

Cover Letters and Thank You Notes

Cover letters and thank you notes are both written forms of professional business correspondence. Cover letters and thank you notes can help make you stand out as a candidate for an internship, job, or graduate school admission.

TYPES OF PROFESSIONAL BUSINESS CORRESPONDENCE

Cover Letter: A cover letter is a one-page business letter often submitted as part of an internship or job application. In a cover letter, you introduce yourself to an employer, express your interest in the organization and/or specific opening, and explain your strongest qualification(s) for the opening. In combination with your resume, a well-written cover letter may incite an employer to invite you to interview for the opening in order to learn more about you and your potential fit with the organization. While some employers do not request or carefully read cover letters, other employers are very interested in these letters. A customized, well-written letter will improve your chances of getting an interview.

A cover letter may be submitted in multiple ways. Be sure you read every job description carefully to understand what application materials the employer seeks and in what format. When e-mailing an application to an employer, attach a cover letter (along with other requested materials) to your e-mail message. In the body of the e-mail, briefly express interest in the company and role and explain what materials are attached to the e-mail. Due to the length of cover letters (and the brief, concise nature of e-mail), putting your cover letter in the body of the e-mail message is not recommended. When using an online application form, you may be asked to copy and paste your letter into a text box, or allowed to upload documents into the system as part of the application process.

Thank You Note: A thank you note should be sent to professional contacts following an internship, job, or graduate school interview, an informational interview, or after making a meaningful networking contact. Sending a thank you or a follow-up note is polite and shows that you are proactive and thoughtful. Use a thank you note to express continued interest in an opening, to provide additional information that you did not share in an interview (for example, something you forgot to mention), and to express thanks.

Notes should be sent to every interviewer or contact, whenever possible, and should be e-mailed or sent via traditional mail within 24-72 hours.

EFFECTIVE LETTER-WRITING GUIDELINES

Content Guidelines

- **Include Relevant Content:** Your letters should contain factual, objective information relating to your professional qualifications for an internship, job, or graduate school. Avoid sharing overly personal information in a cover letter or thank you note.
- **Use Action Verbs and Adjectives:** Keep content action-oriented. Focus on providing the reader with objective, factual evidence of your qualifications.

Format Guidelines

- **Use an Accepted Business Format:** The most common format used today is the full-block style, which is used in the samples in this handout.
- **Vary Your Sentence Structure:** Adding variety to your letters makes them more interesting and easy to read. Vary your sentence structure to create an interesting, effective letter. For example, offset long sentences with shorter sentences and use transitional words and phrases to help ideas flow together.
- **Limit Your Letter to One Page:** Write clearly and concisely and avoid using unnecessary words and phrases. Margins should be no less than .5" and font size should be no smaller than 10 point.
- **Consistency:** Use the same font in a similar size as used on your resume for a consistent, professional look.

Tips

- **Tweak Your Letter:** Adjust and update your cover letter for every application you submit. Review the position description for a clear outline of requirements and ensure your letter directly addresses the qualifications needed for the position. It is not effective to use the same text in your letter to apply for different positions. It is important to change your letter to best suit each position and to highlight your skills and qualifications for that specific internship/job and/or employer.
- **Personalize the Letter:** When possible, address the letter to a specific individual using his/her name, title (Dr., Ms. Mr., etc.) and position with the organization (Director of Human Resources, etc.). If a contact person is not listed in the job description and it is difficult to identify the contact via the company website or through networking, do not assume that the hiring manager has a particular gender by opening the letter with “Dear Sir” or “Dear Madam.” Instead, “Dear Director of Human Resources” or “Dear Hiring Official” is appropriate.
- **Proofreading:** Request that several people review and comment on your letter, including a career advisor in Career Services. Review your document until you are confident it is error-free and an honest, accurate reflection of your skills and abilities. Remember that spell check may not find a word that is spelled correctly but is misused (there vs. their, for example).
- **Focus on the Reader:** When writing cover letters, writers often overuse the word “I” and focus on what they want from a company or job. Instead, focus on the reader of the letter. Explain to the reader how you can contribute to the organization. Reword sentences to eliminate excessive occurrences of “I” by using “my” and “me.” For example, “I have enclosed a copy of my resume” becomes “Enclosed you will find a copy of my resume.”

