

## COVER LETTER GUIDE

### *Why should I write a cover letter?*

A cover letter accompanies a résumé being sent to an organization for a specific position. The well-written cover letter highlights selective aspects of your background which best suit the employer's needs. In other words, the cover letter bridges your skills and experience with the qualifications stated on the job or internship description or what the position requires.

- **Capture Attention:** A well written cover letter commands the reader's attention. It should be a “page turner” to your résumé!
- **Stimulate Interest:** It stimulates interest in you and your résumé, as well as reflecting your interest in the job and/or the organization.
- **Gain an Interview:** The opportunity to interview is the ultimate goal of your cover letter and résumé.

### *What do I include in a cover letter?*

A cover letter is usually three to four paragraphs in length. Each paragraph has a different goal.

#### **First Paragraph.**

- This opening paragraph explains **why** you are writing the letter. State your purpose, identify the position you are applying for, and how you learned about the opening.
- If you are responding to an advertisement, state the name and date of the publication where you found the ad.
- If a person known to the organization referred you to the company, mention the person's name and connection.

#### **Second Paragraph.**

- It is in this paragraph that you **tailor** the information provided on your resume to a particular job or internship.
- Here you should tell the employer why you are a strong candidate for this opportunity, thereby promoting your value to the prospective company.
- Explain how you intend to contribute to the organization. Do not focus on what you hope to gain from the position!
- Identify matches between your skills and experience and the company's needs. Highlight transferable skills, particularly if you do not have experience in the career field or position you are applying to.

#### **Third Paragraph**

- Here you may want to highlight specific accomplishments, achievements or educational/internship experiences that support your second paragraph.
- Highlight relevant achievements, skills, and/or experience, mentioning the most interesting points on your resume.

*(The second and third paragraphs can often be combined into one paragraph. You should also be careful to not simply repeat what is on your resume in these paragraphs.)*

#### **Closing Paragraph**

- Here you must instruct the reader what future action you expect.
- You will want to request an interview or state a specific date you plan to follow-up and what contact will be made.

## ***How do I get started?***

Below are some opening lines to help give you some direction and ideas to start putting your cover letter together. Remember that the cover letter is most effective when targeted to the **specific** job posting and/or company (rather than a mass mailing in standard form).

### **First Paragraph**

- Your advertisement in the Boston Globe, dated Sunday, May 15, indicated your need for...
- Lisa Stepanski suggested I contact you regarding...
- I am writing in response to your internship posting on Bostonworks.com...
- My professor, Regina Rutter, informed me about the opening...
- I am writing to inquire about the position...
- In view of your ongoing need for computer programmers...

### **Second (and Third) Paragraph(s):**

- The position of \_\_\_\_\_ will allow me to utilize...
- My qualifications and experience include...
- Your internship description mentions the need for \_\_\_\_\_, and I have experience with this through \_\_\_\_\_
- My coursework includes...
- I will graduate in May from Emmanuel College with a degree in...
- The experience I have gained in human services...
- I have worked at developing...
- My record highlights other accomplishments...
- I have specialized in...
- I have extensive experience in...
- Your organization interests me because...
- Your company's efforts to.....have attracted me because...

### **Closing Paragraph**

- I look forward to discussing my experience and qualifications with you...
- My resume is enclosed...
- Please contact me at your earliest convenience to schedule an interview...
- I will be in Boston during the week of...
- I will be contacting you...

### **Additional Considerations**

- **Length:** Limit to **one page ONLY**. Try to keep the text to  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the page.
- **Presentation:** Your cover letter is your first impression to any employer. A cover letter is also a very important reflection of your communication skills. A WELL-written cover letter will create interest and entice the employer to read your resume. A POORLY written cover letter will do the opposite, and may create an impression to the employer of a sloppy and unmotivated person.
- **Font Style:** The font you choose should be easily read and the same as in your resume.
- **Font Size:** Font size should be no more than 2 point sizes larger or smaller than your résumé (and should always be between 10 and 12 points).
- **Margins:** You may adjust margins slightly to accommodate for more space, but normally the margins should be 1 inch on the left and right and 1 inch for the top and bottom.
- **Paper:** When mailing or handing out your cover letter and résumé they should be printed on white or off-white bond paper and printed on laser printers for a more professional appearance.
- **Style:** Be consistent with titles and headings. To maintain consistency it is suggested to use the same "address header" which is on your résumé.
- **Language:** This is, in effect, a sample of your writing. Therefore it is important to be clear, targeted to the company/hiring person, relevant to which you are qualified, use active verbs and a positive tone. NEVER discuss why you want to leave your current job or any dissatisfaction you may have with your current experience.

