effective policy papers.

I hope that, after reviewing my credentials, you and members of the selection committee will speak with me regarding my qualifications to be the State Administrator. Clearly, I am confident in my abilities and committed to the efforts of Any Organization, and I would like to schedule an interview to reinforce my qualifications and motivations.

I appreciate your time and look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,

Chris Smith

Chris Smith
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
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

Chris Smith