

Job Search Correspondence

Career Center – CMU's Heinz College

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Types of Job Search Correspondence

1. Cover letter
2. Thank you letter for both job interviews and informational interviews
3. Accepting a job offer
4. Withdrawing your application from consideration
5. Rejection letter
6. Resignation letter

Cover Letter

The cover letter is a selling tool that helps to introduce your resume to an employer. You should send a cover letter when requested by the employer or when you are sending to a current employee in the organization and use it as an introduction. The best cover letters are short and to the point. You should honor the 30-second rule and realize that regardless of what you say, the employer is going to scan your letter. Remember your goal, which is to get the reader to take action and call you for an interview.

Typically, a cover letter is three or four paragraphs. The first paragraph introduces yourself and lets the employer know why you are writing. The second and third paragraphs should stress your strongest points and relate them directly to the position you seek. Please note that you do not need to use two paragraphs. If one paragraph expresses your strengths sufficiently, than that is all you need. The last paragraph closes the letter and a request for action is given.

Paragraph One

Tell the reader who you are and why you are writing. You may find telling about your current status as a good way start. "I am about to complete my Masters degree in Information Systems Management at Carnegie Mellon University and am interested in exploring a possible affiliation with Citigroup." Another lead may be to express where or from whom you heard about the position. "I am writing to submit my resume for the Business Analyst position as advertised on your website. The combination of my education and work experience makes me a uniquely qualified applicant." You can also lead with your interest in working in a certain geographic area. The possibilities for the first paragraph are numerous. One rule to keep in mind is to keep it short and to the point.

Paragraph Two

The goal of paragraph two is to sell you; however, always keep the reader's point of view in mind. Tell the reader what you have to offer or how your experience can benefit the employer. Do not focus on how you will benefit from being hired.

Mention your strengths, special skills, accomplishments and experience. Use action words and numbers to quantify your accomplishments. Do not repeat everything on your resume. Rather, you want to paint a vivid picture of the major benefits you can bring to the employer's organization.

Paragraph Three

Your third paragraph needs to be a call for action. If you are applying for a local position, ask for an interview right away. "When may we get together for a personal interview?" If you are applying for a position that is out of town but you will be traveling to that area let the employer know. "I plan to visit Chicago during the week of November 22 – 26 and will welcome the chance to meet you personally." You can state that you will be calling the employer on a certain day to follow up on your resume. "I will call you on Monday, October 4 to see if your schedule would permit us to meet briefly."

Here are some other examples:

I will call your office at 2:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 23 to ask you a few questions about the position and to see if we might be able to get together for a brief meeting in the near future.

Would next week be a good time to discuss my interest? I will call your office at 3:00 p.m. on Tuesday, September 9 to check your schedule. I appreciate your time.

I would appreciate an opportunity to discuss with you how I might best meet your needs. I will call your office on Monday, September 20 to inquire about an interview.

Cover Letter Do's and Don'ts

- Only one page.
- It may be sent electronically as an attachment along with your resume
- Use paper and an envelope that matches your resume if you are mailing your application materials
- Include your phone number in the letter to make it easy for the reader to take action
- If at all possible, get the name of the person doing the hiring, it is more effective than Dear Sir or Madame or To Whom This May Concern
- If you are currently employed, do not use your current employer's letterhead
- Do not have personal letterhead printed
- Be professional, positive, and to the point

- Do not “preach” to the employer. This is a very common mistake and a big turn off. For example: “In today’s highly competitive business world companies must be extremely careful to control the quality of their products and services.”
- Do not try to explain any perceived weakness in your background
- Do not forget to sign your letter if you are sending a hard copy
- ZERO ERRORS
- If you were asked to provide either a salary history or salary requirements, it is in the cover letter that you give this information, not your resume
- Do not include the following information: birth date, social security number, height, weight, marital status, picture of yourself

Your Name
Your address
Pittsburgh, PA 15289

September 21, 2009

Jane Shirley
Human Resource Manager
Company Name
Company Address

Dear Ms. Shirley:

I am about to complete my Masters of Information Systems Management at Carnegie Mellon University and am interested in relocating to New York City. Please accept my resume as application to the Business Analyst position posted on your website.

