Cover Letter Guidelines

Your cover letter is the first document a prospective employer typically views. Use this document to promote yourself to them and entice them to read your résumé. The ultimate goal of both your cover letter and résumé is to get you an interview.

Your first challenge is to have the receiver read the entire letter. Therefore, the first paragraph needs to capture the reader's attention. One method is to apply your research of the company and explain to the reader why you are interested in the company and position based on what you have learned—e.g., industry leader in innovation, outstanding reputation for customer service, leader in preserving the environment, well known for having the best warranty on their products, etc. The reader is more likely to continue reading if you demonstrate an interest in their organization. Then, within the paragraph tell the employer that you are applying for a specific opening.

The second and third paragraphs of your letter builds interest in you as a candidate and adds some details not necessarily included on your résumé. This is your opportunity to explain why you are the perfect match for the opening. Choose an experience from a co-op or internship that you have had or talk about a particular project that you developed for a class. Be sure to relate these experiences to the job requirements and needs of the company. You should only elaborate on one or two items. Leave the reader wanting to know more, and thus contacting you to schedule an interview.

The third paragraph is devoted to action—the action that you will take and the action that you wish the employer to take. For example, “I appreciate your review of the enclosed résumé. I will call next week to see if you need any further application materials from me for the sales opening.” OR, “Thank you for considering my credentials for your sales position. I would be happy to come in to talk with you about the contributions I could make at ABC Company.” Your action statement can prepare the hiring official for a follow-up phone call to confirm receipt of your application, to ask and answer questions, and/or to explore a mutual interest in meeting to dialogue about your qualifications and how they can meet a need within company.

Remember to use the AIDA technique:
A -- Attention: grab it!
I -- Interest: build it!
D -- Details: provide them!
A -- Action: state what you want!

To schedule an appointment with a Career Advisor, call 937-775-2556.

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