

**Their City, State, Zip Code**

**Today's Date, 1999**

**Dear Mr. Shmoe:**

(Colons are used in formal letters. Commas are used in friendly letters.)

**Think company cars, expense accounts, and a spacious office with bay windows. Who do you picture running a business this successful?**

(Start the letter with a zinger that captures the essence of your proposed article/story. Raise a question that will cause the reader to think, or give a visual image... anything that will make him/her want to read on and find out what you're talking about.)

**Think again. This company was the brainchild of three Boston University sophomores whose ambitions led them to thriving careers before they had diplomas to hang on the wall.**

(The rest of the first paragraph should give a concise description of the focus of your proposed article. Remember to tell why it's appropriate to the publication you're querying. In this case, I was targeting a college magazine, so I made sure to emphasize the relevance to their subject matter early in the letter.)

**Charles Strader, Richard Skelton, and Pablo Mondal run Net One, an Internet Service Provider. The three met in the freshmen dorms, then moved into an apartment together. Opportunity knocked when Strader, who worked for the university's computer center, took a phone call from the owner of a hair salon. She sought help designing a website; Strader volunteered, and Net One was born.**

(Again, concisely, get a little deeper into the content of the article. What is special about your story? In this case, I wanted to emphasize that these guys were college buddies who started a booming business by branching out from their humble beginning.)

**"Working closely with friends to build something we believe in" is Mondal's favorite perk. Skelton agrees. "We have great trust in each other, and feel that we're all in this together."**

(Quotes aren't necessary in a query, but it's nice to give something specific to show that you have done some research into your topic, and that you have access to resources that will enable you to write the article well. I wanted to show that I had already spoken to these guys—they happen to be friends of mine—and that they would be upbeat and inspirational people to interview. You can accomplish the same effect by including a few quirky facts or survey results you've found out about your topic.)

**Considering that their only capital was a computer and a small loan from Strader's father, the guys feel very successful. "We're not millionaires, but we have goals, and we're following them," says Skelton. "I think that's true success." By any definition, Net One's roster of over 50 clients ranging from colleges to Fortune 500 companies attests to their hard work and talent.**

(Look, editor. These guys are big up-and-comers! Notice I mentioned "Fortune 500 companies." This lets the editor know quickly that these college guys aren't small potatoes. It neatly ties up the opening sentence, which promised an article about guys who have a spacious office, expense accounts, and company car. Now the editor has a reason to believe that these guys actually are that successful.)

**I propose a 1,000 word profile for your "Students At Work" section.**

(Shows I've researched their magazine. I know which section this should fit, and I've read their guidelines to determine an appropriate word count.)

**I am a full-time freelance writer, and my works have been recently featured in such publications as *201 Magazine*, *College Bound*...**

(Notice I mention the most relevant magazines first. Anything you've had published that might relate to the content, tone, or audience of the proposed publication belongs here.)

**...Bliss!, *Working Women*, and *Adaptz.com*. Clips are enclosed.**

(If you've never had anything published, don't distress. Just shut up about it. Do NOT tell anyone, "Though I've never been published yet, I'm a real go-getter." Less is more. If you keep quiet, they may not even think about the

fact that you didn't mention your credits. Also, do not get into a diatribe describing how you edited your high school newspaper. Just a quick list of relevant writing background. See below for info about clips.)

**I can provide documentation and interview notes for easy fact-checking, and could submit the completed article within two weeks.**

(Optional. Some people like to suggest a time frame, others let the editor do it. In general, the editor will tell you when the article is due, regardless of your preferences. It's a nice touch to mention how you will research your article. Since mine was a profile, it was primarily dependent on interviews of the subjects, but you may wish to include the names of journals/experts you plan to quote or use for information.)

**I look forward to your response.**

(Obligatory polite ending. Use any variation you wish. No pleading. If you dare type, "I promise to write a reallllly, reallllly good article! Please hire me!" you will incur my wrath. I will hunt you down and yell at you. A lot. Just a simple, dignified ending requesting a response.)

**Regards,  
Jenna Glatzer**

(Oh. Substitute your name and preferred signature ending. Unless you feel like sending your paycheck to me, in which case, you can feel free to use my name. Grin.)

Karen Roman, editor of a computer technology/small business magazine, suggests that it helps to list your resources when querying for non-fiction articles. She explains that she is much more likely to hire someone if she knows she can count on accurate information and quotes.

Further, she notes that if queries sound at all self-serving (coming off like a press release for a company or individual), she would never assign the piece.

"My advice is to be honest about what you can provide, when it will be available, and be sure it fits the format of magazine," she says. "In short, what I find irresistible is a sense that I can trust the writer to make good on his or her clear promise to deliver relevant content in a professional manner.