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
Administrator
Any Corporation
456 Any Street
City, ST 12345

Dear Ms. Cummings:

I am writing in response to your advertisement on Indeed.com. As you determine my worthiness for an interview, please focus on my comprehensive and related employment background detailed in the attached resume. For twelve years, I provided a range of administrative, financial and research support to the Chief Executive Officer of the Deaconess Hospital, Ms. Kelly Smith. As evidenced by the attached letter of recommendation, Ms. Smith is a strong advocate of my candidacy, and she would be happy to discuss my capabilities with you.

Recently, I took a sabbatical and finished my Masters of Public Health at Emerson College, so I am now actively seeking opportunities to build upon academic and employment skill sets. Throughout my graduate studies, I learned about issues that will impact health care for decades to come, specifically those related to HMOs, PPOs and the aging population. Most critically, I learned to use financial analyses to make intelligent managerial and procedural decisions. I am proud of my aptitude for numbers and extensive experience with the most pertinent software applications used in our industry. Please pay particular attention to the summary of qualifications section of my resume, where all competencies are clearly noted, indicating my potential to succeed as your Assistant Hospital Supervisor.

I would be interested in speaking with you further regarding this position. I am hopeful that you will consider my background in administrative support, as well as my word processing, database and spreadsheet skills an asset to Any Corporation. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Smith
Chris Smith
June 1, 2016

Pat Cummings  
District Vice President  
Any Health Resource Corporation  
456 Any Street  
City, ST 12345

Dear Ms. Cummings:

After reading your advertisement on Idealist.org, I would very much like to interview for the Hospital Administrator position. All my past experience, as described in the enclosed resume, reveals that I possess the strong administrative, patient-relations, practice-management and financial expertise you seek in a qualified candidate.

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. Also, I have a strong background in Medicare and health-benefits finance, preparation of business plans and strategies, financial and budget analysis, and forecasts and projections. All accomplishments to date, bulleted as first entries on the resume, have been associated with the healthcare field.

In addition, I am a strong organizer, enthusiastic speaker, capable leader and team player who can interface effectively with you, your Any Health Resource colleagues, medical professionals, as well as support staff and vendors. In the role of Administrator, I offer the qualifications and motivations to achieve results. Through a telephone or in-person interview, I can reiterate the qualifications presented in this letter and on the accompanying resume. Most important, during our meeting, I can learn about your goals for Any Health Resource Corporation and your expectations for the next Administrator. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Chris Smith  
Chris Smith
June 1, 2016

Pat Cummings  
Vice President  
Any Corporation  
456 Any Street  
City, ST 12345  

Dear Ms. Cummings:  

I would like to interview for the Occupational Health Manager position recently advertised on Any Corporation’s human resources website. Attached is a copy of my resume which clearly presents my professional and academic achievements associated with your position. Through a telephone or in-person meeting, I can also share my motivation and desire to join Any Corporation within these critical capacities.  

Upon a foundation of general nursing and health-care experience, all detailed on my resume, I have built a specialized career in occupational health. I am a certified occupational health nurse with twenty-one years of experience developing and implementing occupational health programs. Each related position has required a sound knowledge of OSHA and general occupational health issues in manufacturing, research and health-care settings. I have served in diagnostic, patient care, physician support, education, training and regulatory compliance roles.  

Ideally, my next professional step would be to develop, implement and support the strategically sound policies of Any Corporation to provide preventive, diagnostic and treatment services for employees actively involved in pharmaceutical research, development and manufacturing. I believe I am the right person to oversee the cost-effective, efficient and effective delivery of occupational health services to your local and national workforce.  

I look forward to hearing from you soon regarding your assessment of my candidacy and my request for an interview.  

Sincerely,  

Chris Smith  
Chris Smith, R.N.
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