

GET THE JOB

Creating a Cover Letter

The internet has made applying for a job a breeze, even when seeking similar positions from multiple potential employers. All you have to do is hit the apply button, right? What can be forgotten in such haste, however, is the kind of cover letter that would help you stand out in the online crowd.

Here's a look at the art of the cover letter.

CUSTOMIZE FOR HIGH IMPACT

It may be easier to send a generic the same cover letter over and over, but it won't help differentiate your application from all the rest. Instead, compose job-specific versions to individual companies. You don't have to start from scratch every time. Instead make focused changes that make it clear you're not transferring the same rote information over and over. Aligning your attributes and accomplishments with a specific employer's goals in this



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way makes for a much greater impact – in particular if you're part of a hiring pool where several candidates have similar qualifications. If you can find out who will be receiving your inquiry about the position, go the extra mile to greet them by name.

RE-READ FOR MISTAKES

You've collected all of your pertinent information and dug up every award for your

résumé, then customized a cover letter toward a particular job or industry. But then you somehow miss a typographical error or grammatical mishap. All of that time and effort could be for naught, since your prospective employer might take that as a sign of larger issue with care and attention to detail. These little things count when decisions are being made with little else to guide them.

You don't want your cover letter to end up at the bottom of a trash can in a frustrated hiring manager's office over something so simple. Also, avoid gimmicky choices like emojis, non-traditional fonts or colored backgrounds and paper. They can make you look less than serious.

TELL THE REST OF THE STORY

The strength of a cover let-

ter is that it can explain elements of your job history that a résumé can't. Did you have a gap in your employment because you returned to school or became a parent? Maybe you're simply changing career tracks, rather than re-entering the job market? All of that information can find a home on a well-crafted cover letter. Hiring managers can fill in the blanks on your larger journey. You also get a chance to convey an enthusiasm and command of detail about the specific job opportunity not allowed in résumé.

AVOID THE NEGATIVES

Perhaps because they're more conversational, some people still make the mistake of including negative thoughts and experiences in their cover letters. Don't try to explain away issues in your job history by shifting blame, or portraying a former company in a negative light. This won't convince anyone that you're ready to become a productive member of their team. Keep it positive, even when discussing an earlier separation, by discussing the constructive developments from this change. End on an upbeat note too, by expressing your hope for a future interview. They're looking for people with a can-do attitude, and that starts with your cover letter.