

# Creating a Cover Letter

It is not appropriate to send a resume without an explanation for doing so. The traditional way to do this is to provide a cover letter along with the resume. This letter explains to the reader your situation and what action you are requesting. It is designed as an introduction to your resume.

It is important to make a strong connection between your experience and what the organization or position is looking for. Resumes are talking points whereas cover letters provide the details that are lacking in a resume – *how does your experience relate to the position you are applying to?*

While the same resume may be sent to many different companies, the cover letter must be targeted to each job opening. Studies show that your cover letter will get eight seconds of the reader's time, so it must be brief, yet informative.

## **Length and Style**

Cover letters should be limited to one page of three to four paragraphs in length. Block style is popular for business letters in which all information is typed flush to the left margin. It should be printed in the same high-quality bond paper as your resume (See reverse side for example.).

## **Salary Inquiries**

When an employment posting asks applicants to include salary requirements or salary history, you may address this in the cover letter with a comment such as, "An acceptable salary range for me would be \$25,000 to \$30,000, and I would be willing to discuss my salary requirements with you further upon learning more about the specific responsibilities for this position."

If the posting doesn't ask for a salary history, don't mention salary until an offer is on the table. If you

absolutely would not consider any job offer less than a certain amount, you can include what your bottom line salary expectation.

If you decide to include a range, it is important to research salary ranges within the profession - Asking too much could limit your offers. Asking too little could be a way of being taken advantage of.

## **Opening Paragraph**

The opening paragraph should state why you are writing and why you are interested in the organization. If you are writing about a job opening, you should name the specific position for which you are applying and explain how you learned about the position. In addition, tell the employer how you became aware of the vacancy. If you were referred to the employer, this is the best place to mention that person's name and to point out that he or she suggested you write. A letter of inquiry should provide evidence of your career direction by mentioning desired job functions if you are not sure of a specific job title.

## **Middle Paragraph(s)**

Explain why you are interested in working for this employer and the specific motivation for desiring this type of work. If you have relevant work experience or related education, be sure to point this out. Emphasize skills or abilities you have that relate to the job for which you are applying. If you have qualifications that are not on your resume, this is your opportunity to discuss them.

## **Closing Paragraph**

The closing paragraph states what you will do next (i.e., calling to arrange an interview at the employer's convenience) or what you would like the recipient of the letter to do next. An appropriate closing can pave the way for an interview.

## **CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER**

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