



**FORDHAM**  
THE JESUIT UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Gabelli School  
of Business

# Cover Letter Guidelines

2016-2017



CAREER

PERSONAL & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CENTER  
140 West 62<sup>nd</sup> Street, 1st Floor  
New York, NY 10023

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## **Goldman Sachs' HR chief says this is the key to writing a winning cover letter**

If you ever questioned the value of a cover letter in today's technological age, Goldman Sachs' HR chief has an important message for you. "We read them because, at times, they will contain information that actually gives us insight into the person," Edith Cooper, executive vice president and global head of Human Capital Management at Goldman Sachs, tells Business Insider.

The key to a good cover letter, she says, is to **keep it new and interesting**. A colleague recently told Cooper about a job candidate who submitted a unique cover letter that, strangely enough, touched on astrophysics. "It was so, so unusual that the recruiter said, 'You know what? I really want to talk to this person.'" Cooper says the lesson isn't that every candidate should write about something unusual for the sake of standing out.

"The truth is, if it's interesting and content-rich, it's like a good book: If you open the book and the first few chapters are interesting, you'll keep reading. If you open the book and it's really just saying, 'I'd really like to work at Goldman Sachs. It's the best firm in the world,' and talk about all the attributes of Goldman Sachs, it's interesting, but we know about Goldman Sachs. How about you? That's what we're looking for. We want to learn about you," she says.

*Source:*

**Business Insider**, published May 8, 2016. <http://www.businessinsider.com/goldman-sachs-hr-chief-the-key-to-writing-a-winning-cover-letter-2016-5>

## What is a cover letter?

- A cover letter is a marketing tool
- A cover letter briefly summarizes a candidate's skills, experiences and relevant qualifications to an employer to explain what makes them the ideal candidate for a job.

## What is its purpose?

- The purpose of the cover letter is to pique a recruiter or hiring manager's interest to secure a telephone, skype or in-person interview.
- A cover letter is not a "data dump" of your experiences, wishes and dreams.
- It must convey to an employer that you understand the nature of the organization's needs and possess the relevant skills and qualifications to excel in a specific role.

## Components of a winning cover letter

- Paragraph 1: The Introductory Paragraph: Briefly introduce yourself to the hiring manager or recruiter; should contain these general items:
  - Why are you contacting them?
  - How you heard about the position (if someone referred you, mention the name of your contact)?
  - If you are in school, list your major and minor, and when you expect to complete your degree. When referring to the Gabelli School of Business, it should be stated as "The Gabelli School of Business, Fordham University".
  - Why you are interested in the position/company?
- Paragraph 2 – The Magic Middle: make the case for why you'd be an exceptional hire
  - 'Connect the dots' between the job description and your background: explain how your past experience (education, work experience) has equipped you for the job you are applying for.
  - Match your background with the requirements: explain what you can do for them. Why should they be interested in you?
  - Review the job description to identify what is most important to them
  - EMPHASIZE YOUR STRONGEST QUALIFICATIONS- BASED ON THEIR NEEDS – Provide an overview of your competencies (talents, knowledge, and skills) and unique strengths, stated in terms of the unique value you bring to the company. Support what you say by noting (1 or 2) positive results you achieved in internships, previous work, or educational contexts.
  - Do not restate everything listed on your resume
- Paragraphs 3 – Summarize and close: describe desired next steps between you and the organization
  - Brief summary of your key value proposition as outlined in middle paragraph.
  - Thank the reader for considering your application.
  - Include the desired outcome: Are you asking for an interview? Will you call or email them in the next few days to follow up? Are you asking to meet with them to find out more about their organization or role?
  - State expected action: state how you may be contacted (include your phone number and email address), invite them to contact you should they have any questions or interest in moving forward.
  - Note a follow-up action item for yourself: remember to state the specific date that you will be calling (typically one week after you send the letter).

