

BUSINESS CORRESPONDENCE

“The art of good letter writing is more important than ever... The old interview adage that ‘you never have a second chance to make a good first impression’ is equally valid for the cover letter. For it is usually the cover letter... that first introduces you to a prospective employer. Your cover letter tells them who you are and why an employer should want to spend their valuable time meeting you in person. It enables you to express your personality and style – two important ingredients that are difficult to demonstrate in standard resume formats. It invites the reader to focus attention on your key qualifications in relation to the employer’s needs. In the end, it may well be your cover letter, rather than your accompanying resume, that is responsible for getting you invited to the job interview!”

– Krannich & Krannich, **Dynamic Cover Letters**

In essence, the cover letter provides you with an opportunity to:

- introduce yourself and state your objective,
- personalize your resume, and
- highlight information that addresses the needs and interests of the employer.

Bear in mind that the letters you write not only convey your interest and qualifications, but they also give the employer an opportunity to observe your attentiveness to detail, spelling, grammar, and the overall quality of your written communication. **Flaws in your letters will often be interpreted as flaws in your qualifications.**

We have prepared the following guidelines to help you write your own cover letters, as well as other letters that are frequently used in the job search process. Examples have been included for you to use as general models in composing your own letters, but we expect you to use these examples as guides only and not as scripts for your actual letters.

General Rules for All Business Correspondence

1. Address it to a particular person by name.

Send your letter to the person who will be making the hiring decision. Personal letters get read far in advance of form letters. If you do not have a contact name, call the firm. If you are unsuccessful, you can call the main phone number for the company and ask for the person in charge of MBA recruiting. This name is usually easier to obtain.

2. Letters should be kept to one page only.

Your letter should not be more than one page in length. If it is more than one page, you are probably giving the reader too much information. Keep your letter focused, succinct, and to the point. Letters exceeding one page in length usually don’t get read.

3. Remember the aesthetics.

Print on high quality paper. Your letter should be free of spelling and grammatical errors. Proofread! Have someone review your letter to get feedback regarding style and content.

4. Construct a letter that is unique and specific to the individual.

This will make you stand out from the others!

5. Keep a copy of the letter and response for your records.

This allows you to avoid confusion later.

Guidelines for the Basic Cover Letter

PURPOSE

- To complement your resume and specifically demonstrate the value you can add to the organization.
- To direct the prospective employer's attention to who you are and why you are the right person for the job.

TIMING

- The cover letter may accompany the resume directly, or it may be a follow-up to a conversation or meeting at which time you personally delivered your resume. It can be more powerful than a resume if it is well written and focused.

OPENING PARAGRAPH: *Who You Are and What You Want (Purpose)*

- State the purpose of the letter and who you are.
- Name the position for which you are applying.
- State your personal interest in the company.
- Include how you heard of the position or the name of the person who referred you.

PARAGRAPH TWO: *Why You Are a Good Candidate (Skills)*

- Do not restate your resume. Use the cover letter to say things that you could not "fit" on your resume.
- Relate your skills/accomplishments to the employer's needs. Do not make the reader guess what you want and why you are qualified.
- Use specific examples to prove what you claim while remaining brief and to the point.
- Don't emphasize your desires. Focus on what you can contribute.
- Answer the question, "What can I do for the company?" Communicate in some special way that your skills can be valuable to the potential hirer.

PARAGRAPH THREE (Optional): *Company Knowledge*

- Use their language, jargon, and technology. Use the appropriate terms to indicate your ability and expertise.
- Tell them that you are familiar with the purposes and goals of the firm.
- Show how your personal philosophy about work, job, place, and profession fits with the purpose of the position.
- Use annual reports, recruiting brochures, and other company literature to obtain the information you need to match your career goals with what the company has to offer.

CLOSING PARAGRAPH: *Next Step You Will Take*

- Keep it short and to the point.
- State that your resume is enclosed for their review (this can be included in the first or second paragraphs also).
- Include a specific request, such as for an interview or for a slot on their interview schedule.
- Be clear about the next move and follow up: "I will phone you the week of September 1st to schedule a meeting."
- Be assertive and take the initiative.

