

5 Parts to a Cover Letter (a.k.a. How to Write a Good One!)

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As a follow-up to my article on the [importance of having a cover letter](#) accompany your résumé, I am going to demonstrate here the mechanics of a well written cover letter. I hope that this provides some value and enables you to craft your own cover letter to generate interest on behalf of a potential hiring manager.

The Salutation (The Hello): Get a name, any name. By hook or by crook try to get a name. Sometimes you can't - then try To whom it may concern or Dear hiring manager.

Dear Hiring Manager:

The Opening (The Grab): Your opening paragraph is your introduction and presents the reader with some immediate and focused information regarding the position you are pursuing and a few core competencies that demonstrate your strength:

Having contributed as an operations and general business leader, I am writing to express my interest in [Name of Position] with [Name of Company]. You will see on the enclosed résumé that I turned around an underperforming business, substantially improved productivity and employee morale, and possess critical and creative thinking skills that will facilitate my swift contribution to your sustained growth.

The Second Paragraph (The Hook): This paragraph should define some examples of the work performed and results achieved. This paragraph should be connected to your résumé. This does not mean that you should copy verbatim what is in the résumé. Rather, cover some key competencies that you feel define your success. In the event that you are highlighting some information that is not contained in the résumé (if you are switching careers, or have a unique value proposition), this is the perfect place to cover that information. Use bullets to define key areas of achievement and highlight what you bring:

My professional experiences include my recent position with XYZ Corporation as Operations Manager, and previous positions with ABC Corporation, and DEF Corporation. In all of my roles I guided the professional development of staff and gained consensus for the adoption of new ideas due to my demonstrated ability to clearly present value added recommendations. The following is a brief sample of the expertise I offer:

- Conceptualized and implemented an innovative business strategy whereby inventory was maintained at vendor locations, resulting in the effective use of a JIT system and annual savings of \$250,000 for XYZ Corporation.

- Established internal operating procedures that reduced employee downtime by 15%. In addition to conducting cross-training initiatives, I fostered an environment predicated on accountability for results, which improved the team's commitment to the attainment of short- and long-term goals.
- Conducted industry and competitive analysis while at ABC Corporation, which enabled senior leadership to analyze potential acquisition opportunities. After contributing to the due diligence process, three targets were pursued, and resulted in one successful deal. From working with attorneys, investment bankers, and CPA's, to serving as a key liaison to senior leadership, my recommendations were successfully implemented.

The Third Paragraph (Paragraph of Knowledge): Here demonstrate something you know about the company that prompted you to write. This shows the reader that you did some preliminary homework and understand the company's drivers and goals:

After researching 123 Company, I understand that your immediate goal is to improve business performance and establish key benchmarks within [Name of Industry]. Your recent acquisition of [Company Name], puts you in a position to gain market share and establish a unique brand presence with potential and existing customers. Given my professional achievements, I am in a position to help you quickly achieve your goals.

The Fourth Paragraph (The Close): In the closing paragraph quickly summarize what you offer and close by either suggesting a meeting or indicating that you will call in a certain number of days. If you choose the latter approach, make sure you follow-up within the timeframe you reference.

I bring a tool kit comprised of leadership, strategic planning, and analytical skills; and I would be pleased to review my credentials with you to personally explore how I can contribute as a member of your senior leadership team. Please feel free to contact me at the number above to arrange a time to speak.

Sincerely,

Full Name