

Writing an effective Cover Letter



The cover letter is your first point of contact with the employer and it should summarise why you are the best candidate for the position. Use the cover letter to make an impact - the reader should want to learn more about you in your résumé and to interview you.

The cover letter can help answer questions that are often on the mind of the prospective employer:

1. **Can you do the job?**
Do you have the right abilities, skills, knowledge and experience?
2. **Will you do the job?**
Are you interested in the work itself and do you have the other attitudes necessary for success in both the role and the organisation?
3. **Will you fit in?**
Do your values and goals match the organisation's values and goals?

Cover letters will also give an indication of your written communication skills. Employers (screeners or recruiters) may be assessing any of the following:

- How well you structure written information.
- How well and how clearly you express your ideas.
- How well you target your communication to your audience.
- Your grammar and spelling ability.
- Your understanding of document formatting.
- Your attention to detail with regards to content and information.

Do not use the same cover letter when applying for different positions. Each letter should be specific to the position and the organisation. Employers recognise standard letters and will know you have not put in the effort they expect.

Spend some time thinking about what skills and experience, in your opinion initially, are **Essential, Preferred and Implied**. If the advertisement offers the opportunity to make a call or email a point of contact for more information – make the call or ask what additional information is available. Any opportunity to build rapport along the way is often valuable.

Before sending your cover letter, reread the advertisement, JD if there is one available and your letter and make sure they are closely matched. The reader should be able to quickly glance at your letter and see immediately that the skills and experience listed in the job advertisement or position description are covered in your letter.

And finally, your cover letter can be a little more conversational than your CV, include any insights from your research or networking – you are trying to make a connection with the reader, the role and the organisation.

Things To Remember About Cover Letters

- **Address the letter to the appropriate person**

Avoid using "Dear Sir/Madam". If there is no name in the advertisement, phone the organisation and ask who you should address the letter to. Double-check all of the company and contact person's details, including correct spelling.

- **Relate your skills and abilities to those addressed in the advertisement**

Think about what the employer is looking for. If the advertisement says they are looking for someone with 'customer service experience' it is not enough to say you have that experience. You must prove it - outline where you worked and the skills you gained in customer service.

- **Be confident and positive**

Phrases like "some experience", "while I don't have", and "although I have limited work experience", "I believe" create the impression that you are not very confident or proud of your achievements. If you don't have one of the prerequisites, outline similar skills you do have and that show you are capable of learning new skills quickly.

- **Presentation, Spelling and Grammar**

Your cover letter is an opportunity to show how well you express yourself. Mistakes in a résumé show poor attention to detail and grammatical mistakes will lead employers to think your English is poor.

- **Contact details**

Provide up-to-date contact details and ensure that employers find it easy to leave a message for you. Employers often need to fill positions quickly. If you are not at home when they phone, they will perhaps try a few times, then contact the next person on the list.

- **Timing**

Make sure your application reaches the organisation by the due date. Late applications are usually not considered.

Sample Cover Letters

Your name
Address
Phone
Email

Date

Contact Person's Name
Contact Person's Position
Company Name
Company Address

Re: Name of position or Application for ...

Dear Sandra or Ms Jones (*Avoid Dear Sir/Madam*)

Opening paragraph/s

I was excited to see the above position advertised in/on on (date) and **the compelling reason why you want that job and should be considered** (i.e. why that industry and why that organisation, make sure this highlights how you will meet their needs, not exclusively your own needs.)

Middle section

Outline the skills, experience, training and achievements that are relevant to the selection criteria or the position description. These skills will have been gained through your work experience, education and extra curricula activities. Bullet pointed lists work well.

Closing paragraph/s

Tell them why you are the best fit for the organisation and how your skills will meet their needs. (Tip: you could summarise the 3 best things about you that make you most competitive for the job and how these things will allow you to make an impact/get results in the role.)

Thank them for considering your application, tell them that you have attached a copy of your résumé, and when you would be available for an interview. Provide your contact details (Phone / Email).

Yours sincerely

Your signature
Print name

EXAMPLE 1 – RESPONDING TO AN ADVERTISED ROLE

Joe Bloggs
joe.bloggs1972@mymail.com
012 321 1234
Christchurch

14 January 2020

Roger Bannister
ABC Ltd
roger.bannister@ABC Ltd.co.nz
Christchurch

Dear Mr Bannister

Re: Financial Services Manager – Seek ref: 12345 – 10th October, 2016

The Financial Services Manager position, advertised recently on Seek caught my attention as it involves the challenge of improving financial reporting procedures company wide and the application of specialist management and taxation accounting knowledge. I have been seeking just such an opportunity as this, and I think my background in Financial Services would complement your requirements very well. In particular, my relevant skills and accomplishments include:

- **Financial Acumen:** I am C.A qualified and have extensive experience in all aspects of financial operations from debtor and creditor management, reconciliations, through to compliance and reporting, and acting in an advisory capacity on forecasting and budgeting to boards and CEO's.
- **Leadership:** I build high performing finance teams and have experience in managing, guiding and mentoring large finance teams. At DEF Ltd, I led the accounting and invoicing functions which reduced turnaround time from 32 to 24 days and also improved monthly cash flow by \$50k.
- **Relationship Building:** Building strong working relationships, I effectively engage with people at all levels and organisation-wide to ensure the finance team are seen as partners who provide expert advice and work with the business. I have a strong external network including with government agencies, suppliers and customers.

My contributions to the business in my current role have been achieved by improving information flow, increasing the efficiency of our internal processes and procedures, and improving co-operation between our department and the departments with which we interact.

If you are seeking a Financial Manager who stays abreast of their field, understands a range of financial systems and is committed to achieving organisation-wide success, then please consider what I have to offer. My CV is attached with more details on my career to date and I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss how I can be of value to ABC Ltd.

Yours sincerely

Joe Bloggs

EXAMPLE 2 – GENERAL APPROACH TO AN EMPLOYER

Belinda Smith
Mobile: 012 9876 789
Email: bsmith001@hotmail.com
Auckland

20 January 2020

Ms Wendy Logan
General Manager, Marketing & Communications
XYZ Ltd
wendy.logan@xyzltd.co.nz
Auckland

Dear Ms Logan

I understand that your firm is expanding its operations in Australia in line with its commitment to a global growth strategy. As a recent university graduate with a Masters degree in Business Management, I am well prepared to deal with the tasks involved in managing resources and staff in an expanding organisational climate. Now that my studies have been successfully completed, I would like to offer my services to your organisation.

Along with my academic preparation, I have gained substantial marketing experience through part-time employment with Fisher & Paykel. At Fisher & Paykel, I assisted the Marketing Manager in a rebranding project for 2 major product lines, which has boosted sales for those product lines by 25% and 35%. These projects further developed my project management, market research and product development skills.

My strong academic record reflects well-developed analytical and problem-solving skills, thorough research skills and a solid theoretical underpinning in business and marketing theory. Specific marketing skills developed during my Masters include:

- understanding consumer behaviour
- extensive market research
- product development
- B2B Marketing Strategies
- managing customer relationship programmes
- qualitative research methods.

With relevant marketing experience, management capabilities and strong interest in product development, I am seeking an entry-level position in marketing, product development or business management with XYZ Ltd and I am available for part-time or full-time employment. Enclosed is a copy of my curriculum vitae, thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely

Belinda Smith