Cover Letters Online

Increasingly, job seekers are being asked to send their resumes and cover letter online. In terms of content, online cover letters should be about half the length of a regular cover letter. Be sure you mention how you found out about

the position, what you are looking for, and what you have to offer. You might also mention a few key words the organization might want to hear, but most importantly, be succinct.

Most experts also recommend that you compose your cover letter off-line first and then “import” it into an outgoing email message that you will then send with your resume. You can do this by using your software’s “copy and paste” feature to enter the text into your email, or you can “attach” a file to your email message. However, most companies prefer that the resume and cover letter be embedded into the text of the email, rather than sent as an attachment. While it won’t look as pretty, it’s the information that is important, and it’s quicker for the contact to receive and forward. Companies also use key word searches on these documents. For additional information on the technical aspects of “importing” and sending your resume and cover letter over the Internet, see ***Hook Up, Get Hired*** by J.L. Kennedy.

SAMPLE COVER LETTER

1000 Holt Avenue
Winter Park, FL 32789

September 14, 2001

Ms. Alberta Lee
Human Resources Specialist
Goldman Snacks
111 Goldfish Avenue
Chicago, IL 60602

Dear Ms. Lee:

As an MBA student at the Crummer Graduate School of Business, Rollins College, I am pursuing a brand management position with Goldman Snacks, a premier food manufacturing company. My resume is enclosed for your review.

With over two years of marketing and management experience from Pizza Hut, Inc., I can offer your firm a broad skill set with an emphasis on creativity and analysis. My marketing strategies at Pizza Hut led to a 150% increase in sales volume coupled with a profit increase of over 200%. Additionally, as a Marketing Representative for Neon Concepts, Inc., I assisted in obtaining large corporate accounts such as Vuarnet France, Science Diet, Nordica, Ray Ban, and Rollerblade.

My education from Rollins College and past experience within the PepsiCo family will enable me to help bring your company's products and services to the premier position in each of their respective markets. I understand that one of Goldman Snacks' strategic initiatives is to develop a partnership with restaurants in order to distribute its products more effectively. My experience at Pizza Hut and understanding of the fast food business can provide valuable insight in pursuing this initiative.

I would very much like to meet with you to discuss career opportunities. I plan to be in the Chicago area the week of October 9. For your convenience, I will call you next week to discuss my candidacy. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kate Sullivan

Enclosure

SAMPLE COVER LETTER AFTER AN ON-CAMPUS PRESENTATION / REQUEST FOR INTERVIEW

333 This Way
Merritt Island, FL 32952
(321) 222-7513 (*optional*)

September 1, 2001

Mr. Jack Peterson
Principal
A.T. Kearney, Inc.
222 South Riverside Plaza
Chicago, IL 60606

Dear Mr. Peterson:

After attending your presentation today at the Crummer Graduate School of Business, Rollins College, I am even more impressed with your organization. Although I have already sent my credentials to Ann Madison in your New York office, I wanted to write you to restate my continued interest in A.T. Kearney.

Through my position as a project manager for Hewitt Associates, I have had exposure to A.T. Kearney and the services you provide, and I also acquired and practiced many consulting skills. Some of my responsibilities at Hewitt included interviewing clients in the banking and health care industries, assisting them in defining their business problems, and preparing effective solutions. In selling our solutions, I developed effective presentation skills, and in implementing solutions, I coordinated internal resources to ensure a high-quality product, delivered on time.

Based on research, I understand that A.T. Kearney is working to expand its firm globally. While studying abroad, I lived in Paris for six months and am fluent in French. I also had the opportunity to be involved in an intensive Japanese language and culture program to prepare for my assignment with Hewitt in Tokyo. My diverse experience with international cultures can be an asset to A.T. Kearney's global initiatives.

