



Cover Letter Writing

Tips and Samples to Help you Succeed

Bethel College Career & Intern Services Center
Huffman Administration Building, Room A316
careerservices@bethelcollege.edu
574.257.2661

If you would like one-on-one assistance with putting the final touches on your cover letter:

1. Read through the following information and use the guidelines and suggestions to write your cover letter. Or, if you already have a first draft, use the information to make any necessary changes.
2. Email a copy of your completed cover letter to Sherry Weldy at weldys@bethelcollege.edu. Please send it as a Word document.
3. Sherry will add your cover letter to the queue, and when you are next in line she will contact you for an appointment. Please note that depending on how many others are in line in front of you, this could take up to two weeks.
4. At your appointment Sherry will go over her suggested changes and give you additional tips on improving your letter, and will email you a revised copy.

The Cover Letter

In their book, *101 Best Cover Letters*, Jay A. Block and Michael Betrus state that “the cover letter must address and meet the important needs of the prospective employer in a professional and entertaining fashion.” An employer **receives 100 resumes** and may **only select 8** candidates to interview. The cover letter is what captures the employer’s interest enough to look at your resume. Unfortunately, people do not realize that this is actually their **first impression that is formed about you**. Write a lifeless letter and what other conclusions can they ascertain? **Your letter needs to separate you from the other 92 candidates to obtain that interview!**

Block and Betrus have just that solution! They suggest using the **PIE Method** while composing your cover letter.

P = Passion: Write with **enthusiasm, energy and passion**. The resume is a formal document, but the letter allows you to share excitement and confidence with your reader and shows them the personality that accompanies your skills and accomplishments.

I = Interest: **Passionate words are fine, but not if there is nothing there to interest the reader**. What do you bring to the table? Why should they hire you? Do research on the company and discover what their needs are. Too many times cover letters wax eloquent on how great the candidate is, but fails to communicate how that candidate would benefit the company. **How would your skills benefit their needs?**

E = Excellence: Employers want employees with **a commitment to excellence**. Your letter must communicate your “level of integrity, confidence, competence and trustworthiness.”

A cover letter must:

- Embody a compelling message
- Depict a professional commitment to excellence in one’s chosen field
- Communicate with passion and emotion

Studies indicate **your cover letter has a life expectancy of about eight seconds**, so it must be brief, yet informative. The letter should have **three recognizable parts**: the **opening**, which explains why you are writing; the **main body**, which lists two or three of your major accomplishments and gives the reader a reason to want to interview you; and the **closing**, which expresses your call to action of asking for the interview.

Feeling overwhelmed? Don’t! Here are some tips from **101 Best Cover Letters** to guide you as you compose a powerful cover letter.

1. Use customized stationery with your name, address, and phone number on top. Match your stationery to that of your resume – it shows class and professionalism.
2. Customize the cover letter. Address it to a specific individual. Be sure you have the proper spelling of the person’s name, his or her title, and the company name.
3. If you don’t wish to customize each letter and prefer to use a form letter, use the salutation “Dear Hiring Manager.” (Do not use “Dear Sir.” The hiring manager may be a woman.)

4. The cover letter is more informal than the resume and must begin to build rapport. Be enthusiastic, energetic, and motivating.
5. The cover letter must introduce you and your value to a potential employer.
6. Be sure to date the cover letter.
7. An effective cover letter should be easy to read, have larger typeface than the resume (12 point type is a good size), and be kept short – 4 to 5 short paragraphs will usually do the job.
8. Keep the cover letter to one page. If you are compelled to use two pages, be sure your name appears on the second page.
9. The first paragraph should ignite interest in your candidacy and spark enthusiasm from the reader. Why is the reader reading this letter? What can you do for him or her?
10. The second paragraph must promote your value. What are your skills, abilities, qualifications and credentials that would meet the reader's needs and job requirements?
11. The third paragraph notes specific accomplishments, achievements, and educational experience that would expressly support the second paragraph. Quantify these accomplishments if possible.
12. The fourth paragraph must generate future action. Ask for an interview or tell the reader that you will be calling in a week or so to follow up.
13. The fifth paragraph should be a short one, closing the letter and showing appreciation.
14. Demonstrate specific problem-solving skills in the letter, supported by specific examples.
15. Unless asked to do so, don't discuss salary in a cover letter.
16. If salary history or requirements are asked for, provide a modest window (low to mid thirties, for example) and mention that salary is negotiable (if it is).
17. Be sure the letter has a professional appearance.
18. Be sure there are no spelling, typographical, or grammatical errors.
19. Be sure to keep the letter short and to the point. Don't ramble on and on.
20. Do not lie or exaggerate. Everything you say in a cover letter and resume must be supported in the eventual interview.
21. Be careful not to use the pronoun *I* excessively. Tie together what the company is doing and what their needs might be. To come full circle, explain how you fit into their strategy and can close potential gaps in meeting their potential.
22. Avoid negative and controversial subject matter. The purpose of a cover letter and resume is to put your best foot forward. This material (job hopping, prior termination, etc.) can be tactfully addressed in the interview.
23. If you are faxing the cover letter and resume, you need not send a fax transmittal form as long your fax number is included in the heading along with your telephone number.
24. To close the letter, use *Sincerely*, *Sincerely yours*, *Respectfully* or *Very truly yours*.
25. Be sure to sign the letter.

