

# CAREERS

## Writing Your Cover Letter

BY KATHRYN McKEE, SPHR

SPECIAL TO THE DAILY SOUND

Now that you've put together an attention-getting resume, you'll need to write a cover letter to go with it. The cover letter is the best approach for introducing yourself, providing an enticing glimpse of who you are and giving the reader a reason to review in greater depth the qualifications listed on your resume, instead of immediately tossing it into the trash. The cover letter should display your writing skills and your ability to be concise.

If an ad details the job description and the qualifications the organization is seeking, I recommend what's called a "T" letter, which uses a two-column approach that lists the employer's requirements on the left, with your qualifications on the right, matched to each item they've spelled out. Here's an example from a recent ad in the *Daily Sound*:

### Bookkeeper

#### Your requirements:

- Accounts Payable/Receivable
- Fund accounting
- Preparation of financial statements
- Assist with audits
- Preparation of payroll using Paychex

#### My Experience:

- X years with A/P and A/R for non-profits
- Experience w/ non-profit fund accounting
- Prepared all financial statements required by the Board of Directors
- Prepared work papers and other auditable documents
- Experience with Paychex

Take the time to analyze the ad, pull out the requirements, and explain how you're a match for what the employer wants. If you use snail mail, use a white or cream paper stock to print both your resume and cover letter.

If the ad doesn't detail the skills and experience required but focuses more on

attributes, e.g., "energetic, displays initiative," then your letter should explain how you possess those qualities. Using the example of bookkeeper again, you would take your strengths and turn them into a paragraph along with an accomplishment that might match the attributes indicated. It might read:

Dear Hiring Manager:

I'm enclosing my resume in response to your ad for a bookkeeper. I think you'll find I'm the energetic, self-motivated worker you're seeking. In my current capacity as bookkeeper for a local non-profit, I developed a package of statements for our board of directors that included Excel spreadsheets as well as a PowerPoint presentation. I did this on my own initiative, with approval from our executive director, to supplement the lengthy narrative reports the board had traditionally received. Board members appreciated my efforts, stating that having the information in this format made their job much easier.

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