Cover Letter and Other Job Search Letters

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Why write a cover letter?
Writing a cover letter increases the value of your resume to the prospective employer. A well-written cover letter introduces your resume and motivates the employer to read it with greater interest and attention. The cover letter should be utilized as a tool to link yourself to the employer and demonstrate your writing skills.

Do employers really read cover letters?
Yes! The real question isn’t if but when do employers read cover letters? Think about how you sort through a stack of information. First, you’d probably skim the resume and first paragraph of the cover letter to sort candidates into ‘yes’, ‘no’ and ‘maybe’ piles. The second time through, you’d read everything closely to whittle down your ‘yes’ pile to 3-5 strong candidates to invite to interview.

Will a cover letter really make a difference?
Yes, because it makes your argument about how you can contribute to their organization. Those without cover letters have to hope that the employer can figure that out. A cover letter proves that you know what you have to offer and that you can communicate it!

Cover Letter Tips:

- Make sure it is well-written and meaningful: employers will use a cover letter to measure your writing ability.
- Include the heading from your resume and references page for a uniform look.
- Address the letter to a specific person. If you don’t know their name, call the company and ask for it (be sure you get the correct spelling and gender). If no one can provide it for you, address your letter as “Dear Title” (i.e. “Dear Director of Marketing” or “Dear Finance Manager”).
- Tailor each cover letter to each company: demonstrate to the employer why you want to work specifically for them.
- Back up every statement with concrete evidence.
- Show that you know the skills you have to offer - and that these skills match exactly what the employer is looking for.
- Keep it simple and to the point - 1 page only!
- Use language that conveys confidence, eagerness, optimism and energy.
Jane Smith  
1234 Maple Lane, La Verne, CA 91773 • cell: 909-295-4667 • jane.smith@laverne.edu

January 21, 2011

Alicia Brown, Director of Social Services  
Miller Youth and Family Services  
111 Country Lane  
La Verne, CA 91773

Dear Ms. Brown,

As a graduate of the Masters of Counseling program from the University of La Verne and with six years of experience working with children and families from diverse backgrounds, I believe I demonstrate the skills needed to contribute to the success of the Mentoring Program at Miller Youth and Family Services. I am writing to express my interest in the position of Mentor Program Manager because of my knowledge of your company’s success in changing the lives of youth in the San Gabriel Valley.

I have worked in a variety of social service settings, ranging from school counseling at a California public school to non-profit management in East Africa. Recently, I served as Mentor Coordinator for the BRIGHT Families Project at UCLA’s Division of Community Services. It was my responsibility to run the entire mentoring program, which included recruiting, interviewing, training and managing cases for over 20 mentor dyads. While there, I worked in conjunction with county services in order to best provide foster and adopted children with the mentor that matched their individual needs.

As the Social Services Assistant at Armed Services YMCA, I provided clinical support services to military families. I assisted with in-home crisis counseling and intervention, and implemented the use of intake and psychosocial assessments for our clients. This helped us to better track the needs of our population as a whole.

I believe that Miller Youth and Family Services would benefit from my excellent problem-solving and interpersonal skills, as well as the ability to cultivate trusting relationships with clients and staff from diverse socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds. I look forward to hearing from you to further discuss my candidacy for this position. Please feel free to contact me at (909) 295-4667 or at Jane.smith@laverne.edu. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jane Smith
January 21, 2011

Alicia Brown, Director of Social Services
Miller Youth and Family Services
111 Country Lane
La Verne, CA 91773

Dear Ms. Brown:

As a recent graduate of the masters in counseling program from the University of La Verne and with six years of experience in working with children and families from diverse backgrounds, I believe I demonstrate the skills needed to contribute to the success of the Mentoring program at Miller Youth and Family Services. I am writing to express my interest in the position of Mentor Program Manager because of my knowledge of your company’s success in changing the lives of youth in the San Gabriel Valley.

I have worked in a variety of social service settings, ranging from school counseling at a California public school to non-profit management in East Africa. Recently, I served as Mentor Coordinator for the BRIGHT Families Project at UCLA’s Division of Community Services. It was my responsibility to run the entire program, which included recruiting, interviewing, training and managing cases for over 20 mentor dyads. While there, I worked in conjunction with county services in order to best provide foster and adopted children with the mentor that matched their individual needs.

As the Social Services Assistant at Armed Services YMCA I provided social and clinical support services to military families. I assisted with in-home crisis counseling and intervention, and performed intake and psychosocial assessments on our clients.

I believe that Miller Youth and Family Services would benefit from my excellent problem-solving and interpersonal skills, as well as the ability to cultivate trusting relationships with clients and staff from diverse socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds. I look forward to hearing from you to further discuss my candidacy for this position. Please feel free to contact me at (909) ------- or at name.name@laverne.edu. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jane Smith
June 16, 2011

Ms. Kristin Campbell
California Products Inc.
1432 Juniper Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90048

Dear Ms. Campbell:

Please accept my resume for the Lead Sales Management position listed on University of La Verne’s LeoLink. The skills, qualities, drive, and determination I posses make me an ideal candidate for the Lead Sales Management position. The following are examples of my key strengths that I feel will aid me in succeeding in a management position:

- **Leadership skills** – While working as a cashier and server, I was rapidly promoted to Lead Shift Manager based on my ability to direct in a fast-paced atmosphere.
- **Competitive disposition** - Continuously surpassed sales quotas by 20% winning our location the Highest Sales of the Year award, over 15 other restaurant sites.
- **Excellent communication skills** – Overall, in my professional, academic and personal life, I have successfully established and maintained positive relationships with customers, classmates, and professors. As an excellent communicator I am always trusted with the responsibility of final edits of written work and presentations during group projects. Professionally, I have developed my skills through workshops and trainings on public speaking and presentations.
- **Solid team skills** – In all of my interactions, I have been acknowledged as the glue that binds groups together. My skills have given me the ability to promote solid teamwork and boost morale when accomplishing various goals and tasks.

