

## Writing Employment Cover Letters

Cover letters, also called letters of application, accompany your resume when applying for a job. The cover letter is your introduction to the hiring manager. Not only should it express why your background makes you a strong candidate, it should focus on what you can bring to the company. Effective cover letters are company and job specific, and they show that a candidate has done his or her homework and learned about the company they are applying to. Here are excerpts from two cover letters to illustrate this point:

**Poor (too general):**

I am the ideal candidate to join your company. I have a great deal of experience and am a great team player.

**Good (specific):**

I will be able to bring strong skills to TechStar's sales department, specifically to your new West Coast campaign. My 12 years in marketing for a San Francisco-based corporation have given me strong experience and connections in that region.

TechStar's collaborative atmosphere is well-known and respected in the field. Collaboration often produces the most innovative results, and my extensive experience working collaboratively on sales campaigns will make me a strong addition to your team.

### Tips for Organizing Your Cover Letter

Many people in the job market apply to multiple jobs, so it can seem tedious to write specialized cover letters for every position, but the time spent pays off. One general cover letter is not going to get you noticed anywhere. An example cover letter is included at the end of this resource.

In general, cover letters include the following information:

- **The applicant's full contact information.** While this may sound obvious, many applicants have not gotten a job because they gave the hiring manager no way to contact them. Even if your contact information is on your resume, put it on the cover letter because you have no way of knowing if these two documents are separated.
- **The hiring manager's address.** The hiring manager may be someone in human resources or it may be a director or other manager. If you are unsure to whom your cover letter and resume need to go, call the company's human resources department and ask. It is important to not assume that "To Whom It May Concern" is good enough. In fact, that just shows lack of initiative on your part.
- **Three or four paragraphs.** How many paragraphs you include will depend on your background and the position for which you are applying. The following bullets explain some general information you may want to include in each paragraph of your letter. Examples are also included to illustrate these points further.

- **First paragraph:** Identifies the position being applied for and where the position was advertised. (If you heard about it from a friend who works for the company, mention that he or she referred you, e.g., “Nancy Miller, the director of marketing, suggested I contact you regarding your search for a director of finances.”) Also include one or two sentences regarding your general interest and qualifications for the job.

- **Example<sup>1</sup>**

*Dear Dr. Gonzalez:*

*I am applying for the science/math editor position advertised on monster.com. My work experience encompasses teaching at the secondary and college levels, and I have worked as a technical editor for science and engineering companies. This practical experience provides me with the insight and background needed for the science/math editor position at Red Herring Publications.*

- **Second and third paragraphs:** Discusses experience and its relevance to the company. In other words, make sure you explain why your experience is going to help this company.

- **Example**

*For the past six years, I have been working as a technical editor and writer in an engineering environment. I have extensive experience managing and working in teams and synthesizing information from various authors and sources into comprehensive technical documents. A recent project involved working with seven writers on-site, as well as three remote engineers. I was responsible for compiling information from all 10 engineers, editing the final document for accuracy and consistency, and then overseeing the production of the document for distribution to clients. This experience with project management provides me with the skills I need to track multiple projects and the people who work on them.*

*My editorial experience thus far involves working in cutting-edge science and engineering environments, so I am knowledgeable and comfortable reading and editing technical material. My teaching experience adds to my qualifications for this position because I know what science and math teachers want and need in the classroom. Because of my varied work experience, I relate well with educators and scientists, so I am able to effectively facilitate communication between authors and readers.*

- **Fourth paragraph:** Serves as the conclusion. This paragraph can repeat the contact information. It can also reinforce why you want this position.

---

<sup>1</sup> Examples are taken [and modified] from Martinez, D., Peterson, T., Wells, C., Hannigan, C., & Stevenson, C. (2010). *Technical writing: A comprehensive resource for technical writers at all levels*. New York: Kaplan Publishing, Inc.

- **Example**

*I am extremely interested in this position because it involves working with content I am familiar with and enjoy working on. I look forward to speaking with you further about how I can apply my experience and education to this position. Enclosed are my resume, CD portfolio, and three references, as required. I can be reached at [mhendrix@email.com](mailto:mhendrix@email.com) or 555-444-1234.*

*Sincerely,  
Megan Hendrix*

Always end your letter with a salutation, such as Sincerely or Best, and then include your full name.

An [example cover letter](#) is on the next page.

**Full Address and Contact Information**

Jack Richfield, MBA  
720 Main Street  
Anywhere, MI 40000  
919.555.1234 – [jrichfield@email.com](mailto:jrichfield@email.com)

**Date**

August 10, 2010

Space

**Employer's Full Address and Contact Information**

Jacqueline Conners  
Vice President of Sales  
TechStar Industries  
1234 W. South Street  
Carrboro, MI 40000

Space

**Salutation**

Ms. Conners:

Space

**Body Paragraphs**

I am writing for consideration to be the new Sales Representative for TechStar Industries as posted on your company's website. This position demands a skilled salesperson that is knowledgeable in technology, a proven leader, and customer focused. I am that person, and I hope to bring my skills to the position of Sales Representative.

Space between body paragraphs

TechStar Industries is well-known and respected in software development, and your customer service is consistently superior and in high-demand. My educational background and professional experience will further TechStar's excellent reputation. I received my Master of Business Administration from Kaplan University with a focus on Marketing. In addition, I have a strong technical background as well as extensive sales experience. My education and experience will allow TechStar to remain strong in a global market.

**Closing Paragraph with Contact information**

I look forward to the opportunity to meet with you to further discuss my qualifications and how I can best help you meet the needs of your sales team and clients. Please contact me at your earliest convenience by phone at 919-555-1234 or via email at [jrichfield@email.com](mailto:jrichfield@email.com).

Space

**Closing**

Respectfully,

**Full Signature**

Jack Richfield

**Typed Name Title**

Jack Richfield  
Sales Associate