

WHY IS THE COVER LETTER IMPORTANT?

Most people think the cover letter is simply a brief, general introduction for your resume – similar to the cover page for a report. While important information is definitely contained in your resumes, there are things you can accomplish through your cover letter that cannot be done via your resume.

- **Your cover letter provides the employer with a sample of your writing ability.** How well are you able to organize your thoughts? Can you write persuasively? Do you understand the basic rules of grammar and punctuation?
- **Think of your cover letter as a narrated voice for your resume.** This is your opportunity to highlight specific skills and experience on your resume and summarize them in a way that addresses the needs of the employer. However, you should avoid simply “cutting and pasting” examples from your resume.
- **The cover letter provides you with an opportunity to directly address questions that the employer may have regarding your interest level.** Why do you want the position? Why are you interested in working for the employer? If the position is located outside of your geographic region, you will need to address your desire to relocate and reference any potential ties you have to the area.
- **If you have any connection to the employer you should reference it in your cover letter.** Did you speak with someone from the employer at a career fair? Have you met with someone who works at the employer for an informational interview? These types of references in your cover letter will help you stand out so don't be shy about including them.

Given the advice listed above, it is critical that you devote time to creating customized cover letters for each new position and avoid simply updating a generic cover letter.

KEY COMPONENTS CHECKLIST

- ✓ **Know who you are writing to/avoid To Whom It May Concern.** Most job postings will include contact information for the person coordinating the recruitment process. If that information is not provided you can often conduct online research to find the name of the human resources contact or the name of the manager to whom the position reports.
- ✓ **Reference how you learned about the position.** Was it posted on their website, connectRossier, or another job board? Did you learn about the position from someone who works at the employer?
- ✓ **Reference any prior contact you may have had with the employer** through networking interactions such as informational interviews, career fairs, etc.
- ✓ **Prepare 2-3 reasons why you are interested in the position, as well as the employer.** Try to avoid using general statements that make your cover letter appear generic. Employers will notice and appreciate your targeted focus.
- ✓ **Identify 2-3 skills to highlight in your cover letter.** These skills should match the skills outlined in the job posting. You want to demonstrate to the employer that you have the skills they require.
- ✓ **In addition to highlighting skills, you will also want to summarize related experience.** However, avoid simply restating verbatim what already appears on your resume.
- ✓ **Address any geographic issues.** If the position is located in another city than your current residence, include information on why you are interested in relocating. Employers are hesitant to interview candidates who are not committed to working in their city/region.

Lastly, don't forget to carefully proofread your cover letter!