As you can see from my enclosed resume, I bring not only the educational background needed for this position, but I have also gained practical experience. While interning at Federated Investors, I focused on my analytical and problem solving skills. Specifically, I was responsible for identifying and resolving financial reporting issues, as well as generating innovative methods to improve processes. I also fine-tuned my communication and consensus building skills, as I often needed to present and market my work to middle and upper management.

I will be in the New York area on October 18 and 19 and would welcome the opportunity to interview with you. I will call your office on Monday, September 28 to discuss a time when we can meet. Thank you in advance for your time.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Enclosure

Thank You Letter

Thank you letters for both job interviews and informational interviews are imperative. They will set you apart from **most** of the other applicants. A thank you letter should be typed and on the same paper as your cover letter and resume or sent as an email attachment. It should be just as professional as your resume and cover letter. Also, it needs to be very timely. It is best sent the evening or day after your interview.

If you interviewed with several people, ask for their business cards at the end of their interview. Then, send a thank you letter to each person. If you forgot to ask for their cards, still send a thank you letter to your main contact but mention the other interviewers and thank them. For example: "I enjoyed speaking with you and the search committee. Their enthusiasm for the company is contagious."

A thank you letter is short. The basics of the letter should include:

Paragraph One

- Thank the interviewer for the opportunity to speak with him or her.
- Mention when the interview took place and the position.

Paragraph Two

- Highlight why you are qualified for the position.
- Supply any requested information.

Paragraph Three

- State that you are interested in the position.
- Close with a statement expressing your eagerness in receiving a response.

Your Name
Your address
Pittsburgh, PA 15289

October 20, 2009

Jane Shirley
Human Resource Manager
Company Name
Company Address

Dear Ms. Shirley:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you on Friday, October 19 concerning the Business Analyst position. I am excited about this opportunity and believe the skills and experience I possess will be an asset to your company.

Specifically, my education preparation and recent experience with Federated Investors as an intern has prepared me well for this position. I have the needed blend of quantitative and technical skills plus drive and passion.

Please feel free to contact me if you have additional questions. I can be reached at 412.555.1212. Thank you again for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Your name

Accepting a Job Offer

Congratulations. Writing this type of email or letter means you have a job. This message or letter implies a commitment between two parties, you and your new employer and the end of your job search.

The basics of the message or letter are simple. Express your acceptance of the offer and restate the details as you understand them. For example, your title, place of employment, start date, salary, etc.

If you still need clarification for any part of your employment agreement, seek clarification before writing the message or letter. Close the message or letter by thanking your contact for the employment opportunity.

Withdrawing Your Resume from Consideration

If you have interviewed for several positions and have just accepted an offer, your next step is to withdraw your interest in the other positions. It is important for the other companies to know you are employed. Recruiting is expensive and very time consuming. Do not mislead employers by continuing in the recruitment process if you have already accepted a position.

The email message or letter should be as professional as the others and simply state your appreciation for the opportunity to interview but you have accepted another position. This is an important step in the job search process, as you never know when you may be seeking employment from this company in the future. Do not burn any bridges by misleading them.

You should write a similar message or letter to your references. Tell them about the position you have accepted and thank them for their time and kind words.

Rejection Letter

There may be a time when you are offered a position but you do not care to take it. You need to write a rejection email or letter as soon as you have decided to decline their offer of employment. Open the message or letter by expressing your appreciation for the offer. Then indicate that although the decision was difficult one, you have decided to decline the offer and describe your reason(s). Thank them again for their time and consideration.

Resignation Letter

While you may only be thinking about finding a job at this point, there will be a time when you will resign a position. Once again, this letter is to be professional. Open the

letter by stating your intent to resign your position and actually state your job title. Research your company's Length of Notice policy. Then, calculate when your last day will be based on that policy. Typically it will be two weeks or 30 days. You may want to state why you are leaving such as you have decided to return to school, your spouse is being transferred or you have decided to pursue other opportunities. Do not burn any bridges in this letter. It will remain in your Personnel file and you never know when situations may change and you will be seeking employment from the company again. End the letter by thanking your manager and the company for the employment opportunity.