## **Mistakes to avoid when writing a cover letter**

- Being self-focused vs. employer focused
- Rambling/irrelevant information
- Appearing self-deprecating
- Aggressive/pushy tone
- Gross exaggeration/bragging
- Making the letter too long and wordy

## **BEFORE writing a cover letter:**

- **Analyze the position and the company.**
  - Underline keywords or phrases in the job description describing what the employer is looking for.
  - Identify why you are interested in the position.
  - Identify the recruiter or hiring manager for the position. Search LinkedIn for a relevant business representative. Do not address “Dear Hiring Manager”.
  - Identify any contacts you have within the organization.
- **Compare your credentials with the position.**
  - List key accomplishments or experiences relevant to the position.
  - Identify transferable skills that make you an ideal candidate, such as:
    - Communication skills
    - Teamwork and interpersonal skills
    - Leadership skills
    - Work ethic traits (self-motivation, initiative, ambition, reliability, drive, stamina)
    - Logic, intelligence, proficiency in study, technical expertise
- **Write the letter.**
  - The letter should answer the following questions:
    - Who are you?
    - Why are you interested in the position?
    - How are you qualified for the position?
    - Why should you be hired over other candidates?

## Cover Letters for Email Correspondence

- An email cover letter includes all the essential elements of a traditional cover letter.
- Follow the employer's instructions:
  - Send your cover letter in the body of an email or as an attachment
  - Add a detailed subject line
  - Note whether a Word document or PDF is preferred.

## Attaching the Letter to an Email

- Take note of how the company requests you submit your cover letter:
  - Example, you may be instructed to attach your cover letter along with your resume. In this case, make sure your cover letter is a PDF file.

## When Your Email serves as the Cover Letter

- In instances where you are sending your resume to an email address, the email will serve as your “cover letter”.
- Rules in this case differ from the standard attached letter.
- Avoid the temptation to simply paste your standard cover letter into the body of an email-- this is not the recommended approach.
- **Rules for E-mail Cover Letters:**
  - **Brief and Focused:** email cover letters should be “short and to the point” and include the top two or three most significant selling points of your qualifications and experience to show why you should be considered for the role (why the reader should open the attached resume).
  - **Easy to read:** Should be plain, easy to read and quick to review
    - May be read on a mobile device, so less is more
  - **The Subject Line Matters:** the subject line should communicate who you are and the purpose of your note without the recipient needing to open the email.
    - If applying for a specific job, be sure to include the requisition number for the job you are applying for in the subject line.
    - Never send an email with a blank subject line or generic “Resume” subject.
  - **Tailor for each job you are applying for:** pay close attention to the detail of the job description - specifically, the responsibilities and requirements- and make sure your cover letter reflects how you are a good fit.
  - **If someone referred you, be sure to use their name:** if you have been referred by a mutual acquaintance, do not save that for the body of the email.
    - Put their name in the subject line to grab the hiring manager's attention right away.
  - **Do not use ALL CAPS.**
  - **Resume should be attached in pdf format unless instructed otherwise:** your resume should be saved and attached in a pdf format.
    - This ensures the document retains format and structure.

## Sample Text for Subject Line

- **Subject:** Suzie Carmichael’s Resume for Asst. Brand Manager (Job #12345-6)
- **Subject:** Referred by Homer Simpson for Market Analyst Position
- **Subject:** Clark Kent following up on Summer Internship
- **Subject:** Thank you from Brad Paisley – Consultant role

## **Useful research tools for writing a stellar cover letter:**

### **Vault**

- Provides career information for researching employers, industries, and other career subjects.
- Vault guides cover a variety of career topics.
- Can be accessed via CareerPath.

### **WetFeet**

- Offers 65+ digital guides that include advice on interviewing, résumés and cover letters, networking, entrepreneurship, and more.
- WetFeet gives an in-depth look at today's top employers.

### **GoinGlobal**

- Covers employment market conditions, job search techniques, and job sources by country,
- Includes H-1B database which reflects the number and job title for petitions filed by employer, as well as a compilation of online job postings by country.
- Can be accessed via CareerPath.

### **Wall Street Oasis**

- Offers career guides covering topics such as technical finance interview questions, stock trading tips, navigating the venture capital and private equity market, finance internships, and networking for business.

### **QS Global Workplace**

- Resource for US and global jobs, leadership development programs, career advice, and information about the global employment market for MBA and Masters Students.

### **MBA-Exchange.com**

- A trusted partner of top business schools which facilitates students' and alumni's connections with MBA employers across the world.
- Portal houses job postings for MBA and MS students as well as a list of development programs available to students globally.
- Can be accessed via CareerPath.