Cover Letters

Your Personal Standard Letter
This is representative of "Fully blocked"
Double space between each paragraph

Your Name
Your Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

Date of Writing

Mr. or Mrs. Employer
Title of Employer
Organization
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Mr. or Mrs. Employer:

1st Paragraph: Remember, your opening paragraph should invite and entice the employer. State why you are writing, usually to apply for a position. If you are responding to a known opening, explain how you heard about it (name the publication and date). If it was through a personal reference, tell the employer about it immediately. If you are writing an unsolicited letter to an organization with no announced openings, be as specific as possible about the type of job you are seeking. Tell why you are particularly interested in working for the company.

2nd Paragraph: Present past accomplishments, using numbers to support your successes whenever possible. Expand on information presented in your resume; do not merely repeat it. Use specific examples in demonstrating what you can do for the employer instead of merely listing skills you have or relevant courses you have taken. Indicate how your skills tie into the organization. Mention briefly what you know about the company or some aspect of it.

3rd Paragraph: This is optional if you need to elaborate on your accomplishments further.

4th Paragraph: This is your "critical message". Present your strongest and most relevant qualifications for the job, in decreasing order of importance. Keep the employer's perspective in mind!

5th Paragraph: Close by making a specific request for an interview (your "call to action"). Keep your tone confident! Remind the reader you are willing and able to be of service to the organization. Thank the employer for any consideration he/she may give to your application.

Sincerely,

Your Handwritten Signature

Your Typewritten Name

Enclosure

Paige Pierson

1001 West McKinley Avenue
Mishawaka, Indiana 46545
ppiers@bethelcollege.edu
(574) 850-4782

October 4, 2005

Ms. Bonnie Raine, Executive Director
United Health Services
711 East Colfax Avenue
South Bend, Indiana 46617

Dear Ms. Raine:

As a senior at Bethel College, I am exploring the possibilities of an internship for the upcoming spring semester. I recently received word from my college's Career and Intern Services Center director, Michelle Yager, that you expressed interest in having an intern to assist with public relations and communications at United Health Services. I am very interested in serving you as an intern as I view your organization as a great asset to the local community. I would like to advance United Health Services' mission in providing the people of Michiana with the aid they need regarding various health needs. A key in accomplishing this mission is building a strong communication base.

I have worked at my college's public relations office since I was a freshman. Through this valuable experience, I have learned that public relations are vital for the relationship between an organization and the local community. Working in public relations has enabled me to develop skills such as formulating news releases, proofing materials for publication, and writing articles for the college alumni magazine. Also, I have worked for several years in student publications, which has served to strengthen my writing, editing, layout, and leadership skills. I believe I can use what I have learned to help United Health Services improve its communication with the Michiana community.

I am able to present United Health Services the following:

- One year of experience in public relations
- Three years of experience in student journalism
- Strong written communication skills

Thank you for your consideration in reading this letter. I will contact you this week so we can discuss the possibility of an internship. I am looking forward to meeting you soon.

