



Customizing the Cover Letter

1. First, make sure you have a saved separate copy of your generic cover letter. Take the cover letter "core content" file and resave it with the appropriate name -- for example:
("BrubakerJohnAetnaProjectManagerCoverLetter01514).
2. To customize the top of the cover letter, make sure you use the job ID (if one is listed in the ad) and do some digging to find the contact information for the person receiving the resume. See the handout: "Getting the Job Search Contact Name" for detailed instruction on getting that name.
3. Next, work on your opening paragraph – Your first sentence should follow the standard opening: "Dear So-and-So, I would like to express my interest in and qualifications for the XXXXX position. I believe that I am extremely well qualified....." If there is a company name listed in the ad, go to the company website and do some research. Read the "About Us" section – try and find some language that you can use to show your connection to the company's "Vision/ Mission/Passion/Purpose" to use in the second and/or third sentences of your opening paragraph. Strike at the heart of the company mission and the specific job you would be doing, and why you would be a great candidate. Finish your opening paragraph with the sentence "In evaluating me as a candidate, I hope you will consider these strengths:" (If there is no company listed in the ad, you can still connect with the organization by studying the ad, choosing what you feel is most important about the job, and offer some connection to that job).
4. Now for the bullet points. You want to select the three bullet points you believe best speak to the ad. Unless there is another format that makes more sense to me, I try and keep this idea in mind for the three bullets:
 - a. **First bullet** – best "overall summary" statement of your relevant background. ("Experience") Here you want to expand on your opening paragraph – prove that you can do the job. It's OK to "restate the core job" first, and then show you can do it. You can draw from

the “About Us” section of the company website to connect with the company. If no company name is listed in the ad, re-read the ad and try and pinpoint the core job. You want to connect with the ad by offering some record of achievement relevant to the core of the job. Add something that is verifiable (if you have it, use it—play your cards!) – Rules of evidence apply in the Resume world – if you share something the hiring manager can check on without your knowledge, you add credibility. And most importantly –show your enthusiasm for the job. End this section on a positive note: “The in-depth knowledge, skills and expertise developed through this work would help me excel as (name of organization/ if none listed use word “Your”) next (Job title).”

- b. **Second bullet** – Strong relevant skills and qualities...this is your best “transferable skills” statement. Here you can include the skills and proof of the skills. Go back to your Keyword Analysis of the ad – the words and phrases you highlighted in red – Search through the “core skills” you highlighted – here is where you will replace the skills from your generic cover letter with those skills you have that are also listed in the ad. Pay special attention to the CORE DESCRIPTION OF THE POSITION. You now want to import the key skills from the ad that you have to this section. For short phrases, import word for word. Longer phrases can be changed a little, but the KEY TERMS should remain the same. If the ad uses the word “abilities” – use the word abilities. Remember, your resume and cover letter should be close to a 60-70% match to the ad. Also pay special attention to phrases that identify skills/knowledge that you have that we have NOT listed in the existing content. List these phrases and separate with semicolons. Finish this section with one sentence that proves you have the skills.
- c. **Third bullet** – “Closing on Character.” When you take my interview prep “course” (links in the webinar memo) you will see that, like great salespeople, I like my clients to close with something that strikes to character or intangibles. This is ESPECIALLY effective if those speak DIRECTLY TO THE COMPANY VISION, MISSION, ETC. One of the third bullets I often use when writing for clients is “**Clear Commitment to the Core Values and Principles of XXXXX**”. Where XXXX is the name of the organization. This gives us a chance to pull a quote out of the website – maybe from the President or Executive Director. It is super powerful. If you do not have access to this information, a strong, clear and well written testimony to your strengths works well also. You are trying to commit with their vision. Show your passion—your connection to the job. End with “For some, this work might simply be a profession. For me, it would also be a passion.”

5. Your closing sentences (the contact me for more information section) will likely stay the same.

6. To watch a “before, during and after” example of this, review the Regulatory Compliance files. Start by reading the “Starting Cover Letter”, which was what a client sent me to respond to the ad. Then read the “Sample Ad”. Then read the “Sample Ad Red” to see my markups. Then read the Final letter to see the crafting of the new material.

7. Catch these ads as soon as they come out, and do your research. You have to keep in mind that you are likely competing with dozens, if not 100-200+, competitors. The hiring manager will take a flash moment to look at this, and some little bit of extra effort you put in can be the thing that turns you into a candidate in their mind.

8. Finally, print your resume and cover letter and read these out loud!! You are more likely to catch any awkward phrasing or mistakes when reading the documents loud and proud. Print your documents and place these items in a 9X12 envelope and print out a mailing label for each person on your list (If you have neat handwriting, a handwritten envelope is nice and personal also). If you have any supporting documents – letters, licenses, anything relevant (but don't go overboard – a couple attachments are great, a dozen not so much) include them with your resume. Priority Mail your cover letter and resume to the person handling the job search, or in the event that you were unable to locate that Name but have the company name and address, mail it directly to the Human Resources department (Refer back to the "Getting the Job Search Name" handout for more advice). And then follow up, follow up, follow up!! Have your elevator speech ready to go. Make it happen—what's the worst that can happen? You have nothing to lose – Being persistent and a little creative will get you results as fast as results can be obtained. Your job while searching for the perfect job is to execute the most effective campaign possible. This is some of the most valuable work you will do in a job search –

ENJOY!!!