### **Glassdoor**

- One of the fastest growing jobs and recruiting sites in the world, providing company reviews by employees.
- It provides CEO approval ratings, salary reports, interview questions, benefits reviews, office photos and more.

### **S&P Capital IQ's NetAdvantage**

- The S&P NetAdvantage resource has become even more powerful with expanded content from S&P Capital IQ's leading financial data and independent analysis.
- S&P Capital IQ is one of the world's leading providers of independent research, index data and credit ratings

## **Cover letter Format Checklist**

**Once you have written your cover letter, use the following checklist before meeting with a career advisor or submitting your document to a job posting.**

**A standard cover letter format matches the standard business letter format.**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Check if Completed</b>
There is a minimum of .75 inch margins on top, bottom, left and right	
Font is a minimum of 10 point	
Your name, mailing address and email address appears on the top	
Date of the letter is after your name and mailing address with a space in-between	
Recipient's name and address is after the date	
Salutation/opening of the letter is Dear Mr./ Ms. Last Name- not "Hiring Manager" (For email cover letters, salutation is less formal – First Name only, with no Dear)	
Body of letter after Salutation is written in paragraph format with full sentences	
Referrals to our school should be stated as "the Gabelli School of Business, Fordham University"	
First paragraph of body includes 3 items: 1) what you are applying to; 2) a summary of who you are; and 3) how you heard about this position. If you were referred by someone, you should reference it here	
Second paragraph includes your skills, experiences, and interests as they relate to the job	
Closing paragraph includes 3 items: 1) a summary of your key value proposition, as outlined in the middle paragraphs; 2) a Thank You for considering your application; and 3) a call to action about next steps, either that you will call them to follow up or that you look forward to hearing from them	
Closing greeting consists of Sincerely, Yours Truly, or Regards; plus your full name	
There are four line breaks between the closing greeting and your full name for your signature	
For email cover letters, there are no line breaks between closing and your name because no signature will appear	
Your email address and phone number are directly below your name in the closing for easy access by the reader	
There are no spelling mistakes	
There are no grammar mistakes	

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## Basic Overview

Your Street Address  
City, State, Zip  
Email address  
Telephone number

Date

Employer's Name  
Title  
Company  
Street Address  
City, State, Zip

Dear Mr. or Ms. Last Name (Do not address to "Hiring Manager", identify name through LinkedIn or other online sources):

Your introductory paragraph should briefly introduce you and your interest in the company. If you are aware of a specific position or opening, refer to it now. Make sure to provide context (how did you find out about this company/opportunity). This paragraph should also be used to mention the name of the individual who recommended that you contact the company, or cite other research that prompted you to write, such as a recent article on the company or industry.

Your middle paragraph should consist of a selection of highlights from your background that would be of greatest interest (listed in order of the most relevant point first) to the company and consequently create the "notion of fit." Do not state that you would be an excellent fit and you could improve your skills at this company. Focus on how your skills and accomplishments could contribute to the company and answer "what's in it for me." from a hiring manager's perspective. Do not simply restate what is on your resume. Demonstrate that you know about the organization and the industry (at a minimum, check news releases on the Company as well as the investor relations section of its website). If you are a career changer, it is essential to clearly state your transferable skills from previous experience that directly relates to the skills required in the position you are interested in.

Your closing paragraph should outline the procedure for action. State that you would like to discuss employment opportunities or other information with the person and that you are interested in meeting with them. If the company has a specific position available, ask for an opportunity to interview. Thank the addressee for his or her time and consideration.

Sincerely Yours,

Your Name

## Brand Management

Michael Adams  
210 East 22<sup>nd</sup> Street #4D  
New York, NY 10010  
madams3@fordham.edu  
917-987-6543

October 1, 2016

Ms. Nicole Smith  
Human Resources Associate  
Pepsi Co.  
700 Anderson Hill Road  
Purchase, NY 10577

Dear Ms. Smith:

I am a second-year MBA student at the Gabelli School of Business, Fordham University, concentrating in marketing. Based on my discussions with John Jones and Cameron Manns, I believe Pepsi Foods would be an excellent match for the skills that I have honed both professionally and educationally, and am excited to submit my resume for the Associate Global Brand Management position.

