

Writing a Customized, Persuasive Cover Letter

Opening Body Closing

- Address the letter to an individual by name.
- For advertised jobs, name the source; include job title, date, and publication.
- If someone referred you, name that person.
- Show that your qualifications fit the job specifications, show your knowledge of the reader's business, or show that your special talents will be assets to the company.

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- Demonstrate that your background and training meet the job requirements.
- Summarize your principal assets from education, experience, and special skills.
- Avoid repeating specific data from your résumé.
- Refer to your résumé.

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- Ask for an interview. Consider hooking the request to a statement reviewing your strongest points.
- Make it easy to respond. Tell when and where you can be reached (during office hours). Some recruiters prefer that you call them.

In applying for an advertised job, Kendra Hawkins wrote the solicited cover letter shown in Figure 13.14. Notice that her opening identifies the position and the newspaper completely so that the reader knows exactly what advertisement Kendra means. Using features on her word processing program, Kendra designed her own letterhead that uses her name and looks like professionally printed letterhead paper.

FIGURE 13.14 Solicited Cover Letter

Uses personally designed letterhead — **Kendra A. Hawkins**
1770 Hawthorne Place, Boulder CO 80304
(303) 492-1244, khawkins@yahoo.com

May 23, 200x

Addresses proper person by name and title — Ms. Courtney L. Donahue
Director, Human Resources
Del Rio Enterprises
4839 Mountain View Avenue
Denver, CO 82511

Identifies job and exact page where ad appeared — Dear Ms. Donahue:
Your advertisement for an assistant product manager, appearing May 22 in Section C of the *Denver Post*, immediately caught my attention because my education and training closely parallel your needs.

Relates her experiences to job requirements — According to your advertisement, the job includes "assisting in the coordination of a wide range of marketing programs as well as analyzing sales results and tracking marketing budgets." A recent internship at Ventana Corporation introduced me to similar tasks. Assisting the marketing manager enabled me to analyze the promotion, budget, and overall sales success of two products Ventana was evaluating. My ten-page report examined the nature of the current market, the products' life cycles, and their sales/profit return. In addition to this research, I helped formulate a product merchandising plan and answered consumers' questions at a local trade show.

Discusses education and experience as they relate to the position — Intensive course work in marketing and management, as well as proficiency in computer spreadsheets and databases, has given me the kind of marketing and computer training that Del Rio probably demands in a product manager. Moreover, my recent retail sales experience and participation in campus organizations have helped me develop the kind of customer service and interpersonal skills necessary for an effective product manager.

Asks for interview and repeats main qualifications — After you have examined the enclosed résumé for details of my qualifications, I would be happy to answer questions. Please call me at (303) 492-1244 to arrange an interview so that we may discuss how my marketing experience, computer training, and interpersonal skills could contribute to Del Rio Enterprises.

Refers reader to enclosed résumé — Sincerely,
Kendra A. Hawkins
Kendra A. Hawkins
Enclosure

More challenging are unsolicited cover letters, such as Donald Vinton's shown in Figure 13.15. Because he hopes to discover or create a job, his opening must grab the reader's attention immediately. To do that, he capitalizes on company information appearing in an online article. Donald purposely kept his cover letter short and to the point because he anticipated that a busy executive would be unwilling to read a long, detailed letter. Donald's unsolicited letter "prospects" for a job. Some job candidates believe that such letters may be even more productive than efforts to secure advertised jobs, since "prospecting" candidates face less competition and show initiative. Notice that Donald's letter uses a personal business letter format with his return address above the date.

The body of the cover letter promotes the candidate's qualifications for the targeted job.

FIGURE 13.15 Unsolicited Cover Letter

2250 Turtle Creek Drive
Monroeville, PA 15146
May 29, 200x

Mr. Richard M. Jannis
Vice President, Operations
Sports World, Inc.
4907 Allegheny Boulevard
Pittsburgh, PA 16103

Dear Mr. Jannis:

Today's *Pittsburgh Examiner* reports that your organization plans to expand its operations to include national distribution of sporting goods, and it occurs to me that you will be needing highly motivated, self-starting sales representatives and marketing managers. Here are three significant qualifications I have to offer:

- Four years of formal training in business administration, including specialized courses in sales management, retailing, marketing promotion, and consumer behavior
- Practical experience in demonstrating and selling consumer products, as well as successful experience in telemarketing
- Excellent communication skills and a strong interest in most areas of sports (which helped me become a sportscaster at Penn State radio station WGNF)

May we talk about how I can put these qualifications, and others summarized in the enclosed résumé, to work for Sports World as it develops its national sales force? I'll call during the week of June 5 to discuss your company's expansion plans and the opportunity for an interview.

Sincerely yours,
Donald W. Vinton
Donald W. Vinton
Enclosure

Uses personal business style with return address above date

Shows resourcefulness and knowledge of company

Uses bulleted list to make letter easier to read

Refers to enclosed résumé

Addresses proper person by name and title

Keeps letter brief to retain reader's attention

Takes initiative for follow-up

Sending Your Cover Letter by E-Mail or by Fax

More than 90 percent of résumés at Fortune 500 companies arrive by e-mail or are submitted through the corporate Web site.³⁹ Many applicants using technology make the mistake of not including cover letters with their résumés submitted by e-mail or by fax. A résumé that arrives without a cover letter makes the receiver wonder what it is and why it was sent. Recruiters want you to introduce yourself, and they also are eager to see some evidence that you can write. Some candidates either skip the cover letter or think they can get by with one-line cover letters such as this: *Please see attached résumé, and thanks for your consideration.*

If you are serious about landing the job, take the time to prepare a professional cover letter. If you are sending your résumé by e-mail, you may use the same cover letter you would send by snail mail but shorten it a bit. As illustrated in Figure 13.16, an inside address is unnecessary for an e-mail recipient. Also move your

Serious job candidates send a professional cover letter even if the résumé is submitted online, by e-mail, or by fax.

FIGURE 13.16 E-Mail Cover Letter

