

## **The Cover Letter**

### ***Definition of a Cover Letter***

A cover letter is a document paired with your resume to provide additional information on your skills and experience. A cover letter typically provides detailed information on why you are qualified for the job which you are applying for. Effective cover letters explain the reasons for your interest in the specific firm and identify your most relevant skills or experiences.

Your cover letter gives employers the opportunity to evaluate your ability to communicate – do you know the proper form for a business letter? Can you string together coherent sentences? Are you able to express yourself well on paper? Your cover letter will give employers insight into all of these important considerations.

### ***Cover Letter Purpose***

The purpose of a cover letter can be summarized as follows:

- Obtain an interview.
- Highlight the match between your resume and the position applied for.
- Catch your reader's interest and make them want to know more about you.
- Effectively advertise your work skills.
- Represent you in your absence and convey your image.
- Draw attention to your more significant accomplishments and contributions.
- Demonstrate your written communication skills.
- Move the application process to the next step, the interview.
- Remind the interviewing supervisor of you after the interview.

### ***Cover Letter Organization***

A typical cover letter contains three parts summarized below:

#### **Introduction**

The introduction is your chance to capture the prospective employer's interest, identify the position for which you are applying, and describe reasons for your interest in the position. In addition, you may wish to state how the position relates to your career objectives.

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## Body

Your cover letter body should be 1 to 3 paragraphs in length, and should demonstrate to the prospective employer that your skill set and experience is a good match for the requirements of the position. Do not repeat what is already stated in your resume. Instead, give specific examples that illustrate why you are a good fit for the position.

## Closing

In your closing, it is important to ensure that you leave an open invitation for the prospective employer to invite you for an interview.

## ***Cover Letter Suggestions***

- Your cover letter should be brief, concise, and no longer than one page.
  - Your cover letter should draw employers to your resume. Don't clutter it with needless facts.
  - Tailor your cover letter to the position and firm to which you are applying.
  - Open by explaining why you are writing and where you heard about the opportunity.
  - Be sure to state why you think you would be a good match for this position. If the advertisement lists several traits or skills the prospective employer wants to see in job applicants, reference those skills in your letter and say how you exemplify them. Mention traits that will set you apart from other candidates.
  - Refer the prospective employer to your resume – “you can see from my resume that I have the experience you are looking for” may be a good way to do so. Experiment with your own wording.
  - When describing your accomplishments and duties, use action verbs such as those listed in the resume guide.
  - Remember to sign your cover letter.
  - Note “enclosure” or “enc.” several lines after your signature if your resume is enclosed.
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## Example Cover Letter

January 5, 2008

Robert Lindley  
XYZ & Associates Consulting Engineers  
321 Ashton Place  
Winnipeg, MB  
R3X 5B9

Dear Mr. Lindley:

I am graduating from civil engineering at the University of Manitoba in May, 2008. I am seeking a full-time engineering position, and am very interested in working within the field of municipal engineering. I have heard only positive things about your firm, and I am hoping for the opportunity to join your team.

For the past two summers, I worked for the Town of Homeville, as a civil engineering co-op student, in the Municipal Infrastructure Department. I spent time both in the office and the field. My office duties included assisting with the design and drafting of projects, while my field duties included surveying and inspecting projects. In the field, I was solely responsible for ensuring the integrity and completeness of the contractor's work. As I performed such duties as supervising and collecting data for both payment and project purposes, I learned a great deal about the construction of municipal infrastructure systems.

Other skills I would bring to XYZ & Associates include my strong work ethic, adaptability, communication, and leadership abilities. I am confident that these skills and abilities in partnership with my university degree, and summer experiences provide me the ideal background.

I look forward to the opportunity to further discuss my potential to contribute to the XYZ & Associates team. I can be reached at (204) 123-4567 or by e-mail at [tparker@excape.com](mailto:tparker@excape.com). Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Tom Parker

Enclosure