

COVER LETTERS:

YOUR COVER LETTER: THE GATEWAY TO YOUR RESUME

Takeaway Points

- A cover letter can make it easier for hiring managers to decide if they want to interview you.
- Your cover letter should include the job you want, how you heard about it, and a summary of skills and experience that are relevant to the job and employer.
- Indicate in the letter that you will follow up with the employer – unless the employer specifically states otherwise in the job posting.

By: Team Pongo

People often ask why a cover letter is even necessary. After all, they reason, the resume is the chief marketing tool that leads to an interview. But in some ways, the cover letter may be even *more* important than the resume.

Curb Appeal

Think of a house for sale. Most house hunters will judge the house by what it looks like from the road. Realtors call it curb appeal. The house may be ideal on the inside, but if the front doesn't look good, buyers won't bother walking through the door.

So, like the front of a house, a personalized, targeted, well-written cover letter can be what draws an employer in for a closer look at your resume.

Tell Them Why They Need You

A hiring manager's job is to decide which resumes warrant interviews. And the purpose of your cover letter is to make that job easier. It summarizes why your resume (which is probably one out of dozens or even hundreds) is worth reading, and shows how well you can communicate in written form.

What Should Your Cover Letter Include?

1) Which job you want and how you heard about it.

You might have seen an advertisement or online posting, or received a personal referral. A logical place to state this is in the RE: (reference) line.

Examples:

- RE: Corporate Controller Position Posted on ABC Company Web Site
- RE: Bakery Manager Opportunity Advertised in the *Daily Tribune*
- RE: Web Developer Opening (referred by John Doe)

2) The skills and experience most important to this employer.

You have a set of skills, but not all of them are relevant in every job. If you're responding to a specific job posting, it's important to tailor your cover letter to demonstrate the value you can offer *this* employer on *this* job.

Take words and phrases directly from the ad, then look to your resume to see which skills are close matches. For instance, if your resume says "all aspects of masonry" and the job ad says "bricklaying, mortaring, and concrete repairs," don't assume the employer will realize they're the same thing. If it's just a difference in wording, use the company's wording.

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“Past performance is a good indicator of future performance, so give the hiring manager some examples of what you have accomplished for other companies.”

Bonus: As you note the similarities between your resume and the job description, your confidence will grow, and that will be reflected in your cover letter.

Example:

If you're applying for an accounting position at WesternBank that calls for general ledger experience, you might say:

My five years of general ledger experience with Central Savings Bank make me a highly qualified candidate for the accounting position at WesternBank. Like WesternBank, Central is a progressive financial institution with a varied product line that includes many investment and loan options.

3) How your skills benefited your employers in the past.

Past performance is a good indicator of future performance, so give the hiring manager some examples of what you have accomplished for other companies. Go ahead and brag, as long as it's true!

Examples:

- *I established a strong track record of finding efficiencies in several corporate departments, which resulted in the elimination of budget shortfalls that the company had previously considered unavoidable.*
- *Throughout my tenure at Xenyx Company, I frequently had the opportunity to use my finance and accounting skills to help the business build revenue and minimize expenses.*

4) A confident, cordial ending.

Re-emphasize your interest in the opportunity, your confidence that you can contribute, and your gratitude for the reader's time.

Example:

Thank you for taking the time to review my qualifications. Let me again emphasize my strong interest in the corporate controller position. I am certain that my skills and experience will allow me to contribute to the success of your team. I look forward to talking with you further about this opportunity.

5) A follow-up statement.

Unless the company explicitly states that it does not want candidates to follow up, say you'll contact the recipient on a certain date (allow several days to a week). And hold yourself to that! Even if you don't reach the hiring manager on that date, you'll be sending a message that you're thorough about following through on promises.

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Did you know?

The Pongo LetterBUILDER (www.PongoResume.com) enables you to craft well-written cover letters to accompany your resumes. LetterBUILDER can even help you write post-interview follow-up letters!

Example:

I will contact you by telephone on Wednesday, June 27, to see if you will be available to talk further.

An appealing and well-written cover letter will entice the reader to review your resume. By explaining up front which job interests you and how your qualifications fulfill the company's needs, your cover letter paves the way to an interview...and your next great career move!

www.pongoresume.com

Pongo Resume is a premier full-service online resume-building resource that provides a suite of tools to help job seekers market and manage their career. Pongo generates over 100,000 resumes per month through its 4+ million registered users and has in excess of 1/2 million unique visitors per month. The company is privately held and headquartered in Northborough, Massachusetts.