

CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER TOOLKIT

GUIDE TO COVER LETTER WRITING

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Writing your cover letter in a job search is a challenging but critical step. It is NOT just a formality in the process. Like your résumé, the cover letter is an essential marketing tool that plays an important part in your job search strategy. A cover letter is a tailored and specific professional memo which will tell the reader why you want to work for their company, and serves as an introduction to your potential employer.

WHAT IS AN EFFECTIVE COVER LETTER?

An effective cover letter is personalized and will entice your potential employer to read your résumé. A new cover letter should be created for each position and company. Create a positive impact by conducting research on your “audience,” which will enable employers to view your written communication skills – a very important skill in the job market.

WHAT SHOULD YOU KNOW BEFORE WRITING A COVER LETTER?

Generic (and impersonal) cover letters don't work. Be sure that your cover letter reflects what is appropriate for your audience, objectives, and the job requirements. It should be able to quickly tell the employer:

- Why you are applying
- What skills, experiences, or education you have that relate to their needs
- How the company will benefit from hiring you
- Why you've chosen this particular company

COVER LETTER DETAILS

- Research the company and position you are applying for.
- Find out who to address the cover letter to – it MUST be addressed to a specific individual, with his or her correct title and business address.
- Make the content of your letter powerful. It must convince the employer to interview you.
- Drop a name – if you have a contact at the company, with permission, mention him or her in your letter.
- Your Cover Letter should be designed to be work-centered and employer-centered, NOT self-centered.

- Avoid flattery and DO NOT state the obvious (“Queen's Medical Center provides care for the ill.”)
- Be honest, and be able to back up your claims with evidence and specific examples from your education or experience.
- Keep it brief – it should be no longer than one page.
- Be positive and forthright – avoid negatives (“Although I cannot...”, or “Unfortunately...”)
- Avoid beginning too many sentences with “I”.
- Your grammar, spelling and punctuation MUST be accurate – have others proofread it for you.
- You MUST sign your cover letter:
 - Hard Copy – Sign the original document.
 - Soft Copy – Scan your signature and insert it where you would sign, OR print a hard copy, sign it, and scan the entire document with your signature on it.

SENDING YOUR COVER LETTER

- Via post mail – send it in an envelope that will not require you to fold your document(s).
- Via e-mail or online – save it as a PDF version and submit or upload your cover letter.

THE MOST IMPORTANT DETAIL

PROOFREAD! Your cover letter should be free of typos or grammatical errors. Your cover letter is a professional writing sample of what you will produce for the company.

■ GENERAL OUTLINE FOR A COVER LETTER

OPENING PARAGRAPH

- Who you are
- What you are seeking
- Why you are writing
- When and where you learned about the position

MIDDLE PARAGRAPH(S): MORE INFO ON YOU:

- Skills
- Interests
- Abilities
- Etc.

PERSONALIZED:

- Why this company?
- Why will you be a good fit?

CLOSING PARAGRAPH:

- Thank you
- ASK for the interview
- Provide your contact info

NOTE:

Format should have at least 1" margin all around.

Applicant's Street Address

City, State Zip Code

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Date of Letter (Month, day, 20__)

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Employer's Name

Title

Department

Company Name

Company Street Address

City, State Zip Code

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Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms./Dr.

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OPENING PARAGRAPH: State why you are writing, name the position or type of work for which you are applying, and mention how you heard about the job opening or the company. Underline titles of newspapers or professional journals. Mention a contact person at the organization if appropriate.

MIDDLE PARAGRAPH(S): Explain why you are interested in working for this particular employer and specify your reasons for seeking this type of employment. Outline your strongest qualifications that match the position requirements. As much as possible, provide evidence of your related experience and accomplishments, but do not repeat exactly what is on your résumé. Convince the employer that you have the personal qualities and motivation to perform well in the position. Be personable and enthusiastic. Make the employer want to read your résumé. If you are not available for immediate employment, say so. ("I will graduate in May 2017, and will be available for full-time employment as of June 2017.")

CLOSING PARAGRAPH(S): You may refer the reader to your enclosed résumé which gives a summary of your qualifications. Have an appropriate closing to pave the way for the interview by indicating the action or steps you will take to initiate an interview date. Include a current telephone number where you can be contacted. Express appreciation to the reader for his or her time and consideration.

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Sincerely,

Your Written Signature (Don't forget to sign!)

Your name as it will be signed

Enclosure (This means that you have additional attached documents – your résumé)

■ SAMPLE:

APPLICATION LETTER SENT IN RESPONSE TO A POSTING

35 South Beretania Street, Apt. #347
Honolulu, HI 96813

March 7, 2017

Ms. Dianne C. Strand
Manager of Human Resources
Pacific Coast Industries, Inc.
3790 N. Nimitz Highway
Honolulu, HI 96819

Dear Ms. Strand:

I am applying for the position of systems analyst which was advertised in HPU Connect, March 3, 2017 edition. The position seems to fit very well with my education, experience, and career interests.

Your position requires experience in computer systems, financial applications software, and end-user consulting. In August 2017, I will earn a Bachelor of Science degree from Hawai'i Pacific University with a major in Information Systems and Finance. Throughout my course of study, I have received hands-on training on a wide variety of micro- and macrocomputer systems as well as many software programs and applications. My practical experience in the University's computer center as a student assistant gave me valuable exposure to complex computer operations and user training. Additionally, I worked as a cooperative education student in computing operations for a large bank where I gained knowledge of financial systems. My enclosed résumé provides more details on my qualifications.

Would you please consider my request for a personal interview to further discuss my qualifications so I may learn more about this opportunity? Should you need to reach me, please feel free to call me at (808) 555-5555. If I am not in, please leave a message on my voice mail and I will return your call promptly.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to talking with you.

Sincerely yours,

(Written signature)

Susan Lee

Enclosure

■ SAMPLE:

PROSPECTING LETTER SENT TO A COMPANY THAT MAY HAVE OPENINGS

849 Ala Wai Blvd.
Honolulu, HI 96819

January 30, 2017

Mr. Steven Chang
Director of Recruiting
Macy's Corporation
4500 Liberty Blvd.
New York, NY 10050

Dear Mr. Chang:

I read about your company in CPC's Job Choices in Business and would like to inquire about employment opportunities in your management training program. I want to work in retail management and plan to relocate to the New York area after graduation.

I will receive my B.S. degree in Management this coming December. My interest in business started in high school when I joined the Future Business Leaders Association and has developed further through a variety of retail sales positions during college. My internship with a large department store convinced me to pursue a career in retail. When I researched the top retailers in New York, Macy's Corporation emerged as having a strong market position and a reputation for excellent customer service.

My education and experience listed on my enclosed résumé match the qualifications you seek in your management trainees, but they don't tell the whole story. I know from customer and supervisor feedback that I have the interpersonal skills and motivation needed to build a successful career in retail management. My relatively extensive experience gives me confidence in my career direction and in my abilities to perform competently.

I know how busy you must be during this time of year, but I would appreciate a few minutes of your time. I will call you during the week of February 15 to discuss employment possibilities. In the meantime, if you need to contact me, my number is 808-947-9236. Please leave a message if I am not in, and I'll return your call the next day.

Thank you very much for considering my request. I look forward to talking with you.

Sincerely,

(Written signature)

Craig W. Mishihara

Enclosure



CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER

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