

Writing an Effective Cold Cover Letter

A cold cover letter is an uninvited inquiry to an employer, recruiter or other hiring manager regarding possible job opportunities. Basically, the cold cover letter is the letter written to the hiring manager of a company for a job that has not been advertised and might not even be available yet. The main point of "cold calling"—sending unsolicited cover letters—is to tap into the hidden job market, which some experts estimate covers up to 80% of positions.

In reality, companies are ALWAYS hiring and ALWAYS looking for top talent to join them. Even in the worst economic conditions, there are people leaving firms to retire, to take other jobs or to do something else like go to school or start their own business. Often, these openings are filled by people already working for the firm, who get promoted. Other times, they are filled by referrals of people working for the firm. Sometimes, resumes are received at the right time.

Cold calling also helps you create contacts in the industry, so even though you may send many cover letters without generating specific job leads, it's still worthwhile as a networking tool.

An effective cold cover letter should strongly convey the impression that you've taken time to research the company you're contacting. And by doing some simple research on the company before sending a cold-contact cover letter, you can effectively show an employer that you have the skills they need. When you're writing a cold cover letter, it's more important than ever that you emphasize your relevant professional skills and talents, simply because a hiring manager will not bother to read your letter if it is full of irrelevant information.

Before You Write

Know Yourself: You are contacting a company that hasn't asked to be contacted. So what do you offer? Why should the company take an interest in you? What skills, abilities and credentials would be desirable to the organization? Remember to market yourself!

Research the Employer: Find out as much as you can about your target company, including past performance, goals and competitors so you can knowledgeably write about how you would help the operation. Review recent public relations announcements. Read what they say about themselves.

The letter must begin with an opening so compelling that the manager MUST keep reading, even though the main priority at that moment may not be hiring.

Cold Cover Letter Writing Tips

- Make sure to write to a specific person. It will increase your chance of receiving a response. Do you read the junk mail you receive?
- Open your letter in a way that catches the reader's attention. You can't write, "I am applying for the position you advertised..." Be creative!
- Quickly identify who you are, how you will benefit their company, and what type of position you would like.
- Sell yourself. Tell the reader your strengths and how you could benefit their company. Make sure to include some of your accomplishments.
- Do not mention salary or benefits in your letter.
- Close in a manner that requests a meeting or interview.

Sample Cold Letter

Components of Your Letter – Your entire letter should convey the enthusiasm and passion that you would bring to the job.

The Salutation – *Since you are writing an unsolicited letter, it's critical that you address a particular person. Do some research so you can get your resume in the hands of the manager most likely to be interested in hiring you.*

The Opener – Grab the attention of the reader. *You can use a number of different techniques to open your letter.*

The Value Proposition – offer your skills as the best solution to the business's problems.

The News Angle – tell them something great about themselves.

The Body – *Summarize the key strengths you bring to the job. Provide an overview of your main selling points and examples of how you have contributed to your current or former employers.*

The Close – *End your letter with an action statement, promising to follow up to explore the possibility of an interview. This is a much stronger closing than, "I hope to hear from you soon." Your letter should ask for the job interview and tell the hiring manager how to get into contact.*

September 12, 2009

James Johnson
123 Park Street
Anytown, MT 12345

Ms. Hiring Manager
Your Dream Company
123 Main Street
Anytown, MT 12345

Dear Ms. Manager,

Through the information I saw on the internet about your organization, it appears that Your Dream Company hires employees who are hard-working, energetic and experienced professionals in the field. This is exactly the kind of organization to which I am interested in applying.

My education at Montana Tech and previous hands-on experiences has given me a variety of experiences that have enhanced my practical skills. [Insert a specific example from your experience to emphasize the skills you have developed.] I am certain I would become a valuable addition to your team.

In December, I will complete my bachelor's degree and am interested in making a significant contribution to the profitability of Your Dream Company. I will call you in early October to discuss Your Dream Company in greater detail and the needs of your organization.

Please find enclosed a copy of my resume highlighting my skills and experiences. I look forward to speaking with you about how I would be an asset to your organization. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

James Johnson
406-555-1212