My passion for the food sector stems from the early exposure I had from working in my family's food business throughout high school and college summers. More recently, as Manager of Strategic Planning at MasterCard, I led cross-functional teams that developed and implemented integrated marketing plans and communicated our platinum card's benefits to consumers successfully with maximum impact and efficiency. This role also afforded me the opportunity to interact with senior management from five divisions, work with marketing directors in 10 foreign affiliates and gain marketing experience with a global perspective. I believe that my tactical success in expanding MasterCard's brand name by targeting new consumer segments as well as my success in refining its core market strategies, plus my passion for the food industry, would enable me to make an excellent contribution to your team.

I would like to request a time to meet for us to discuss the Associate Global Brand Management position. Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely Yours,

Michael B. Adams

General Networking

Michelle B. Aarons  
454 East 96<sup>th</sup> Street, #2B  
New York, NY, 10128  
madams3@fordham.edu  
917-987-6543

October 1, 2016

Mr. Charles Smith  
Director  
Time Inc.  
1271 Avenue of the Americas  
New York, NY 10020-1393

Dear Mr. Smith,

As a first-year MBA student at the Gabelli School of Business at Fordham University and a former journalist, I am interested in exploring careers in the media industry. I would very much appreciate the opportunity to meet for an informational interview to learn more about Time Inc.

I have worked in media in Argentina and New York, obtained a joint Master's degree in journalism and international affairs, and worked in equity research at Goldman Sachs where I solidified my financial skills. There are several research positions at Time Inc. specifically, where I believe my skills would be additive to the organization and would appreciate the chance to understand more about the culture of the organization.

I would love to have the opportunity to set a day and time that would be convenient for you to talk more about Time Inc. I will follow up with a phone call during the week of October 12<sup>th</sup>. In the meantime, if you would like to reach me sooner, please do not hesitate to call me at (555) 987-6543 or via email at [mbastudent@fordham.edu](mailto:mbastudent@fordham.edu).

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely Yours,

Michelle B. Aaron

Investment Management

Michael Adams  
2 West 63<sup>rd</sup> Street  
Apartment 7G  
New York, NY 10025  
mbastudent@fordham.edu  
(555) 987-6543

October 1, 2016

Ms. Alice Smith  
Vice President  
The Capital Investment Group  
635 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
New York, NY 10017

Dear Ms. Smith:

I am a second-year MBA student at the Gabelli School of Business, Fordham University pursuing a career in investment management and I am writing to apply to Capital Investment Group's Investment Associate program. I am impressed by your long-term investment perspective and multiple portfolio counselor system, which I believe brings comprehensive management to your investments and superior client service. In addition, your unique research portfolio and outperformance highlights the skill of your equity research team.

During four years in the management consulting industry, I concentrated on providing creative and effective solutions to improve business operating performance, specifically streamlining distribution and manufacturing activities in my clients' supply chains. The projects I completed taught me the many factors that influence corporate performance and allowed me to cultivate my client relations skills. My current part-time equity research position at Gabelli Asset Management is also developing my practical knowledge of securities valuation. The detailed research I am performing is furthering my knowledge of how to best analyze a company's future prospects.

I am very interested in speaking with you about how I would contribute to the success of the Capital Investment Group. I will telephone your office during the week of October 9<sup>th</sup>, but feel free to contact me at your convenience at (555)987-6543. Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely Yours,

Michael Adams

Finance

Michael Adams  
123W 68<sup>th</sup> Street, Apartment 7B  
New York, NY, 10010  
mbastudent@fordham.edu  
(555) 987-6543

October 1, 2016

Mr. Charles Smith  
Citigroup  
Recruiting Coordinator  
One Court Square, 14<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Long Island City, NY, 11120

Dear Mr. Smith,

I am a first-year MBA student at the Gabelli School of Business, Fordham University and I am writing to apply to Citigroup's 2016 Summer Associate program with the Commercial Business Group. I became interested in the Consumer Business Group after attending a Citigroup presentation, and speaking with your colleague Jennifer Jones. I am particularly drawn to the enormous opportunity for people, within the Commercial Business Group, to impact this relatively new business unit and drive growth meaningfully at Citigroup.

