

GET THE JOB

Personalizing a Cover Letter

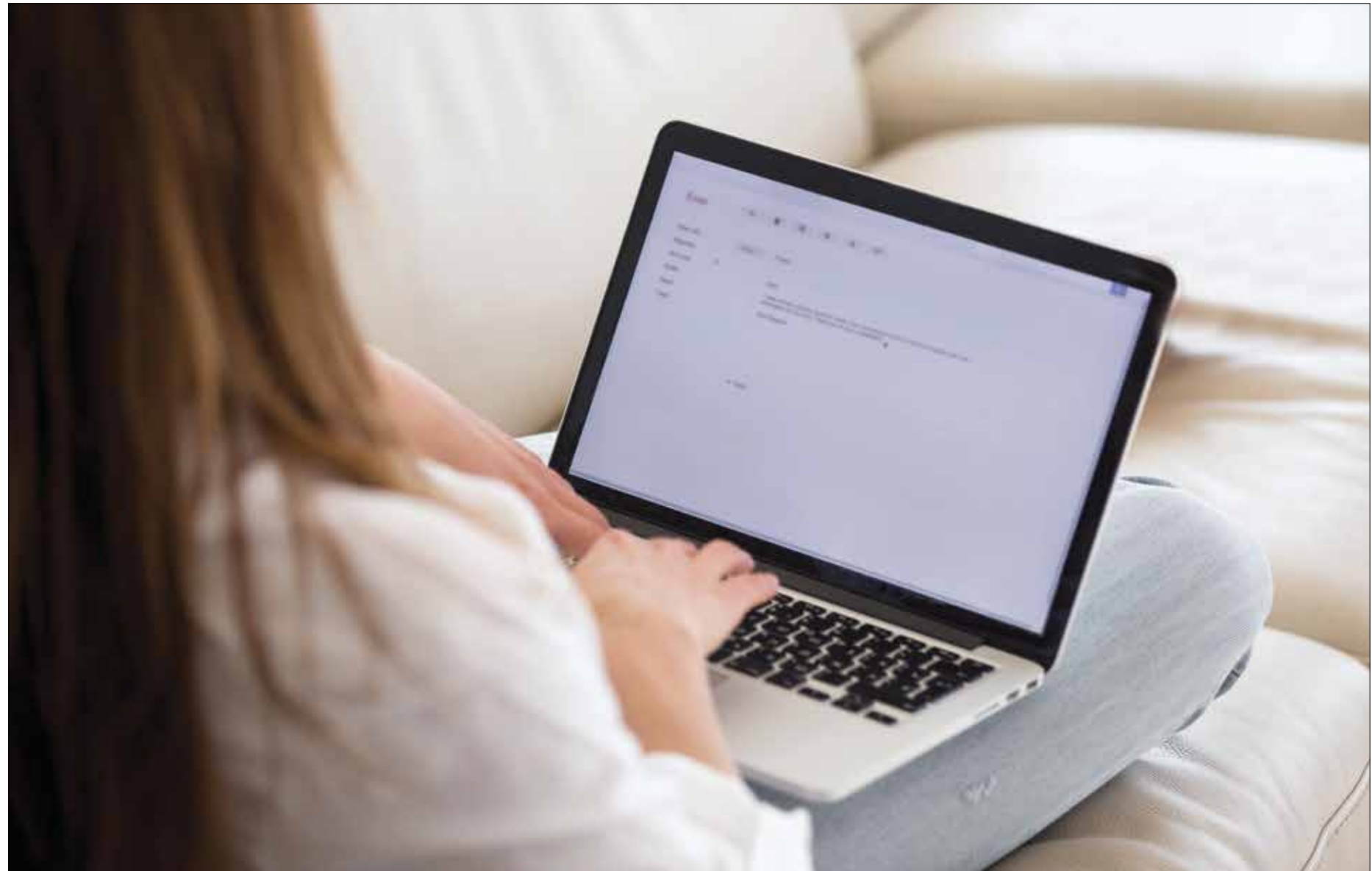
In a competitive hiring environment, even a small edge counts. That's why you don't want to submit a cover letter with impersonal or canned phrases.

Hiring managers might pass you over without getting past introductions like "To Whom It May Concern" or "Dear Hiring Manager." Aside from being impersonal, this approach betrays a lack of research. In today's plugged-in world, it's often easy to find the name of the hiring manager. Some companies, however, intentionally shield their employees' names in order to protect them from spam. In these cases, opt to leave off a salutation instead.

It's best to take a formal approach, using courtesy titles like "Mr." and "Dr." Use "Ms.," rather than Mrs. or Miss. If you are unsure of the hiring manager's gender, opt for first and last names rather than risk misgendering someone. If all you can find is the department head for the position you're applying for, feel free to include that name.

SEARCH ONLINE

Start with the company web-



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site, looking for links marked "Staff," "About Us" or "Directory," then search for the hiring manager or appropriate department. If the site doesn't host those kinds of pages, try Google or social media searches. LinkedIn is a great resource; search for the company there and the results will include anyone who has listed the company in their profile.

Hashtags might also lead you to the person or department you are looking for.

If needed, send a polite email to any contact you can find asking for the name and contact information of the hiring manager. You might just make a new networking contact and learn more about the company. When all else fails, pick up the phone. This kind of

information was traditionally shared courtesy of a direct call to the company. Candidates got in touch with the hiring manager, or spoke with a receptionist, co-worker or secretary to find out more.

FOLLOW THE NEWS

Researching the company will also include following relevant news. Articles from busi-

ness journals, mainstream media, news releases and trade publications will provide broader perspective on company priorities and will also include key contact names, even if it's only their public relations department. If the organization is in the same city, archives of local coverage in the newspaper can usually be found and accessed at the library.