

# CAREER REALISM

BECAUSE EVERY JOB IS TEMPORARY

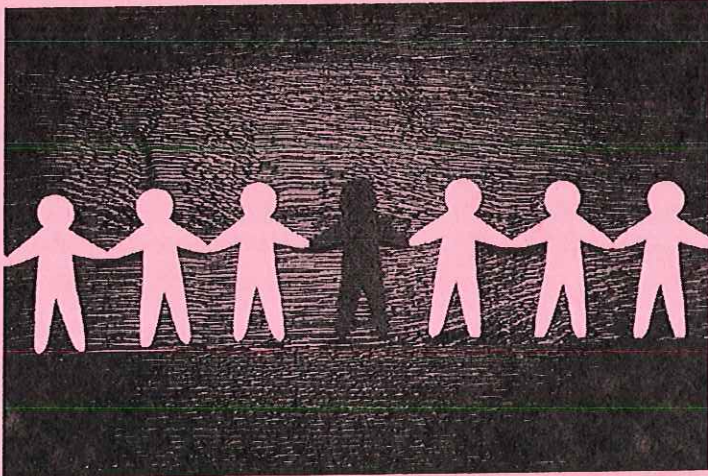


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## 5 Easy Tips To Make Your Cover Letter Stand Out

Ted Hekman March 5, 2015

It's the job of the cover letter to make the person want to read the resume. That's it. The letter doesn't get you the interview — that's the resume's job. But if your cover letter isn't persuasive in a different way, your brilliantly crafted resume will never make it to the first pass. So, what makes a great cover letter?

Here are five easy tips to make your cover letter stand out:

### 1. Keep It Short

Having too much detail in your cover letter will take some of the glory from your resume. In the days of paper resumes, it was called a cover letter because its purpose was to "cover" the other item in the envelope: in this case, the resume. It's similar to what you might say when you hand someone an information piece of some kind: "Here's the sales report for this month. The results are excellent, mainly because we introduced the new product line."

Similarly, tell the person what you are sending and why, with one point that ties in with what they will read in the resume. It's what the advertising industry calls "teaser copy."

A cover letter **should never be more than one page.** \*

## 2. Be Clear About What Job You're Applying For

Some companies have many jobs available and advertised at the same time, and all the resumes probably land in HR to be sorted. So, **if you don't clearly spell out which job you want, why should they take time to guess?** They won't — your letter and resume will be thrown out without being read.

If you are responding to a want ad in the newspaper or online, it **may have a file number or job number associated** with it. Make sure you **quote that number** so that your letter will end up in the right pile. You don't want to send your carefully written accounting resume to be chasing a job as a copywriter!

## 3. Illustrate You Have Researched The Company

**Review** the company's website to get a feel for its **culture and current operations**. Find a way to **reference this in your cover letter** as a reason you are a good fit for the job. Most people don't take time to do this, so right away your application will **stand out from all the cookie cutter letters**. **When referring to the company, do so by name.** Just referring to "your company" makes it sound as if you don't care which company you work for. \*

## 4. Address It To The Right Person

**Find out who is hiring for this particular job.** If the ad or job posting just gives the person's title or position, call the company and get that person's name. If your letter is addressed to Bob Treadway, that will stand out from all those who wrote to Dear Sir/Madam or To Whom It May Concern, and show you have initiative.

If the person's name is something like Francis or Jackie, again call the company and ask if it is a man or a woman, and address the letter accordingly. It's just a little extra touch that shows you did your homework.

At this stage in the game, you still want to show respect by using the person's last name. So, your letter will begin with Dear Mr. Treadway — not Dear Bob.

Technicalities that can make all the difference in your perceived professionalism:

- Use a standard business letter format, even if you are sending it by e-mail. You can find sample formats online.
- **Use standard business fonts.** Many people mistakenly think that using fancy or fun fonts will make their cover letters stand out. They will stand out, but for the wrong reason! Keep it businesslike.