

Resume - Cover Letter Guidelines for getting good Jobs

You have just a few short moments to make an impact with your cover letter and resume to get a good jobs.

Since the cover letter is what most hiring managers and HR people read first, yours should make the most impact in the shortest time for the employment opportunities.

I submit that you have less than 10 seconds in which to make your reader want to put down your cover letter, pick up the phone and call you for a job interview.

Here are four ways to do just that.

1. Limit yourself to five or six paragraphs.

The cover letters I write every day for clients are rarely longer than five paragraphs. That's an introductory paragraph, three bullet points to prove your skills and elicit curiosity, and a strong closing paragraph.

A cover letter with this concise format is easy to scan and shows respect for the reader's limited time. If you need more room fine, but never exceed one page.

2. Start smoothly.

Your first sentence is most important. Use it to give the reader context for the rest of your letter. For example, it can be very effective to simply say: "I'm applying for the position of Sales Rep, as advertised in the Wall St. Journal."

If you heard about the opening from a friend, drop his name in that first sentence: "Jack Smith suggested I contact you about the position of Design Engineer."

3. Drop crumbs.

I like to include a "teaser" paragraph in every cover letter that says, more or less, "Here's why you'd be crazy not to call me." Try something like this:

"I've developed methods, which I can share with you, that have produced a 15% gain in market share for my current employer over the past 11 months, producing \$2.3 million in new revenue."

What's special about you? What can you do? Everyone is unique and valuable in some way. Make sure this comes through in your cover letter!

When your cover letter opens with an attention-grabbing sentence, is error-free and tailored to the needs of the company that's hiring, you'll greatly increase the results you get in your job search!

4. Finish strong.

Finish your cover letter with emphasis on how you can help your prospective employer. And, if possible, include a time when you'll call to discuss their needs. Here's an example closing paragraph:

"Now I would like to bring these skills to work for you. I look forward to speaking with you soon about the results you can expect from me, and will call your office next Tuesday at 10:00 to answer any questions you may have."