COVER LETTER OUTLINE

Applicant's Address
City, State Zip

Date of Letter

Hiring Official's Name
Title
Organization
Address
City, State Zip

Salutation: (If possible, address the letter to a specific person.)

First Paragraph: State the reason for the letter. Who are you (academically and professionally) and why are you writing to this company and for this position? State the specific position for which you are applying and indicate where you learned about the position (GorlokJobs/Career Services, company website, personal contact/networking, etc.). Then, explain why you are interested in the position and why you want to work for this organization.

Second Paragraph: Outline your strongest qualification(s) as they relate to the company and position description. Do not repeat the information on your resume. Instead, draw attention to the most important experience or education you have and provide supporting evidence of your qualifications. You can do this by describing specific accomplishments or highlighting skills you have developed through work experience, coursework, campus or community involvement, or other activities. Make every effort to connect your qualifications to the job requirements.

Optional Third Paragraph: Some writers prefer to introduce their strongest qualification(s) as they relate to the company and position description in the second paragraph and then expound upon them in a third paragraph. If you choose to utilize a third paragraph, use it to provide specific provide supporting evidence (give an example) of your qualification(s).

Final Paragraph: Thank the reader for his or her time. Establish a flow of action that produces a positive response. Suggest what you want the reader to do or what action you plan to take. Repeat your contact information (preferred phone number and e-mail address).

Sincerely,

Your Name

COVER LETTER SAMPLE (THREE-PARAGRAPH)

123 Apple Lane
St. Louis, Missouri 63119

February 1, 2013

Ms. Hireme Interview
Director of Human Resources
AT&T
555 Boulevard Street
St. Louis, Missouri 63123

Dear Ms. Interview:

I am writing to express my interest in the AT&T Retail Leadership Development Program, which is posted in Webster University's GorlokJobs database. As a senior in Webster's Bachelor of Arts in Management program, I have knowledge of business, management, human resources, and marketing. My knowledge, combined with experience in the retail and hospitality industries, makes me a well-suited candidate for the Retail Leadership Development Program. I am interested in bringing my talents to AT&T, which has a strong focus on providing seamless service to customers in a way that is interactive, informative, and entertaining.

My previous experiences at ABC Retail and Eddie's Restaurant have honed the skills needed to succeed in AT&T's Retail Leadership Development Program, including enthusiasm for sales and service and demonstrated leadership potential. While a server at Eddie's Restaurant, my ability to listen to and exceed customers' needs was recognized in October 2011, when I was named employee of the month. This award was based on unsolicited feedback from customers, as well as peer nominations. Following my employee of the month nomination, I was promoted from a server to a weekend manager role. As a weekend manager, I ensure that all employees follow procedures while maintaining a positive, customer-focused environment. I set a strong example for servers on my shifts and provide immediate feedback to them regarding their performance. My focus on customer service, positivity, and ability to train and develop others would make me an asset to the AT&T family.

Although my resume outlines my education and experience, I would appreciate the opportunity to demonstrate in an interview my qualifications for AT&T's Retail Leadership Development Program. If you have any questions, please contact me at 314-555-5555 or hectorsmith@email.com. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Hector Smith

COVER LETTER SAMPLE (FOUR-PARAGRAPH)

124 Main Street
St. Louis, Missouri 63131

November 15, 2012

SSM Health Care-St. Louis
1173 Corporate Lake Drive
St. Louis, Missouri 63132-1716

RE: Director of Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)

With over six years of experience in the healthcare industry, including a director-level role, I have a strong interest in SSM Health Care's current opening for a Director of Continuing Quality Improvement (CQI). I discovered the opening while reviewing the company's website and was also encouraged to apply by a former colleague of mine, Henrietta Jobs, who is employed within the SSM Managed Care Organization. SSM Health Care is a leading healthcare provider in St. Louis and I would like to contribute to the organization's strong reputation and growing brand.