I have five years of experience in financial services consulting, analyzing the best practices of leading financial services institutions across a variety of areas, including: relationship management, marketing, strategy, customer service, sales and new product development. Working closely with senior executives from large financial institutions has provided me with a solid understanding of these organizations and helped me sharpen my communications and analytical skills as well. During the last three years, I advised over 30 financial services companies, focused exclusively on small business and middle market banking, determining which strategies and best practices are most effective at contributing to profitable growth. That experience helped me understand the challenges and opportunities faced by startups, growing companies and smaller organizations. I believe that advising such companies would help me perform well in a new and growing business customer-focused unit at Citigroup as well.

I look forward to the opportunity to further discuss my qualifications. If I can provide you with any further information, please feel free to contact me at (555) 987-6543.

Sincerely Yours,

Michael B. Adams

Consulting

Michael Adams  
500 West 5<sup>th</sup> Street, Apt 1A  
New York, NY 10027  
mbastudent@fordham.edu  
+1(555) 987-6543

October 1, 2016

Ms. Kirsten Smith  
Recruiting Coordinator  
The Boston Consulting Group  
430 Park Avenue  
London  
United Kingdom

Dear Ms. Smith,

I am a first-year MBA student, concentrating in finance, at the Gabelli School of Business, Fordham University and am enthusiastic about continuing my career in consulting. My background in client service combined with my broad exposure to industries, diverse cultures, and senior leadership is one which situates me well for management consulting. I am particularly interested in The Boston Consulting Group, with the consultants I have met (Beth Davis and John Goldsmith), and their longevity and open praise of the firm's culture. My own values and motivators are aligned with those demonstrated by BCG's people, and I would like to apply to the firm's 2016 Summer Internship program in London.

I have four years of professional experience across continental Europe analyzing clients' customer service problems and delivering results across a variety of business areas including new product development, operations, and customer relations. I enjoyed working in cross-functional teams and presenting findings to senior management that enabled companies to improve their overall profitability. While at Fordham, I am strengthening my quantitative and analytical skills and applying that background to consulting case studies in preparation for the challenging problems that BCG tackles every day.

I look forward to the opportunity to interview with BCG. If I may provide you with any additional information, please feel free to telephone me at +1(555) 987-6543.

Sincerely Yours,

Michael B. Adams

Sales & Trading

Michelle Aarons  
679 Columbus Avenue, #11C  
New York, NY, 10024  
(555) 987-6543  
mbastudent@fordham.edu

November 1, 2016

Ms. Amy Smith  
Barclays  
375 Park Avenue  
New York, NY 10017

Dear Ms. Smith,

I attended Barclays' corporate information session and am impressed by the firm's significant efforts to become acquainted with the MBA students at the Gabelli School of Business, Fordham University. I am very interested in a 2016 Sales & Trading summer internship and have sought out your colleagues, Julie Edwards and David Black, to learn more about the culture of your firm and they have further enhanced my interest in the position and the firm as a whole.

Prior to business school, I managed relationships with Fixed Income business leaders and technologists while serving as a business unit controller at JP Morgan. During those three years, I provided timely data on the performance and profitability of JPMC's fixed income business unit. I was also exposed to the debt trading floor when meeting with administrators and surveying fixed income traders across the credit curve. Furthermore, my selling skills and client interaction were developed while interning at Merrill Lynch in their retirement brokerage group.

I would like to be considered for Barclays 2016 Sales & Trading Summer Associate program and have enclosed my resume. I look forward to your review of my candidacy and may be reached at the above contact information. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely Yours,

Michelle Aarons

Summer Associate (Career Change)

Michelle Aarons  
123 Mott Street, Apt. 8  
New York, NY 10023  
(555) 987-6543  
mbastudent@fordham.edu

October 10, 2016

Ms. Nicole Smith  
Human Resources Associate  
L'Oréal  
123 East 52<sup>nd</sup> Street  
New York, NY 10017

Dear Ms. Smith:

I enjoyed learning more about L'Oréal during Steve William's career panel as part of L'Oréal's corporate outreach to graduate students. I am especially impressed by the strength of L'Oréal's brands and the company's global reach, and would be eager to make a contribution to the company as a Summer Associate. As a first-year MBA student at the Gabelli School of Business, Fordham University, I am seeking an Associate Brand Management Summer Internship position with your company.