Sincerely yours,

Paige Pierson

Enclosure

Laura Glassburn, RN, BSN

50675 Yorkview Drive
Granger, Indiana 46530

glassmenagerie@junol.com
(574) 273-0354

September 30, 2005

Accelovance
2275 Research Boulevard
Suite 700
Rockville, Maryland 20850
Attn: HR South Bend

Re: Clinical Research Nurse Coordinator in South Bend Tribune, 9/28/05

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am very interested in your position of Clinical Research Nurse Coordinator as advertised in the South Bend Tribune. My enclosed résumé reflects a broad range of nursing experience spanning 20+years. I am now seeking additional challenges and opportunities in research. Accelovance is on the cutting edge of clinical services attempting to meet the medical needs in China. I am confident that my skills would make me an ideal candidate for your team.

Qualifications I bring to the table include:

- Strong analytical skills with exceptional attention to details
- Highly motivated and aggressively take on great responsibility
- Proven performance in fast-paced and high-stress working environment
- Physical assessment skills and pathophysiology knowledge

I would appreciate the opportunity to meet and further share my qualifications and enthusiasm for this position at Accelovance. I would like to be a part of your dynamic team in researching new medications to help people. Together we can make it happen.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Laura Glassburn, RN, BSN

Mollie Medication, BSN

7802 Rolling Prairie Lane
Mishawaka, Indiana 46545
(574) 123-4567

March 31, 2006

Ms. Judith Reichman, R.N.
Nurse Recruiter
Dupont Hospital
2520 East Dupont Road
Fort Wayne, Indiana 46825

Dear Ms. Reichman:

Innovative, caring, and trustworthy. These are the qualities that characterize Dupont Hospital and its employees. As my résumé shows, these are also qualities I possess and hope to demonstrate as a Registered Nurse with Dupont Hospital.

I have completed clinical rotations in Psychiatric-Mental Health, Emergency Room and Intensive Care Units. Each rotation has enabled me to work both independently and interdependently with people and health care team members in a hospital setting. My clinical experiences have provided me with opportunities to assist RNs in administering direct patient care and helping patients perform daily living activities.

The staff development programs that I participated in while working as a Student Nurse Aide broadened my awareness of current trends and breakthroughs in the field of medicine and nursing.

In May, I will graduate from Bethel College with a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing. I am confident that my practical experience and knowledge of nursing procedures will allow me to make immediate contributions to your hospital. I look forward to meeting you soon to discuss how my skills can meet Dupont Hospital's needs. I will call you the week of April 15 to arrange an interview.

Sincerely,

Mollie Medication

Enclosures

Jonathan Goodrich

1025 Pinedale Drive
Mishawaka, Indiana 46544

goodgray@comcast.net

(574) 234-7489
cell: (574) 850-3764

April 7, 2006

Jillian Spindle
Lincoln National Bank
817 Washington Boulevard
Boston, MA 02116

Dear Ms. Spindle:

Over the past few years I have come to realize that the banking community has a powerful opportunity to help people succeed in fulfilling their dreams. This may be as big as helping a young couple become first-time homeowners or as small as helping a young child open a savings account, but they are both important dreams. You need people in your company that put an emphasis on the customer, building a relationship to help them not only get a loan or open an account, but to make sure they will be successful in doing it.

I have worked with students and their parents for the last two years to not only choose the right college, but to choose one where they can grow and thrive. I have worked with nearly 400 applicants in the last two years, and over 50 percent of them have chosen to attend Wheaton College to further their education. During the time I have held my current position I have supervised the planning of over 875 visits to the campus and have managed a group of student workers throughout the school year and summer.

While spending the last two years as an Admission Counselor at Wheaton, I have had the opportunity to help a specific group of people, namely high school seniors, fulfill one dream - attending college. Through this position, my interaction with students and their parents has given me a passion to help people fulfill their ambitions. I feel that it is time for me to broaden my horizons to help people not only with choosing a college, but also the other aspects of life, such as owning a home, saving for retirement, and planning for a family.

I offer Lincoln National Bank the following skills:

- Excellent customer service relations and communications skills developed as college recruiter
- Analytical and organizational skills demonstrated through detailed data-gathering and compiling
- Driven and willing to take initiative with proven success in prioritizing time and resources to meet goals and achieve results
- Ability to learn quickly

I am eager to take on new challenges and am confident that I can deliver strong results for Lincoln National Bank. I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss employment possibilities that would benefit each of us. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Goodrich