

We've got cover letters covered

If you were giving a beautiful piece of jewellery to someone, you wouldn't wrap it in yesterday's newspaper would you?

So why would you go to all the trouble of crafting a fabulous resume, only to send it with a half hearted, poorly crafted covering letter?

Well, you wouldn't. Not if you were really serious about getting that ideal job.

A well thought out and carefully written covering letter is the first step to selling yourself to a prospective employer. So make it count.

Top tips

Focus on the job at hand. It's fine to tell a prospective employer how great you are. But people are only interested in how your greatness relates specifically to the position they are looking to fill. In other words, do you have the particular skills and talents they need? So make it relevant. Find out exactly what the job will entail and tailor your cover letter accordingly.

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Do some research first. Before you write your letter, why not call or visit the place where you wish to be employed? A bit of background will add some substance to your letter.

The best type of letter is one which is typed. Don't handwrite unless specifically instructed to do so, which would be highly unusual. (Unless you were going for a job as a calligrapher).

Get the little things right. Make sure that the names are spelled correctly - in fact, make sure ALL words are spelt right. Check the grammar and punctuation. Don't use words that sound impressive if you're unsure of their meaning. Make sure that the date is correct and of course, that your contact information is right.

Don't exaggerate ... too much. It's OK to gild the lily a little bit when it comes to your experience and credentials. Everyone tries to put as a positive a spin as they possible can on themselves. But don't go overboard. You should be able to work out how much is too much.

Some fine cover letter examples

Here are some examples of some great cover letters examples written by some successful job applicants before you. Have a read, and get some inspiration.

Project Manager

Why it was a winner...

- Covers the requirements indicated in the ad
- Solid précis of work experience, - easy for a consultant to refer to
- Indicates by default what the candidate considers to be his strengths

I am a professional project manager with expertise in the use of personal computers to manage the projects and risk analysis; and dealing with customers and staff. My strengths include the ability to manage staff during periods of change, generating management reports and problem solving, and creating satisfied customers. I have worked for six different organizations, from a private enterprise small business, to a large domestic telecommunications provider, two multinational telecommunications suppliers, two large metropolitan hospitals and an entertainment organization. The skills I can bring immediately to the job are:

- To prepare Project Management procedures for a new IT organization, assume control of existing projects inherited from other divisions and manage and create the project office environment for new staff.
- Project Management of critical telecommunications projects (PABX's, radio paging, networked dictation solution) for a hospital group spread over a large area.
- Year 2000 project management training and experience in implementing solutions to overcome risk exposure.
- Hands on experience in work station rollout for a state government department.
- Telecommunications network design experience and business financial management of design sections.
- IT teams management during a critical development phase for a major telecommunications provider.
- Specifications, design and project management of a Dictation system.
- Project management experiences that involved negotiating contract variations and substantial management of sub-contractor relationships.
- Developed and maintained performance reporting (to senior management) which was linked to generate the necessary reports, thereby enabling a proactive approach to dealing with the customer.
- Approved the invoicing of the project management service.

- Analysed data to identify regional performance issues and develop options for corrective action to be taken.
- Negotiated the equipment type and timing for customer's projects, resolving any contractual issues that arose.

I have been required to participate in, and manage, teams of up to fifteen members. My management style is participative with a focus on developing and empowering others to achieve business objectives. I look forward to discussing this opportunity with you.

Personal assistant/admin

Why it was a winner:

Shows a clear understanding of:

- The structure of the company
- Where the advertised position fitted into the company
- The company's products and its markets

Dear Mr Klein

I wish to apply for the position of Personal Assistant (your reference 0900/A) as advertised on SEEK.

For your consideration I have enclosed my résumé. I believe that my résumé will demonstrate that I have the complete range of skills and experience to be able to achieve in the advertised position including the communication and computer skills mentioned. It is harder in a résumé to demonstrate the personal qualities and beliefs that I have which are also necessary to be a good Personal Assistant (PA).

The manufacturing industry is going through a period of significant change and it is important that senior managers are able to devote their energies to ensuring that gains result from this change. I believe that PAs should assist in this process by freeing senior managers to devote time to the serious issues while the PA takes care of the more peripheral issues.

To do this successfully the PA must be able to develop a relationship with a senior manager built on understanding, trust and the ability to keep confidences. It is the quality of this relationship which often is as much the measure of the efficiency of a PA as the technical skills.

A good PA also has a broad understanding of the structures of the company, the industry in general, the markets for the company products and influencing factors on those markets.

I understand the importance of a good PA and I am sure that my referees will attest to my good nature and my personal qualities as well as my skills and experience. This is why I am applying for

this position.

I look forward to hearing from you soon. I am available for interview any time at your convenience.

Yours sincerely

Alice Smith

Trade/Machinist

Why it was a winner:

- Clear reference to the position
- Brief but succinct - highlights the core skills needed

Dear Mr Wayne

I wish to apply for the position of machinist (ref 301/00) that was advertised on www.seek.com.au on 20 August 2000.

I have over five year's experience as a Machinist with Weaveanduck and have experience of a wide variety of pattern techniques. My technical skills are second-to-none, and I have an excellent record as a reliable, productive employee.

I am looking for new challenges and the position of Machinist sounds the perfect opportunity. Your organisation has an enviable record in innovation in machining, and an excellent reputation as an employer, making the position even more attractive.

I enclose my resume for your inspection and look forward to hearing from you soon. I am available for interview at your convenience.

Yours sincerely

Intern

Why it was a winner:

An intern letter has to stand out from hundreds of others. This one won a Microsoft internship because:

"This is a great letter. It's well written, highlights current projects and degree background and best of all, includes her technical skills. It also showed her motivation when she mentions what an invaluable experience she believes this would be."

Dear Sir/Madam

I wish to apply for the position of Technology Specialist Intern as advertised [publication] on [date].

I believe I would enjoy the challenge and the opportunity to learn provided by this position. I also recognise the invaluable experience that would be gained working with the largest name in the industry.

I am currently completing my Bachelor of Engineering (Electronics)/Bachelor of Information Technology (Computer Science) degrees at [university]. Over the past two years in particular, I have achieved an average Grade Point of 4.96 (on a 7 point ascending scale) in subjects completed. I have attained academic excellence in subjects involving large professional-style projects, communications, management and business skills.

My involvement in the operation of EESEC, the largest single-campus student society in Queensland, has strengthened my leadership, teamwork, problem-solving and decision-making abilities and has enabled me to acquire expertise in all facets of successful business administration. I believe that these factors, along with my broad information technology and engineering knowledge base, my extensive experience with the Microsoft suite of products and my personal skills such as initiative, creativity, adaptability and a willingness to learn will enable me to excel in the role of a Microsoft Intern.

Please find attached my resume and academic transcript. I would appreciate the opportunity of an interview and I can be contacted at the above addresses, on my home phone [telephone number] or via a message left on my paging service [number].

Yours faithfully