



## JOB AND CAREER ADVICE

### COVER LETTERS AND THANK YOU NOTES

Today's blog deals with cover letters and thank you notes. Should you write them? Do employers even read them? Today I'll answer those questions and offer tips for helping you stand out in a sea of applicants.

Yes, take the time to write a cover letter and send a thank you. Sure, not all cover letters are read, but virtually all thank you notes are read.

Many things in life, including whether we get hired, are beyond our direct control. We can control our time and our attitude. So why not do the "little" things within your control to make the best possible impression?

By the way, I've asked numerous hiring officials for their estimate on the percentage of today's workers who bother to send a thank you (email or US Mail). Care to take a guess? The answer lies at the end of today's blog.

Selecting a candidate is a subjective decision. Employers look for a good mix of skills as well as culture/personality fit. Showing you care by paying attention to detail can help create a more favorable impression in the employer's eyes.

Now that you know it's important to write a cover letter, are there certain guidelines for creating

an effective one?

Start by realizing you'll need to customize your resume. Don't rely on the cover letter – alone – to help the employer understand why you're a fit for the job. Keep the letter brief. Certainly one page is preferred.

Most letters contain three paragraphs. The first one should reference the position and where you learned of it. I'll get to the second paragraph in a moment. The third paragraph should contain a call to action – the opportunity to discuss the position in more detail.

Back to the second paragraph for a minute. Conduct an internet search for “T-Letter cover letter” for examples. For decades I've advocated this format. The first and third paragraphs are essentially what you'd see in a standard cover letter, but that middle paragraph now becomes two columns.

The left hand column, “Your Requirements,” quotes from the job posting. The right hand column, “My Qualifications,” concisely addresses those requirements point by point.

Now on to thank you notes. You should email a separate thank you to each person with whom you interviewed. Try to cite something from your conversation which piqued your interest. Don't get lazy and just say you appreciated the chance to meet and look forward to speaking further.

When you get home from the interview, take time to hand write a thank you note and place it in the next day's mail. It'll arrive in a couple days, providing yet another touch point with the employer. Employers LOVE getting hand written thank you notes. Trust me on that.

Back to my question about the percentage of job applicants who send a thank you. What was your guess? If you guessed about 25-33% you'd be in the ballpark. And that crosses all levels of applicant from entry level through senior management.

Just think how easily you'll gain an advantage over most of your competitors by simply doing something old school guys like me were taught years ago. Sometimes those “little extras” can really make a difference. Good luck!

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