**BE SURE TO PROOFREAD YOUR LETTER TO MAKE SURE IT IS ERROR-FREE!**

## SAMPLE COVER LETTER FORMAT

Date

Your Street Address  
City, State Zip Code

Omit date, return address, and inside address information if you are emailing the thank you letter and begin with the salutation.

Mr./Ms. Recruiter's Full Name  
Recruiter's Title  
Company Name  
Street Address  
City, State Zip Code

Always use "Ms." When addressing a female and "Mr." when addressing a male, unless they have a formal title such as Doctor.

Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name Only,

The opening paragraph should state **why you are writing** and why you are interested in the organization. If you are writing a letter of application, you should name the specific position for which you are applying. Also, tell the employer how you became aware of the vacancy. If a former employer or someone else referred you to the employer, this is the best place to drop that person's name and mention that he or she suggested you write. A letter of inquiry should provide evidence of your career-mindedness; it helps to refer to specific job functions, if not titles, when trying to determine if a vacancy exists.

The second paragraph is where you draw attention to your resume and highlight specific skills relevant to the potential employer. This paragraph is devoted to explaining **how you are qualified**. Cite achievements and qualifications related to the position desired. If you have qualifications that are not noted on your resume, this is your opportunity to discuss them.

The third paragraph states **why you are right for this job**. Use this paragraph to demonstrate your knowledge of the employer and their goals. Tell them why you should be considered for the position you are applying for. A little bit of homework on the company or the industry can really pay off by showing the employer that you are serious about your application and informed about the type of work and experience that it requires. Remember to focus on what you can contribute to them, not what they can do for you.

The closing paragraph states **what you will do next** (such as calling to arrange an appointment at the employer's convenience) or what you would like the recipient of the letter to do next. Request action. Ask for an interview. Inform the employer when you will make contact with them again if appropriate. Either here, or in your closing, thank the employer for their time. Restate your phone number and e-mail address in case this becomes separated from your resume.

Sincerely,

*Your Signature Here*

Your Name Typed

If you are sending this letter as an email, you can sign your letter by scanning your signature and placing it in the closing line.

Enclosure (s)

This indicates that your resume and/or additional materials are enclosed and should only be used for hard copies.

## SAMPLE COVER LETTER #1

January 4, 2013

400 The Fenway, Box#007  
Boston, MA 02115

Ms. Sandra Bellows  
Recruiting Coordinator NewsImage, Inc.  
546 West 23rd Street  
New York, NY 10001

Dear Ms. Bellows,

After speaking with you at the Emmanuel College Internship Fair, I became very interested in applying for the Summer 2013 NewsImage – Media Internship. The opportunity to develop core competencies in content management, marketing, and design is the reason that I have a strong interest in this internship. I firmly believe that my experiences in journalism and communications have adequately prepared me for this opportunity.

As a junior majoring in English Communications and a self-taught freelance photographer, I have developed my talent for determining aesthetic quality and what makes an image appealing to others. Serving as a sports reporter for *The Hub*, Emmanuel College's newspaper, I have been able to adapt my design talents to meet the demanding expectations of journalistic writing. Having written over 40 articles, and assumed responsibilities as a Sports Editor, I am certain that my skills in organization, design, and content management would be valuable in the Media Internship with NewsImage.

I have often looked to supplement my academic pursuits with purposeful professional experiences. My previous work experience includes serving as a Teaching Assistant and Treasurer of the Emmanuel College Journalism Society. Balancing the competing timelines of my activities in the classroom and beyond has required that I learn how to work expeditiously without sacrificing the quality of my academic work, which would transfer well to the internship experience with NewsImage, Inc.

With an understanding of the expectations in this position, I am confident that I can contribute to the creative design processes at NewsImage. Thank you for considering my application and I look forward to speaking with you about this opportunity in the near future. Please feel free to contact me directly at (617) 555-5555 or iamastudent@emmanuel.edu.

