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Cover Letters

By Amit Pujar

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by: **Amit Pujar**

Cover Letters :: Are you telling them what they want to know?

Let's face it. Recruiters (or employers) are smarter than we think. Bigger organizations pay a hefty salary to their HR department to filter out and sieve through hundreds and thousands of resumes. The idea is to build an organization with people of the right mental aptitude. Most of the top organizations believe strongly in a motto – "People are their greatest assets". Your cover letter goes a long way in capturing and retaining the attention of these people whose main job is to recruit people and coordinate with the workforce.

A well-written cover letter engages the recruiter and pushes him to spend more time reading your detailed resume. Before you start off writing your cover letter, write down what you want to convey on a paper. Read it once, twice, thrice and then set off for a good start. Pack in as much power as you can, because it is these 400 or 500 words that can make the difference.

Have these things on your mind before you start off writing:

Keep your sentences short and avoid using really long sentences because you don't want the recruiter to read it twice to understand what you're trying to convey. Got the point.? Keep your sentences s-h-o-r-t.

Keep your language simple. "I take immense pleasure in applying for this esteemed position in this esteemed organization." Hell.! Your employer knows more about his organization than you do. So you can as well cut the "false" praise. Maybe a subtle mention can do wonders. "I look forward to work with JK Industries".

Organize the content of your cover letter into small paragraphs or bulleted points, not exceeding three paragraphs. Typically each paragraph can contain 3 or 4 sentences.

Cover Letters

Do NOT use slang or spoken words like "Lookin' fo a kewl break into yo IT world".

Make sure your cover letter (and resume) is free from spelling or grammatical errors.

And most important: Deliver what the employer is looking for.

So, what should you put in your cover letter?

Ask yourself two questions. One, why should the employer choose you over others? And two, what can you give to the company that others cant? Skills, yes. Proven experience, better.

A good way to start writing is with the correct greeting phrase. If you know the name of the person you are addressing then you can start with 'Dear Ms. Stevenson' or 'Dear Mr. Washington'. Do not use their

first names. A bad greeting would be 'Hi Jane' or 'Hello George'.

The first paragraph is to contain a reference. If this is a response to an advertisement or a vacancy listing, this is where you refer to get their attention. Alternatively you can put in a separate line mentioning your reference. (Ref: Your advertisement on Jobsite.com – Ref # 12345).

If you're mentioning your reference in the first paragraph, you can continue on to include why you applied for that position. A good way of connecting the reference to your application is "my skills and your requirement are a good match." Put that in your own words.

In the next paragraph, you justify your statement about why you think that your skills and the skills required for the position are a good match. Make a single line reference to a particular achievement in your current (or previous) job that is along similar lines so that the employer will know exactly what he's looking for. A good example would be "Set up a fully operational network of franchisees in Southern France for retailing ABC Coffee".

Avoid mentioning skills you don't have or projects you have never worked on. Because sooner or later, you're going to face it; when the interviewer looks into your cover letter (or resume) and says "OK, Mr. Stephens, can you give me an instance of how you can use XML to port data from a backend system into a Middleware application"? And that's when you mind starts racing, "XML?? Middleware?? Port..?? Is that my resume he's got..??". God bless you if it's not your resume.

If there are more achievements you want to include, write them down in bulleted points. It's easier for the employer to read, comprehend and get a good picture of your capabilities. Do not reproduce your entire resume here. 2 or 3 such points will do perfectly fine. Of course, do not include irrelevant achievements like "Won a Silver Medal in 200 x 4 Men's Relay Race conducted by Louisville Young Adults Club in 1991". Not unless you're applying for the post of a Physical Trainer or Coach.

You have made your point here. You know why you're applying. And recruiters like that. You know your responsibilities, the risks involved and the tasks you'll be handling. You're just the person they're looking for. At least, you're one of the persons they'd like to talk to before handing over the

employment contract.

An ending note can make quite an impression. Tell them your resume is attached and that you're "looking forward to explore this opportunity further". Include an address and telephone number for them to contact you.

Sign off with a "Yours Truly" or "Best Regards" and put your complete name under it.

Get into form and write out your winning cover letter.

Amit Pujar is a copywriter/technical writer currently heading the content department of an online publication. Amit writes on a variety of subjects and is currently working on his first non-fiction. He can be reached at

Beat the Crowd with Winning Resume Cover Letters

By Roger G Clark (BSc)

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Far too many people underestimate the importance of resume cover letters. In a sense, a well written cover letter works like an agent on your behalf. It tosses a sales pitch for you to the employer, explaining why you should be at the top of the list for interview calls. Taking the time to write a cover letter tells the employer you are willing to go above and beyond; not just simply slap a resume in an envelope and mail it.

Not All Resume Cover Letters Are Created Equal

No two resume cover letters should ever be the same; each one should be uniquely tailored to the job for which you are applying. A generic cover letter is insulting to an employer and will quickly find its way into the trashcan. When writing cover letters keep the following tips in mind:

Address resume cover letters to an actual entity, not just a generic "To Whom it May Concern" or "Personnel Director." If you are not sure who to address, find out and then make sure you spell their name correctly. Do not just assume.

State who referred you or how you found out about the job opening. "Linda McCain mentioned that you might be hiring a new computer programmer soon." or "I learned about your opening for a Sales Associate from your posting in the San Francisco Sun and would like to discuss a few ways I can contribute to your team."

Resume cover letters should discuss how you can help the employer, not about why you need the job. The employer has posted a job opening because they need that position filled and they need the best candidate to fill it. Convince them why you are that person.

Make Yourself Stand Out from the Crowd

Demonstrate you know something about who the employer is and what they do. If you don't know anything about the company, find out what products or services the company offers, their competitors; any recent or upcoming changes. Employers will be impressed with your knowledge, especially if their company services a specialty niche that isn't well known.

Do not discuss salary requirements in resume cover letters. If the job posting requests that you respond with salary information, simply state in your cover letter "I would be pleased to discuss my salary history in an interview." Then quickly move on to what you can offer them in terms of your talent and skills.

Give an exact date when you will follow-up to discuss an interview. Don't depend on the employer to follow-up with you.

Keep it Short and to the Point

Do not say 'enclosed please find my resume.' This wastes valuable space in resume cover letters you can devote to highlighting why you are perfect for the job.

State what you need to, but don't draw it out. Keep resume cover letters to one page, preferably about four short paragraphs.

Neatness Counts

Proofread your resume cover letters and then ask someone else to proofread as well. Don't eliminate yourself from the candidates called for an interview because of a simple typo or misspelled word. Don't rely on your computer's spell check. It does not always catch everything.

Make sure your letter is neat. If at all possible, spend a little extra and print it on nice, professional paper. Make sure there are no wrinkles, folds or smudges.

Following a few simple rules can help your resume cover letters stand out from all the rest and get you in the door for an interview and on your way to that great new job!

Roger Clark (BSc) has over 25 years experience in career development & recruitment at a senior level through top management positions he has held with major international companies.

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