Prior to attending Fordham, I was a Grants Officer at The Museum of Modern Art in New York. My work in the Development Department focused primarily on managing the grant process in collaboration with an inter-departmental team to meet financial goals of \$75 million. My responsibilities included preparing persuasive grant proposals, over 50 within three years, to secure corporate and individual funding for museum programs and projects, developing relationships with donors, and managing the financial reporting for the department. In addition to communication and analytical skills, my experience at MoMA gave me substantial managerial experience with leadership in a deadline-driven environment.

I was effective in communicating the museum's vision strategically to donors and I am confident that my skills will allow me to make an immediate and significant contribution to L'Oréal as a Summer Associate. I would be grateful for the opportunity to meet with you. Thank you for your time and consideration of my candidacy.

Sincerely Yours,

Michelle Aarons

Marketing / Media

Michelle Aarons  
123 Mott Street, Apt. 8  
New York, NY 10023  
(555) 987-6543  
mbastudent@fordham.edu

October 20, 2016

Ms. Nicole Smith  
Director  
NBC  
123 East 42<sup>nd</sup> Street  
New York, NY 10016

Dear Ms. Smith:

I am a second-year MBA student at the Gabelli School of Business, Fordham University, with a concentration in marketing and prior experience in market development. Last week I read about the announced joint venture NBC is entering into with Discovery Communications to expand its broadcast presence in the young adult market in Europe. I would be very interested in speaking with you about how I could contribute to the success of this exciting new partnership.

Prior to Fordham, I worked in the European consumer goods industry for four years, handling export sales and marketing for a leading Italian beverage firm. My experience working with the primary European and North American markets enabled me to develop a range of essential skills, including: insight into consumer purchasing behavior, distribution channels, and advertising and media planning. I successfully managed five new product launches and 13 campaigns throughout Europe, helping the company expand into six new markets. During my MBA training, I have focused on developing my strategic analysis and financial/investment planning competencies.

I believe these skills coupled with my passion for media and experience with new product launches in European markets would enable me to significantly contribute to NBC. I would like the opportunity to discuss NBC and opportunities in which I might be additive to the organization. I will contact you during the week of October 26 and would look forward to a brief discussion, at your convenience. Thank you in advance for your consideration. If helpful, I would be happy to send you my resume in advance of any discussion.

Sincerely Yours,

Michelle Aarons

E-mail Cover Letter

**SUBJECT: Bruce Wayne's resume for Assistant Brand Manager**

I am writing to express my interest in the Assistant Brand Manager's role at XYZ Consumer Products posted on the American Marketing Association's job board.

I recently completed my MBA in marketing from the Gabelli School of Business, Fordham University. Prior to beginning my MBA, I spent 2 years at BigData Media, where I assisted in planning and executing digital media buys that enabled my clients to optimize efficiencies. I also completed an internship in brand management at BigBaby Foods, where I supported the launch of the PreChewed Baby food line, with direct responsibility for packaging development and in-store merchandising, so I bring a unique set of qualifications to this role.

My resume is attached for your review and consideration. I look forward to having the opportunity to discuss how I can contribute to the continued growth of XYZ Consumer Products.

Thank you,

Bruce Wayne  
(212) 000-1111  
mbastudent@fordham.edu

Email Cover Letter – Request for Networking Interview

**SUBJECT: Fordham MBA Student Requesting Informational Meeting**

Hello Ms. Smith,

My name is Joyce Shah and I am a first-year MBA student at the Gabelli School of Business, Fordham University pursuing a career in marketing. I found your information in the Forever Fordham alumni directory. Would I be able to schedule a telephone call with you to discuss your experience at Amazon? Your insights would be appreciated as I am in the process of applying for an internship position at the firm.

I understand you may be busy at this time, but I will call you next week, if we are not able to connect via email.

I look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely Yours,

Joyce Shah  
mbastudent@fordham.edu  
(212) 555-0000