Sincerely,

*Iam A. Student*

Iam A. Student

Enclosure: Resume

## SAMPLE COVER LETTER #2

January 4, 2013

400 The Fenway, Box#007  
Boston, MA 02115

Mia Soreallo  
Assistant Manager  
Taggart Consumer Products, Inc.  
36 Traverse Way  
Norfolk, VA 23503

Dear Ms. Soreallo,

I am very enthusiastic about the Assistant Product Manager position at Taggart Consumer Products. I believe that my entrepreneurial spirit, along with my strong analytical skill set and leadership capabilities, will help me make a positive contribution to your company.

I am confident that my creative approach to problem-solving will allow me to thrive in the Assistant Product Manager role at Taggart. As a college sophomore, I founded NeoSententia, an online platform designed to encourage small-business growth and entrepreneurship amongst teens and young adults. Through this endeavor, I gained solid organizational, communication and inter-personal skills as I interacted regularly with team members, software developers, and private investors. Starting a company taught me how to take an idea and think creatively in finding a way to execute it, as well as how to work with a variety of different individuals across a broad range of circumstances. I look forward to bringing my entrepreneurial spirit and my intellectual curiosity to Taggart Consumer Products.

Succeeding in the Assistant Product Manager will also rely on my analytical and critical thinking skills. As a Summer Analyst in the Ellwood Ernst Securities Division internship program this past summer in New York City, I delivered analytical research support to various departments throughout the division. As an intern working in both the Fixed Income and Equities trading areas, I was asked to regularly absorb and analyze market data while providing my own research that could be used by the desks as they sought to better serve their clients. I look forward to taking the analytical skill set that I honed at Ellwood Ernst this past summer and applying them at Taggart Consumer Products.

Competing at the highest level of collegiate athletics has prepared me to thrive in the team-oriented atmosphere at Taggart. Because college basketball is both a team sport and an individual sport, I have, as a player, embraced both the importance of teamwork as well as the significance of independence and motivation in my continued commitment towards excellence on the field. As an athlete, I have learned how to seek positive guidance in taking my performance to the next level.

I am very hopeful to join Taggart and assume the Assistant Product Manager role. I know I will make valuable contributions to the firm. I will follow-up with you next week to inquire about the status of my candidacy and answer any questions that you might have regarding my background and experience. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (617) 555-5555 or iamastudent@emmanuel.edu.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,

*Iam A. Student*

Iam A. Student

### SAMPLE COVER LETTER #3

January 4, 2013

400 The Fenway, Box#007  
Boston, MA 02115

Ms. Molly Miller  
Healthcare & High Tech Group  
TransNational Inc.  
888 Random Street  
Boston, MA 02116

Dear Ms. Miller,

Please accept this letter as my application for the Research Associate position which was advertised on the Emmanuel College Career Connect employment website (EC3). I am certain that I can supply the strong analytical and communication skills that TransNational requires to maintain its successful record of customer results. My coursework and two internships have equipped me with a broad range of experiences in rapid problem solving, customer service, research and business strategy that will prove valuable to your team.

I became a Management major and chose to minor in Information Technology because I have an appetite for new knowledge and a drive to seek out the optimal solution for problems I encounter. As such, I think my research and analysis skills will be an important asset to TransNational. I demonstrated this skill set when I researched the prospect of implementing a public key infrastructure (PKI) at Emmanuel. My findings included technical considerations as well as practical concerns such as student attitudes and behavior, costs of various implementations, and a projection of when such a system might become obsolete. As a Research Associate, I will exhibit the same attention to practical detail without losing sight of the big picture.

When interning at Logix, the company was looking for ways to reduce costs, maintain market share, and expand product offerings to enable entry into related markets. I was able to contribute to these goals by researching their competitors newest features and carefully weighing the benefits of integrating these features in Logix's competing product. My exposure to the senior staff decisions regarding each choice's effect on sales, revenue, company morale and productivity helped prepare me to think critically and realistically about similar issues facing TransNational's clients.

I strongly believe I can add value to your organization. I think you will find that my combination of initiative, real business and technical experience, and clear analytical thinking are an excellent match for TransNational's needs as a high tech solution provider. Enclosed please find my resume documenting my qualifications. I will call you next week to discuss the potential of an interview.

Regards,

*Iam A. Student*

Iam A. Student

Enclosure: Resume