

Communication, Resumes and Cover Letters

Targeting your audience

When you begin to look for a new career, creating a professional cover letter and resume is very important to have ready. These are items that you will customize, depending on the position that you are applying for.

First, consider targeting your audience. Think about who will review these documents and why it's important to consider Applicant Tracking Software, an HR Recruiter, and a Hiring Manager. Think about which style of cover letter and resume works for each one? And, what type of company it is, might determine your overall presentation of your cover letter or resume.

The Importance of Word Choice

Most recruiters spend about 7.4 seconds scanning a resume, meaning the resume should be eye catching enough with key words and good formatting to be properly considered. Here are some tips to creating an effective resume:

- The most relevant information should be located at the top of the resume
- Keep the layout simple and organized so the information is easy to follow, and your resume is not crowded.
- Try using labeled sections.
- Pick the right format! The three formats you can use are:
 - Reverse Chronological format which is the most common
 - Functional/Skills-based format which lists skills at the top of the resume
 - and a Combination format which blends the Reverse Chronological and Functional format equally, emphasizing work experience and skills
- Make sure to include all work experience dates including, the month and year of your employment

Resume Basics: How to Write a Resume

Your resume should include other basic elements, including:

- Your contact information at the top of the page
- A Headline right below with accurate information introducing yourself to your audience
- Next, construct a summary or overview section (who you are as a professional and what you specialize in), keeping your target job in mind. This is where you spell out your professional brand and tell the recruiter “I’m exactly what you’re looking for!”
- Now, consider adding a key skills section
- Include your professional experience and or expertise
- List your education, certifications, volunteer work, and any other relevant information

Think about how you can get noticed by an ATS or Applicant Tracking System. Many companies use these systems in their HR hiring process to review large amounts of applications. Using keywords that align to the job description will help you get through the system. Try catering or specifying your previous job titles in a way that would make sense. For example, if you previously had the job title ‘Happiness Representative’, it would be better to change it to ‘Customer Representative’. And finally, keep the formatting simple. Don’t use various columns, headers, colours, or different fonts. This, will only make the resume look disorganized.

From Technical to Layman: Translate Your Experience

Translate your experience into “layman’s terms” meaning, if your previous experiences are not easily understood by everyone, make sure to convert those words into something easily understandable, but also understanding your true experiences

Make sure to avoid acronyms, give accurate dates, and tailor your resume to the job you are applying for, by highlighting certain experiences that are fit for the desired job.

Think about Executive summary factors; understanding of job, relevant experience, the business’ objectives, and how you can contribute.

Writing A Cover Letter

There are three main decision makers that someone reviewing your cover letter will consider.

- One, can the applicant DO the job?
- Two, does the applicant seem excited to work for us? Note, that it is easier for you to adjust tone and display of your personality in a cover letter than in a resume
- And three, does the applicant compliment the team they will be working with?

If the applicant is a YES to all three of these make or break questions, then the applicant is already off to a great start and is on their way to the interview process.

Anatomy of a Cover Letter

Here is the anatomy of a cover letter, that will get you noticed.

- Have a great hook or lead-in to create interest for the recruiter. Make them want to continue reading and learning more about you, the applicant.
- Provide direct evidence with specific skills - this will help the recruiter easily be able to tell if your skills and experiences align with the target job
- And, make sure to use a strong close. Summarize how fitting you are for the role and encourage the recruiter to interview you