Effective Cover Letters

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The Purpose of the Cover Letter

- Introduces you to the employer
- Communicates why YOU are the best fit
- Viewed as a writing sample by the hiring manager

- Ultimate goal of the cover letter and resume package is to persuade the hiring manager to interview you
Cover Letters

The Cover Letter Format

• Introduction

• Making the case

• Closing
The Introduction

• **Always** try to find a name
  – Don’t use outdated terms such as:
    *Dear Sir or Madam* or *To Whom it May Concern*
  – If you cannot find a name, use the following salutations:
    *Dear Human Resources Representative*
    *Dear College Recruiting Manager*

• Grab their attention – draw them in!

• Let them know that your qualifications match their requirements
• Introduce yourself to the reader or name-drop if someone referred you to this person.

Dear Ms. Jones,

My name is Daniel Tillman and I am writing to express my interest in the Marketing Analyst position (MA3557) currently advertised on the IBM Web site. One of your colleagues, Sona Thayer, suggested I forward my resume to your attention.
Making the Case

• One to two paragraphs; okay to use bullets
• Demonstrate why you should be invited to interview
• Match your technical skills, work experience, education, industry preference/knowledge
• Alleviate any trace of risk in the mind of the reader
Making the Case

Example 1 – paragraph form

I am currently a Senior at the University of New Mexico and will graduate in December 2005 with an undergraduate degree in Marketing. In 2004, I served as President of the student chapter of the American Marketing Association. Under my leadership we increased membership 20%, expanded the number of job shadowing experiences for students, and won the campus-wide Toys for Tots competition by collecting over 200 pounds of toys for disadvantaged children.

Last summer, I moved to Madison, Wisconsin and held a marketing internship position with the Oscar Mayer Division of Kraft Foods. During my internship, I was part of a cross-functional team charged with launching the next generation of Lunchables. Working under the Director of Marketing Research, I coordinated three focus groups and was responsible for presenting our findings to the Vice-President of Marketing.
Making the Case

Example 2 - bullets
This position is an excellent fit with my core skills, education, and desire to become an operations analyst. After reviewing the job description, I believe my success factors for this position include:

• Part of class project teams that helped local manufacturers identify and solve operational inefficiencies.
• Assisted in making production planning decisions using SAP.
• Completed 12 hours of advanced level supply chain and operations management coursework.
The Closing

• Typically short and to the point
• Try not to be passive

• Highlight your interest in speaking to them more
  – “I would love to have the opportunity to discuss my qualifications with you in more depth. I will call you next Wednesday to see if we could meet in person.”

• Let them know the best way to reach you
  I can be reached at 505.555.1212 or via e-mail at sona.thayer@gmail.com. Thank you for your time and consideration.
Cover Letter Tips

• One page in length
• Use the same font size and font type for both the resume and cover letter
• Use the job description to identify which skills and experiences are valued the most by the employer
• Keep it simple, direct and to the point.
  – Use the active voice (not passive)
  – Use short, simple sentences
  – Don’t use “big” words just for the sake of using them
• E-cover letters should be part of the body of the e-mail message
Questions?