Once again, I would like to express my interest in the consulting careers available with A.T. Kearney and thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to speak at Crummer. My resume is enclosed for your review. I will call you during the week of September 25 to answer any questions you may have. When A.T. Kearney is on campus later this month, I would be interested in interviewing with one of your representatives to further illustrate my qualifications. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Kevin O'Connor

Enclosure

SAMPLE COVER LETTER IN RESPONSE TO AN ADVERTISEMENT

333 This Way
Winter Park, FL 32789
(407) 222-7513 (*optional*)

September 16, 2001

Ms. Martha F. Farlington
Executive Vice President
Fin Tube, Inc.
200 East Commerce Blvd.
Tampa, FL 18273

Dear Ms. Farlington:

In response to your September 15th ad in the *Orlando Sentinel* for an Assistant Director, Sales & Marketing, I have enclosed my resume. I appear to fit the candidate specifications as detailed in your ad.

Specifically, I hold an MBA in Finance and Marketing and have over three years of marketing and sales management experience. As Marketing Associate for Fuel Jet Carburetors, I managed a 10 employee marketing and field sales organization that sold automotive carburetors to car and truck engine manufacturers. During the last year in this capacity, my marketing and sales strategies led to a 250% increase in sales volume coupled with a profit increase of nearly 300%. I am known for being a key contributor to the business planning process and am credited with revitalizing and motivating the marketing and sales organization through creative leadership.

I understand that Fin Tube, Inc. is currently restructuring its sales force in an effort to increase sales volume. My leadership skills and active role in developing successful sales strategies would be an asset to this initiative. Fin Tube's corporate principals further enhance my interest in the economy. Specifically, your goal of providing superior quality while delighting the customer with unbeatable service caught my attention. In fact, while reading your corporate principles, I saw a direct correlation to my personal mission statement. Because of this, Fin Tube has become a primary target in my career search.

I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to explore how I might bring added value to Fin Tube's marketing and sales effort. I will call your office on the morning of September 21st to inquire if a meeting can be scheduled at a convenient time. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Lanai Kline

Enclosure

Guidelines for Information Interviewing / Networking Letters

Because you are asking a favor of a busy executive, alumni, family contact, etc., the tone of this letter should demonstrate genuine interest and appreciation for their time. Remember that it is a request for information and advice, ***not*** a job.

OPENING PARAGRAPH: *Purpose*

- If the contact does not know you, introduce yourself in one sentence. Start with a personal statement that connects you to the reader. For example, "Since we are both alumni of the Crummer Graduate School of Business, Rollins College..."
- Explain how you got that person's name, who referred you, or how you heard of his or her expertise. For example, "Ms. X of the Crummer EAMBA Program suggested that I contact you."
- In one or two sentences explain why you are writing; for example, to obtain information and advice on career choices, jobs, or industries.

PARAGRAPH TWO: *Skills*

- Explain why the contact's background and perspectives are important to you.
- Give details about your interests.
- Explain that you are interested in finding out how your background, strengths, and interests could be utilized in their industry. You would like to know about career options in their field.

CLOSING PARAGRAPH: *Next Step You Will Take*

- Give a specific date or time period during which you will phone to arrange a convenient time to talk.
- Close by requesting a brief meeting. Ask for only 20 to 30 minutes noting that you are aware of how busy they are.
- Stress how important the informational interview is to you and express your gratitude.

SAMPLE LETTER FOR INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

333 Ridgeway Avenue
Winter Park, FL 32789

October 1, 2001

Ms. Jane Richards
Assistant Manager
Associated Financial Advisors
241 Mount Blanch Road
Chicago, IL 33434

Dear Ms. Richards:

Mr. Lee Junkans, Senior Director of MBA programs for the Crummer Graduate School of Business, Rollins College, suggested that I write you in regard to my interest in finance. He thought you would be a good person to provide me with advice about my job search strategy and career objectives.

Please find enclosed my resume so that you can learn more about me. I am currently pursuing a career in financial analysis, and my interest in finance has been heightened by the MBA courses of "Financial Policy" and "Corporate Financial Reporting." I am specifically interested in learning more about your experiences in this field and possible career opportunities.

