Designing Cover Letters

Compiled by Career and Counseling Services, University of Houston - Clear Lake

Cover letters are marketing tools that should address the needs of the employer and entice the reader to want to learn more about you. Cover letters reflect your personality, your attention to detail, your communication skills, and your enthusiasm or interest in the position. The purpose of your cover letter is to get your enclosed resume read and to generate interviews. The cover letter allows you to tailor your application to each specific job. In reading the job description, link major job requirements with your related past performance and experience. Your letter should illustrate how your qualifications fit the needs of the employer.

LETTER WRITING TIPS

- Write your own cover letters to ensure an accurate reflection of your abilities and interests.
- When possible obtain the appropriate contact name, and address your letter to this specific individual with his or her correct title and business address. Ideally address letters to individuals capable of making hiring decisions.
- Tailor each letter to the specific situation reflecting the given audience and your objective.
- Write cover letters to be work and employer-centered, not self-centered. Remember that the goal is to generate interest in your application by stressing benefits for the employer.
- Use a positive, professional tone when writing the cover letter.
- Use active voice and action words when writing.
- Organize the information in a logical manner with the most critical information first.
- Use the same high quality paper for the cover letter as you are using for the resume.
- The letter should be clear, straight forward, easy to read, and error-free.
- Be brief. One page cover letters are most often appropriate.
- Be honest. Always be able to back up your claims with evidence.

CONTENT

Cover letters typically contain three to four paragraphs with each providing specific information. Paragraphs two and three below would be combined for the three paragraph version.

Paragraph One
In a concise opening paragraph reveal why you are writing and, when possible, express your interest in a specific position. Identify the position and how you learned of the vacancy. If someone referred you to the position, mention the referral’s name.

Paragraph Two
Paragraph two should focus on your resume and prompt the reader to refer to your enclosed resume. Using the position requirements as a reference, outline your most relevant qualifications. Expand upon your resume by providing additional evidence of your related experiences, accomplishments, and skills.

Paragraph Three
Use the third paragraph to market yourself. This paragraph is where you attempt to convince the employer that you have what is necessary to perform well in the position. Discuss your preparation and motivation to contribute to the employer’s organization.

Paragraph Four
Use the closing paragraph to suggest a plan of action. If appropriate, request an interview, and indicate that you will contact the employer during a specific time period to discuss interview possibilities. Provide phone numbers where you can be reached. Finally, express your appreciation to the reader for his or her time and for their consideration of your application.

Over for a Sample Cover Letters
### Letter with Key Qualifications in Paragraph Form (Full Block Format)

1123 Wood Drive  
Houston, TX 12345  
March 12, 2000  

Ms. Elizabeth Jacobs  
Manager of Human Resources  
Jones Marketing Group  
1300 Ocean Drive  
Houston, TX 67890  

Dear Ms. Jacobs:  

I am applying for your position of marketing analyst, which was advertised on March 9 with the Career Center at University of Houston – Clear Lake. As advertised, your position seems to fit well with my education, experience and career objectives.

You require effective communication skills, computer skills, the design and implementation of various marketing strategies and knowledge of current techniques in market analysis. As my resume illustrates my education and experience have ideally prepared me to meet these requirements. Through my course work in marketing, I obtained training in the development of various marketing strategies. As a student I have served as President of the Marketing Association, where I had the opportunity to work with a team on developing marketing materials for numerous university programs. During my recent experience in a cooperative education position at ABC Marketing, I was able to apply this training to several large projects. The most comprehensive project required the development of a marketing plan for a proposed new product. I conducted a market analysis in the greater Houston area and proposed appropriate strategic initiatives to effectively market the product.

I am confident I can make an immediate contribution to your company. Your position combined with your company’s excellent reputation are very appealing, therefore, I am genuinely interested in the position and in working for the Jones Marketing Group.

I welcome the opportunity to discuss with you how I might best fit your needs. Would you please consider my request for a personal interview? I shall call you next week to see if an appointment can be arranged. Should you need to reach me, please feel free to contact me at (202) 111-3333 or e-mail@e-mail.com. If I am not available, please leave a message and I will return your call. Thank you for your consideration of my application. I look forward to talking with you.

Sincerely,  

Your Signature  
Joan Smith  

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### Letter with Key Qualifications in Bullet Form (Modified Block Format)

1123 Wood Drive  
Houston, TX 12345  
March 12, 2000  

Ms. Elizabeth Jacobs  
Manager of Human Resources  
Jones Marketing Group  
1300 Ocean Drive  
Houston, TX 67890  

Dear Ms. Jacobs:  

I am applying for your position of marketing analyst, which was advertised on March 9 with the Career Center at University of Houston – Clear Lake. As advertised, your position seems to fit well with my education, experience and career objectives.

You require effective communication skills, computer skills, the design and implementation of various marketing strategies and knowledge of current techniques in market analysis. As my resume illustrates my education and experience have ideally prepared me to meet these requirements as follows:

- Trained in the development and application of various marketing strategies.
- Participated with team members on designing marketing materials for numerous university programs as President of Marketing Association.
- Developed marketing plan for proposed new product as co-op student at ABC Marketing; conducted market analysis and proposed strategic marketing initiatives for the Houston area.

I am confident I can make an immediate contribution to your company. Your position combined with your company’s excellent reputation are very appealing, therefore, I am genuinely interested in the position and in working for the Jones Marketing Group.

I welcome the opportunity to discuss with you how I might best fit your needs. Would you please consider my request for a personal interview? I shall call you next week to see if an appointment can be arranged. Should you need to reach me, please feel free to contact me at (202) 111-3333 or e-mail@e-mail.com. If I am not available, please leave a message and I will return your call. Thank you for your consideration of my application. I look forward to talking with you.

Sincerely,  

Your Signature  
Joan Smith  

Revised 10/09