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How To Write A Cover Letter That Will Get You Hired

January 30, 2014 by Jessica Holbrook Hernandez

Can you write a cover letter that will actually land you the job? I'm sure there are unique cases where someone has written a cover letter that has played a major role in their candidacy, but to say that universally, a cover letter could get you hired is a pretty far stretch. I think job seekers should instead aim to write a cover letter that gets their resume read—or even plays an instrumental role in getting them the interview.

I can tell you with a great deal of certainty that there have been several resume writers that I've chosen to interview based on the information they included in their cover letters. A cover letter is a marvelous tool in your job search because you can use it to communicate information that doesn't have a place on the resume—and it gives you the opportunity to show, in even more detail, how great a fit you are.

Here are a few things to keep in mind when you write a cover letter:

Showcase The Benefits

The best cover letters showcase the benefit you can be to the employer. For example, in my line of work, we're very serious about deadlines and customer care. When a resume writer takes the time to review my website and then backs up her claim to always meet deadlines and take exceptional care of clients by providing examples such as: "never had a customer complaint" or "trusted to resolve escalated client projects," I pay attention—because statements like these show me the benefit the writer can offer my company. Show the company the benefits you can offer them.

Hit Their Pain Points

Most employers will touch on their greatest needs within the job posting. If the last person was really weak in detail orientation, cost savings, project management, or customer service, you can be sure these will be a central focus and top priority on the job announcement. Find the employer's pain points—and what's most important to them—and give examples of how you've successfully addressed similar issues in the past. Nothing speaks louder than verifiable experience.

Add A Personal Touch

Give your resume a personal touch. Some great resumes I've seen have given a personal reason for the person's interest in the position. For example:

... Being a Utah native and graduate of the University of Utah, I'm very excited about the Business Administrator position with the University and the possibility of returning to my home state.

It also shows the employer you're personally invested in the opportunity, which means it's of worth to you—and it's a good move for them to consider someone who's personally interested in the opportunity and not just applying to any and everything they see on the job boards.

When in doubt, share why you're interested in the opportunity. It takes time to customize the cover letter—but the employer will appreciate it. At a time when hundreds are applying—and no one is customizing his or her cover letter—it speaks volumes.