

# Cover Letter Workshop



- Purpose & objectives
- Effective tips
- Format
- Sample paragraphs
- Final Steps

# How long does it take to create a basic Cover Letter?

- You can create an effective cover letter in only **15 minutes!**
- After the first draft, you can edit and send them in even less time!
- We will go through all of the steps to build a successful cover letter.

# Purpose

- To introduce YOU and your background to a prospective employer.
- To serve as a business letter to transmit your resume to an employer.
- To serve as a SALES letter to convince the employer you have something valuable to contribute and that it would be worth their time to interview you.



# Objectives of your Cover Letter

- To introduce yourself and declare your intentions
- To highlight your most notable:
  - Qualifications
  - Experiences
  - Credentials
  - Skills
  - Achievements

Think of anything that sets you apart!

Build on that idea for your cover letter.



# Additional Objectives

To identify the value you can bring to the organization

- Bottom line: How can you impact the company?

To capture your reader's interest in you, your resume, and your availability

To motivate the reader to call and offer you the opportunity for an interview

# Effective Tips

1. Make it easy for someone to understand all about you and your qualifications for the position.
2. Use a professional format when **typing** your cover letters.
3. Stay simple.
4. Target the right person.
5. Be an attention getter.



## Effective Tips cont...

- Include information that you know about the company or the position for which you are applying.
- Explain why you want to work for this company in particular.
- Be sure that your cover letters are neat, clean, and well presented.
  - Written on stationary that matches your resume
  - Just enough information to get the employer interested in you for THAT position

## Effective Tips cont...

- Double check, triple check, and then have someone else check your letter to be sure that it is **error-free**!
- Keep your cover letters short!
- Always remind yourself why you are writing each cover letter
- Be sure to ask for the interview!



# Cover letter formats

- Paragraph style
- Comparison-list style (directly comparing your qualifications to the position requirements)
- Bullet style (with introductory and closing paragraphs surrounding bullet-point statements)

# Paragraph Style – 1<sup>st</sup> Paragraph

## Opening Sentences

- Why are you writing?
- How did you learn about the position

## Samples of opening sentences for cover letters

- I am writing in response to your advertisement in the **Herald Palladium** for an **Administrative Assistant** position and have enclosed my resume for your review.
- I am writing to request an informational meeting with you regarding career opportunities in the **CNA field**. With my experience in **(explain QUALIFICATIONS)** I would be a great addition to your team.
- Recently I saw an advertisement on **southwestmichiganjobs.com** for a cashiering position. I have great customer service experience from jobs at **Company A** and **Company B** and would love to join your team.

# Paragraph Style – 2<sup>nd</sup> Paragraph

## Body

- Sell yourself, highlight the attractive features and benefits of “you”

## Samples of middle paragraphs

- Please accept this letter and enclosed resume as application for the position of \_\_\_\_\_. You will find that not only do I have the specific qualifications you are seeking; I am a strong **(QUALIFICATION), certified in \_\_\_\_\_, and (ANOTHER QUALIFICATION).**
- I meet all the hiring criteria for your search for your **customer service position.** Briefly summarized, my qualifications include the following: (list 3 qualifications)
- As you will note on the enclosed resume, my expertise covers a wide area of responsibilities, including extensive experience in **cashiering, customer service, and closing procedures.**



# Paragraph Style – 3<sup>rd</sup> Paragraph

## **Closing**

- Ask for the interview
- Thank them

## **Samples of closing paragraphs**

- I am confident that with my abilities I can make an immediate and valuable contribution to your company. I am available for an interview at your convenience and look forward to hearing from you soon. Thank you.
- I would appreciate an opportunity to discuss my abilities in more depth. I am available anytime after 2:00 p.m. Monday through Friday for an interview. Thank you for your time and consideration.
- I would appreciate the opportunity to speak with you about how I can contribute to your company. I'll follow up on (DATE) to arrange a mutually convenient time for our meeting. Thank you.

# Connecting your Resume and Cover Letter

- 60 % of executives believe a cover letter is either as important as or more critical than a resume, according to a survey by Accountemps.
- Your Cover Letter should draw attention to the most important information in the resume
- Your Resume/ Cover Letter should present two essential things all employers look for:
  - Resume – shows you can do the work
  - Cover Letter – shows you want to do the work required

# Before You Send It

## **Polish, Proofread, and Finalize**

- Spelling
- Grammar and punctuation
- Clear and concise language
- Consistent with resume format

## **Font & Paper – one size, no special format**

- White/ivory
- Times New Roman



# Don't Make These Mistakes!

- Don't make the employer guess what kind of job you're looking for
- Don't forget to include your resume!
- Don't be generic – save & edit!
- Don't include irrelevant content
- Don't forget to follow-up!
- Don't forget to send a thank you note after your interview!

# When Writing a Cover Letter Think...

- What will I say when the interviewer asks “Why should we hire you?”
- What skills do I have that would help me transition into this job?
- What stands out in my resume as something that the employer should know about me?
- What skills do I have that are transferrable to this position?

# Have Confidence in your Cover Letter!

- This is your first step in the door of a new career!
- Don't give up if you have to send out several cover letters before you get a response.
- It only takes one interested employer to get that job that you always wanted!



# When do you NOT need a cover letter?

- Some information technology positions
- Part-time re-tail jobs, some full-time retail
- Creative industries may prefer to see a portfolio sample instead
- If a recruiter or employer has specifically told you not to include one
- Otherwise, play it safe!
- Communicate why they should hire you!

(MSN Careers “When you need a Cover Letter...”)

# Job Search Sabotage

1. Not keeping track of your accomplishments
2. Leaving on a bad note
3. Not networking
4. Only using the Internet
5. Searching only for the perfect job

# Sample Cover Letters

- Go to [office.microsoft.com](http://office.microsoft.com)
- [Jobsearch.about.com](http://Jobsearch.about.com)
- Winway Resume Deluxe @ MI Works sites
- [Bestcoverletters.com](http://Bestcoverletters.com)
- [Jobstar.org](http://Jobstar.org)  
(Click on “Resumes” in Left-hand corner)
- [Resumecoverletterexamples.com](http://Resumecoverletterexamples.com)
- “Google” or “MSN Search” the phrase “Cover Letter Examples”
- Come see me for additional questions or to review your cover letter!