

How Not to Write a Cover Letter

Being a small business, I don't often get cover letters and resumes, although once I got a perfume-scented resume on blue letterhead that went directly in the trash. Yesterday, I got a cover letter that was truly stunning, and not in a good way. It was stunning because it was such a good example of how NOT to write a letter. I am posting it here, with comments (and with identity removed, of course).

To Whom it May Concern:

No personalization...unforgivable since I am the only person listed on my website.

I would like to be considered for employment with your company, so here is a little background on my education and experiences.

Doesn't mention what type of employment is being sought.

I have a Bachelors of Science in Business Administration from [XXX]University, where I double majored in Marketing and Business Management. I also earned a minor in Professional Communications. I achieved a GPA of 3.49, while also being extremely involved in extra-curricular activities and community service opportunities on campus.

Would have put this down further...or talked about what subjects I learned about, more specifically.

I've gained experience relevant to the business industry through two internships, one with[xxx]- a marketing firm, and the other with[xxx]. These internships allowed me to utilize

the information I had been learning at[the University] and have allowed for me to gain experience in the marketing field.

No specificity: the writer could have given examples of specific tasks or information learned.

Before you ask, I'll go ahead and answer the big questions in your mind. Yes, I am currently in [other state] No, I do not plan to work from here; I'm ready and willing to relocate. And finally, No, I understand that I'm entry-level and do not expect to receive relocation funds.

Geez. Now you are a mind-reader. Don't assume anything.

I have enclosed my resume for your review. Also, my LinkedIn profile can be viewed at[LinkedIn], if that better fits your viewing preferences.

This is nit-picky but you have attached not enclosed your resume, since this is an email.

I would be happy to aid you and your company in future endeavors, if you will please contact me at [telephone and email] I would welcome the chance to discuss openings.

Notice that nearly every paragraph and sentence starts with I. It's all about the writer and nothing about my company.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

I wrote the author of this email back and told her there were no opportunities. I also gave her a couple of tips. She didn't reply. I am pretty positive this letter will get her nowhere.

Here are my top three tips on how to write an effective cover letter:

1. **Personalize:** Have a name (or at the very least a department or title). Mention the name of the company you are applying to, and why you are interested in working at that company.
2. **Summarize your background, but in relation to the potential job:** In college, you probably took arts classes and sociology, etc. but perhaps you took a really great writing class that would help you be a copywriter, right?
3. **Talk about what you can do for the company:** Can you bring in business, deal with clients, sweep the floor really well? What do you bring to the table?

What are your tips? What are the biggest mistakes you see when you get cover letters?



Proving once again Mother was right

Mom was right about minding your manners. Although behaving appropriately and properly seems to be lost these days, it is still the best way to behave, especially if you care about your personal brand and personal marketing.

This evening I was at an event about social media. Lots of people were tweeting and in this context that is acceptable

behavior. However, lots of people, especially a very obnoxious man behind me, were chit-chatting during the panel presentation. This is not acceptable. It shows lack of respect for the speakers, the audience, and very poor manners. Of course, this is no way compares to the congressman shouting "you lie" to the president or the obnoxious rants of a self-absorbed, self-important rap/pop star (I am omitting the names because you know who I am talking about and I am sick of giving them any more publicity).

Manners and considerate behavior are in free fall in our society and we should be concerned from a personal branding and marketing perspective, among others. Why? Because someone who has bad manners shows him/herself to be very self-absorbed, even narcissistic. And do you want to do business with someone like that? In the end, we always want to do business with people we like and maybe even respect. Let me tell you, if I ever see the man whom I mentioned was seated behind me, I will not want to meet him. And why should I? He has shown me through his behavior that he lacks common courtesy.

The takeaway is this: mind your manners to show the world your best self, and in the process you will help improve your personal brand perception.

On Monday, Kami Huyse discussed this very issue on her blog, Communication Overtones. She came to a different conclusion. She thinks the overemphasis on personal branding has allowed character to fall by the wayside. I think society and culture have more to do with that. I was thinking about it this evening and really, I don't think you can fault personal branding at all. In fact, as I said before, if you care about your personal brand, you should aim to be civil, be polite. It is better to be known for your ideas, your experiences than for your crassness and lack of manners. Right?

What are your thoughts on this subject?