In addition to my genuine interest in the position, the skills and experience I harbor will allow me to contribute directly to your organization. The collaborative team oriented environment your organization is known for and its strong determination to provide professional development to its employees are all aspects I value in a work environment. California Products Inc. is an excellent organization that is well paired with my skills and career goals, and most importantly my work values.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you soon so that we can further discuss how my skills and abilities are aligned with the Lead Sales Management position.

Sincerely,

Lea Leopard
Dear Ms. Brown,

Thank you so much for the opportunity to interview with Miller Youth and Family Services. I am not only impressed by the comprehensive services you offer for your clients, but also by your staff’s support of and commitment to each other as a team.

It was especially helpful to hear about your experience transitioning into the organization from a county department, as well as your take on the volunteers who work here. I have no doubt that your perspective will be invaluable for whomever you select as the new Mentor Program Manager.

I remain very interested in this position, and regardless of the outcome, I greatly appreciate your willingness to meet with me and share more about the work you do here. I hope that your interview process runs smoothly, and I look forward to hearing from you soon regarding your decision. Please let me know if you have any further questions regarding my experience, skills, and interest in the position.

Thank you,

Jane Smith

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A. Thank you notes are 4-8 sentences long. Use this format as a reference. If your interview was conducted by a panel of interviewers each person should receive a separate letter.

1. (Same for everyone) Say thank you.
2. (Same for everyone) Tell them why you are thanking them or give your overall impression of the meeting.
3. (Unique to each person) Give a statement about something you specifically appreciated from your time with them.
4. (Same for everyone) Closing lines.

B. Who should get a thank you letter? Everyone you interviewed with should receive a thank you letter. If someone takes the time to interview or share advice or resources (whether it’s an employment or informational interview) it is considered professionally polite to acknowledge it. A thank you also sets you apart from other candidates.

C. Should I send my note by email or via the post office?
If you know that the employer is making a decision in the next few days, send a short thank you email within 24 hours of your interview. Always follow up with a more personalized hand written note sent by post. If you’re not sure, you can ask. For example, at the end of the interview, you could ask the administrative assistant or whoever organized the day for the contact information of everyone you met. You can also ask their opinion. “I’d like to send brief thank you notes to Ms. Brown and Mr. Jones. Do you recommend email or a paper correspondence?”

D. If I send paper correspondence, do I need to use cards that say ‘thank you’?
No. Simple 4x6” folding cards are excellent for brief, 4 sentence thank you notes. You do not have to use the ones with thank you stamped on them. You may also choose ones with the University of La Verne logo or your monogram (be sure they look professional). Handwrite them, for a more personal touch. However, be sure that you write legibly!
May 30, 2011

Kristin Campbell
California Products Inc.
1432 Juniper Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90048

Dear Ms. Campbell:

I am delighted to confirm my acceptance for the position of Lead Sales Manager in your Public Relations department at California Products Inc. I will be attending the 3-day training orientation and begin my employment on Monday, June 23rd.

In speaking with Ms. Smith, the human resources representative, I understand that California Products Inc. has an extensive healthcare and insurance benefits program as well as a 401(k) company match plan. As we agreed, my compensation will be $65,000 annually and will provide for 3 weeks paid vacation leave each year.

I would like to once again express my appreciation for your offer and my excitement about joining your team. I look forward to my association with California Products Inc. and feel my contributions will be in line with your goals and continued success for the company.

Sincerely,

Lea Leopard

A. Acceptance Letter Dissected

1. **Enthusiastic Yes** — Demonstrate your excitement regarding your acceptance of the offer and include the title of the position.
2. **Terms of Agreement** — Clarify the terms as you negotiated and understand them (salary, start date, benefits, etc.).
3. **Thank you** — Thank the employer for the opportunity and reiterate your enthusiasm for beginning your new position.

B. If you are offered a position in writing it is a courtesy to inform the prospective employer of your final decision in writing also. Only accept a position that you are certain about. An initial acceptance and later decline will reflect badly on you.

C. The basic components of an acceptance letter include the following: Acknowledgement of the
May 31, 2011

Michael McDonald, Director
The Walt Disney Company
11414 East Rose St.
Anaheim, CA 928036

Dear Mr. McDonald:

It was a pleasure meeting with you and your staff to discuss your needs for an administrative assistant. Our time together was very informative and enjoyable.

I want to thank you for the offer you have made to join your team as an Administrative Assistant. After careful thought and consideration, I have decided to decline the position. My decision is primarily based on the fact that I recently accepted a position elsewhere that is well suited with my qualifications, experiences, and future goals.

I want to thank you for interviewing me and giving me the opportunity to learn more about your company and its projects. Best wishes to you and your staff.

Sincerely,

Mary Murphy

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B. **Rejection/Decline Letter Dissected**

1. **Opening Paragraph** – Greet and thank the employer for offering the position to you.
2. **Your Decline** – Tell the employer that you are declining the position and convey your reasons.
3. **Closing** – Express your thanks again and end with a positive closing. Wish the employer well and luck in their search for a candidate.

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B. A formal way of declining a job offer is in writing, which can be a difficult task for anyone. A formal letter of decline will allow you to demonstrate your professionalism to employers when you are not interested in the position. This type of communication is a courtesy to the organization and demonstrates good business etiquette.