My education and professional experience match well with SSM's needs. I have worked in a healthcare setting since 2007, when I completed my Master of Arts in Health Services Management at Webster University. My coursework gave me a strong background in healthcare policy and administration. In 2007, I began applying what I learned in class in a practical way at the Serenity Healing Center in St. Louis. As a Counselor at Serenity, and then the Director, I have developed skills in the areas of management, employee training, program development and coordination, and public relations and marketing.

I am enthusiastic to lead SSM's growing quality improvement program and would look forward to the opportunity to facilitate the work of the four current CQI Facilitators. I have served as the Director of the Serenity Healing Center for nearly four years and have demonstrated strengths in supervising and training others. For example, I recruited, trained, and supervised over 60 employees and implemented a leadership and training program that resulted in a 50% increase in employee retention. I have focused on providing a quality experience for my staff at Serenity and, in doing so, have seen improved ratings on our patient feedback surveys. I would bring this same focus on quality to the Director of CQI role at SSM.

I appreciate your time and consideration. I am confident that my background matches well with SSM's needs and I look forward to an opportunity to interview for the role. At your convenience, please contact me by phone at 314-555-3232 or via e-mail at mschristinesample@hotmail.com. I look forward to speaking with you about my fit with the role and with SSM Health Care.

Sincerely,

Christine Sample

THANK YOU NOTE OUTLINE

Applicant's Address
City, State Zip

Date of Letter

Interviewer's Name/Networking Contact Name
Title
Organization
Address
City, State Zip

Salutation:

First Paragraph: Express appreciation to the reader. If you are sending a follow-up letter after an interview, tell the reader where the interview was conducted, what position you interviewed for, the day and date of the interview, and any other relevant information. If you are sending a follow-up letter after a significant networking meeting, remind the reader about the day and date of the meeting, discuss your interest in the company, and provide any additional information.

Second Paragraph: Express continued interest in the position or company and briefly match your qualifications to the position or company.

Third Paragraph: Discuss the next steps. Indicate your willingness to provide additional information to support your qualifications. End the letter with a friendly, professional close.

Sincerely,

Your Name

THANK YOU NOTE SAMPLE (INTERVIEW)

123 Apple Lane
St. Louis, Missouri 63119

March 10, 2013

Ms. Hireme Interview
Director of Human Resources
AT&T
555 Boulevard Street
St. Louis, Missouri 63123

Dear Ms. Interview:

Thank you for taking time to meet with me today to discuss the Retail Leadership Development Program with AT&T. I would like to extend my thanks to your entire staff for making me feel comfortable during the interview.

After interviewing with you and other members of the development program, I am even more convinced that my experience in retail and hospitality makes me a well-suited candidate for the program. I am energized by the potential challenges and rewards a career with AT&T offers. I would like to reiterate my willingness to relocate for the company, if needed, following my May 2013 graduation.

Should you have any further questions regarding my qualifications, please contact me at 314-555-5555 or hectorsmith@email.com. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Hector Smith

THANK YOU E-MAIL SAMPLE (NETWORKING)

From: hectorsmith@email.com

Subject: Speaker Series Event Follow-Up

Dear Mr. Networkson:

It was nice connecting with you this morning at the George Herbert Walker School of Business and Technology Speaker Series event in Sunnen Lounge. I enjoyed speaking with you about how your organization has started to use social media as part of an overall marketing strategy. It is interesting to see how social media tools that were once used for personal purposes have been adopted by companies and organizations for professional reasons, too.

As I move forward in my coursework, I would like to stay in touch periodically via e-mail. I learned a good deal through our discussion today and would like to continue the conversation.

Sincerely,

Hector

Hector Smith

314-555-5555

ectorsmith@email.com