I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you, as I feel certain that your counsel would be most helpful as I gather information for my job search. I will call your office next week to inquire when you may be available to arrange a meeting. Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to talking with you.

Sincerely,

Haley Grialou

Enclosure

SAMPLE LETTER TO ALUMNI FOR INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

821 Stevens Point
Maitland, FL 32751

September 1, 2003

Mr. Phil Smart
Director of Personnel
ABC Beverage Company
111 Madison Avenue
Orlando, FL 32955

Dear Mr. Smart:

I obtained your name from the *1997 Crummer Graduate School Alumni Directory*. Similar to you, I will be concentrating in human resources at Crummer, and I was hoping you might be able to recommend some appropriate classes and advice on the field of human resources.

Please find enclosed my resume so that you can learn more about me. As a first-year MBA student, I have an interest in a career in training and development. However, before I venture further into the job market, I want to benefit from the experience and knowledge of others in the field who might advise me on opportunities for someone with my qualifications.

Perhaps we could meet briefly sometime during the next two weeks to discuss your experiences and how I might develop an effective career plan. I would be happy to drive to Orlando to meet you at your office. There are several questions that I believe you could help clarify. I will call your offices on September 8th to inquire about your availability.

I look forward to learning more about your insights in this field and discussing my plans with you.

Sincerely,

Kelly Magaddino

Enclosure

Guidelines for Thank You Letters

The thank you letter is one of the most important, yet least used tools in a job search. It is used to establish goodwill, to express appreciation, and/or to strengthen your candidacy. The basic rule of thumb is that everyone who helps you in any way gets a thank you letter. When used to follow up on employment interviews, thank you letters should be addressed to your interviewer(s). If the letter is received within 48 hours of the interview, it may help in the decision-making process. Thank you letters should also be sent to your contacts who granted you informational interviews and to people who served as your references. Keep in mind that recruiters remember those who don't send thank you letters (usually in a negative light).

Note: You may want to consider faxing or sending your letters overnight to make a positive impression of strong interest. If you wait too long to send your thank you letter, the hiring decision may already be made. If you fax, be sure to send the original copy by mail and note in the fax that the original will follow by mail.

OPENING PARAGRAPH: *Purpose*

- A quick one-sentence "thank you" and a reminder of where and when the interview took place.
- Personalize it by referencing things discussed during interviews. Mention a positive aspect of your conversation, such as information for which you are grateful or agreement on a point raised by your contact.

PARAGRAPH TWO: *Skills*

- This is the reinforcement section that guides the contact in the direction you wish to go.
- Convey your understanding of the recruiter's situation, the needs of the company, and the requirement of the job.
- State or imply how much you can contribute. Include information that occurred to you after the interview that reinforces your "fit."
- Sell your skills and previous experiences. Re-emphasize specific abilities related to the position for which you interviewed.

CLOSING PARAGRAPH: *Next Step You Will Take*

- Close by reiterating your interest in the position and your willingness to provide additional information.
- Thank them again for the time spent with you and tell them that you look forward to hearing from them.

SAMPLE THANK YOU LETTER

615 Walnut Street
South Bend, IN 46617
(219) 231-4400

January 6, 2003

Mr. Roger Estrada
Vice President and Manager
Personal Trust Division
First Bank
342 Cherry Street
Fresno, CA 94319

Dear Mr. Estrada:

Thank you for considering me for the Marketing Associate position and for taking the time to meet with me last Thursday. I enjoyed learning about how someone like myself with an accounting background can impact the marketing department of your bank.

As I mentioned in the interview, my previous work experience as internal auditor at Mentor Savings & Loan and my coursework at the Crummer Graduate School of Business, Rollins College, have prepared me to make a smooth transition into this position. My organizational skills were enhanced at Mentor Savings & Loan by completing a yearlong project aimed at reviewing the internal controls of the Trust department. Likewise, my MBA classes in market research have provided me with an in-depth knowledge of marketing. I am confident in my ability to make a valuable contribution to First Bank.

