

Writing an Effective Cover Letter for nonprofits

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Blog post: Six Ingredients of A Memorable Cover Letter For a Mission Focused Organization

1. **Stories Store themselves in the reader's mind.** **A short personal story near the beginning of your cover letter can hook the person reading it**, if it is concise and clearly relevant. A story that speaks to why you want be part of the mission and team of the organization will always be more memorable than dry statistics from your past employment. **Make a lasting positive memory** for your prospective employer and remember that "stories store" themselves in the mind.
2. **Research Rewards those who make the effort.** Are you used to addressing your cover letter to "recruiter" or "hiring manager?" Research the company to find out the best person to send your resume to. Take the initiative by calling the organization and asking the name of the person who is receiving applications. Other options are to use LinkedIn, current employees or the organization's website. You may wish to combine your research and a story with the mission statement of the organization in a clever way, to grab the attention of the nonprofit.
3. **Give them what they want.** Carefully **review the job description and posting, then state your experience with actual examples (bullet points are great) that demonstrate that you have the desired skills and qualifications.** If the company is looking for someone with program management experience, make sure you speak to your experience in that area. For example, "I have six years of program management experience and have been acknowledged for leading the team with the biggest growth in the organization." Show clearly through your specific examples that you would be a good fit for the position and organization.
4. **Showing is knowing.** One common mistake that many people make in their cover letter is stating their qualifications but not **backing them up with clear examples** to support their case. Are you applying for a program manager position? Include specific achievements of yours that speak to the skills and qualifications needed. Pull out one or two events from your previous work experience and write them up in detail (but concisely, of course) in the body of your cover letter.
5. **The Power of Persistence.** Trust can be a major factor in the job search. For example, trust is a part of the foundation that networking and referrals are built on. Finish your cover letter with a pledge to follow-up in about ten days. Start building trust by taking action and following up when you said you would. Take control of your job search and offer to help the prospective employer: "If you wish, I will help facilitate a meeting for us and will contact you in ten days." If you leave a voicemail, feel free to send an email .follow-up. **Persistence can be a powerful tool when it is polite and professional.** Of course, if the job description states, "No phone calls", be sure to respect this.
6. **Proof read** to lead and get ahead of the competition. Employers may be weary of looking at cover letters with careless mistakes. It is a sound recipe for success to re-read your cover letter more than once. Get a friend, family member, or career coach to read over the document for any typos, spelling mistakes or grammatical errors. A new perspective and another pair of eyes may see things that you may have missed.

Want to read more blog posts? Feel free to visit - <http://thenonprofitcareercoach.org/blog>

Here is a recent video and blog post about writing an effective cover letter for nonprofits. If you can take one idea away, then you will be writing a more effective cover letter for a mission focused organization. Please pass along to anyone you may know who could benefit. Make it a wonderful weekend and happy learning!

Video post: Nonprofit Cover Letter Tip <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ov5EDIUQ5So>