I enjoyed our discussion about current marketing trends in the banking industry, and I look forward to hearing from you next week. In the meantime, if you need additional information about my background and experiences, please feel free to call me at (219) 231-4400.

Sincerely,

Janelle Smith

Guidelines for Job Offer Acceptance Letters

Once you have accepted a position verbally, it is wise to follow-up with a formal letter of acceptance. This is a very brief letter and to the point. It confirms in writing some points that may have been conveyed over the phone or verbally by the employer.

OPENING PARAGRAPH

- Give the title of the position you have accepted and express your enthusiasm for the job and the company.

PARAGRAPH TWO

- Put in writing your understanding of the terms, including salary, benefits, start date, etc.

CLOSING PARAGRAPH

- Close by thanking your new employer for the opportunity, with the assurance that you are looking forward to working with them and for the company.

Guidelines for Letters Declining a Job Offer

If you have decided to turn down an offer, you should call first and then follow-up with a written response declining the opportunity. A well-written letter, however brief, is required. You will “close the deal” on a positive note and allow the company to offer the position to someone else. It is good business sense to maintain a positive relationship with a contact you made through the recruiting process. You never know if this person may be a client of yours, may be someone you’ll call on a deal, or may be someone you want to work for in the future.

OPENING PARAGRAPH

- Give the title of the position you have declined and express your appreciation for the time spent with you.

PARAGRAPH TWO

- Inform the company of your rejection of the offer in a positive manner. Provide a reason, if possible.
- Mention positive aspects of your experience with the company.

CLOSING PARAGRAPH

- Close by thanking the company for the kindness and courtesy extended to you during the recruitment process.

SAMPLE LETTER TO ACCEPT A JOB OFFER

123 Chestnut Street
South Bend, IN 46616

May 1, 2003

Mr. Jon Smith
Vice President and Manager
Personal Trust Division
First Bank
342 Cherry Street
Fresno, CA 04319

Dear Mr. Smith:

I am delighted to confirm my acceptance of the job of Senior Financial Analyst with First Bank.

Having reviewed your offer letter dated April 15, 2003, I am pleased with all aspects of the compensation package. I look forward to beginning work on July 1, 2003. Let me reiterate how excited I am with obtaining this position. I know that I will be able to contribute to the finance department with my experiences, expertise, and education. Further, I also feel that I will fit into the culture of First Bank very well.

Again, thank you and I look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Brian O'Toole

SAMPLE LETTER TO DECLINE A JOB OFFER

231 Kempsville Road
Kissimmee, FL 32801

March 25, 2002

Mr. George Duvall
Manager, Sales and Marketing
Colonial Properties, Ltd.
1700 Colonial Parkway
Williamsburg, VA 23176

Dear Mr. Duvall:

Thank you for offering me the position of Commercial Leasing Agent with Colonial Properties. I appreciate your discussing the details of the position with me and giving me time to consider the offer.

Although there are many aspects of the position and your organization that are very appealing to me, I believe it is in our mutual best interest that I decline your kind offer. As you know, my fiancée and I are conducting a dual career job search. She was able to secure an ideal position in California and, therefore, I have directed my job search to this region. This was a difficult decision for me, but one that is appropriate for my career at this time.

I appreciate your consideration and courtesy. It was a pleasure meeting you and your staff. I would recommend Colonial Properties to my other colleagues interested in this industry.

Sincerely,

Christopher Jones

Career Management Center Resources

BOOKS:

- *Business Writing Quick and Easy, 2nd Edition*, Brill
- *Cover Letter Almanac*, Adams
- *Gallery of Best Resumes, 2nd Edition*, Noble
- *How to Put Your Book Together and Get a Job in Advertising*, Paetro
- *The Job Hunter's Final Exam*, Camden
- *The Ultimate Job Search Survival Guide*, Dyer

*The majority of the information contained in this guide was compiled from resources obtained from the following schools:
University of Indiana, Stanford University, Duke University, Notre Dame, and University of Miami.*