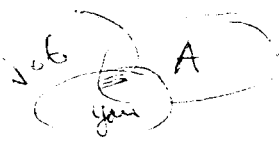


Rhetorical



title #4

3  
cover letters

# WRITING EFFECTIVE COVER LETTERS

A cover letter is a letter you send to a potential employer either in application for a particular position or to inquire about possible openings. A large number of resumes are sent to potential employers under cover letters that seem designed deliberately to kill off any enthusiasm that the resume arouses. They do this usually because they say the same thing that all other cover letters say, they emphasize negative factors about the person seeking a job, or they are dull.

To counteract these common problems and to make your letter stand out, focus on the needs, concerns, and problems of the potential employer and tell how you can help meet or solve them. These needs or concerns don't have to be ones that are bothering only one particular employer. Perhaps there are problems common to business organizations, non-profit organizations, or educational institutions that you can address. Declining enrollment, for example, is certainly a major problem facing most educational institutions.

increased interest in course...  
- my broad base of contact with students  
- science  
- empowering people to use speech effectively  
- high academic ratings

As with your resume, pay close attention to what your cover letter is communicating through its form and appearance. Type each letter individually, orienting it to the particular employer and position. Address the employer by name; never use "Dear Sir." Cover letters should be typed with a dark ribbon and preferably on paper that matches the paper of your resume. There should be no errors or obvious erasures.

Remember as you write your cover letters that you are an applicant, not a supplicant. You are proposing a work relationship with another person that will benefit both of you. Your experience, abilities, and energies can work for the interests and concerns of the employer. Although

you should not exaggerate what you can do for an employer, the cover letter is not the place for self denigration!

The following cover letter represents the typical, ineffective cover letter. Use it as a model of how not to write your letters. Once again, we'll return to Loren A. Erickson, our student with an interest in using his doctoral degree for fund raising and promotion.

8505 Wadsworth Boulevard  
Denver, Colorado 80161  
April 24, 1982

Metropolitan Denver Arts Alliance  
c/o Artreach  
1510 S. Grant  
Denver, Colorado 80210

Dear Sir:

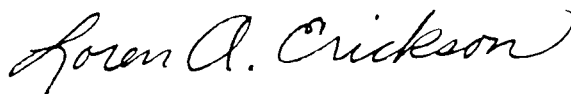
I will graduate in June from the University of Denver with a Ph.D. in Speech Communication.

Because my coursework and experience have been in the area of promotion and public relations, I will be available for the position of fund raiser and would like to be considered by your organization at that time.

I have heard many favorable things about your organization and would like very much to be associated with it. I am enclosing my resume for your consideration.

I look forward to hearing from you if there should be an opening in line with my experience.

Very truly yours,



Loren A. Erickson

Loren A. Erickson is likely to obtain much better results with a cover letter such as the following. Note the focus on how his skills and experience can help the organization meet some of its concerns:

8505 Wadsworth Boulevard  
Denver, Colorado 80161  
April 24, 1982

Judy Wood  
Director  
Metropolitan Denver Arts Alliance  
c/o Artreach  
1510 S. Grant  
Denver, Colorado 80210

~~Loren A. Erickson~~

Dear Ms. Wood:

With the lessened support of the Reagan administration for the arts, organizations such as the Metropolitan Denver Arts Alliance will likely find fewer governmental funds available and a need to raise more and more of their operating and programming funds from the private sector. My education and experience in the field of communication have convinced me that the arts can remain a vital and influential force that the public is willing to support if the arts cause is presented in the best possible manner.

As the enclosed resume details, my abilities in fund raising and promotion have demonstrated results for a number of projects. This experience and expertise could produce, I believe, the same positive public response for an organization such as yours.

I would very much appreciate the opportunity to discuss my ideas with you. I hope you won't mind a call on Wednesday to determine when a meeting might be arranged.

Very truly yours,

*Loren A. Erickson*

Loren A. Erickson

Other sample cover letters follow that are designed for use when applying for both academic and business positions.

*Alice White*

1999 Humboldt Street  
Denver, Colorado 80667  
April 26, 1981

Donald Leistner  
Chair  
School of Speech Communication  
Eastern State University  
Eugene, Massachusetts 43001

Dear Dr. Leistner:

Please consider me an active candidate for the position open at Eastern State University. I feel my eclectic background in terms of academic studies, as well as experience in applying theoretical material to practical situations, makes me a well-suited candidate for the position.

*thought  
- teaching  
- planning  
- writing  
- org*

Your description asks for an individual who is capable of teaching interpersonal and public communication courses. At the University of Denver, I have enjoyed the opportunity to execute total responsibility in planning, organizing, and teaching courses in both areas. I have just finalized plans for teaching a summer course in interpersonal communication, utilizing new books and lesson plans. In addition to the basic courses listed on my resume, I have lectured for some upper-division classes, particularly on the relationship between thought and language.

*me*

My theoretical interests have led me to study research methodology, statistics, theory building, as well as linguistics, rhetoric, phenomenology, and more. The range of my academic work, I feel sure, contributes to my ability to develop and teach effectively a variety of courses.

✓ I am strongly committed to the quality of instruction in the discipline from the basic course to graduate seminars. I would welcome the opportunity to polish materials already in use and to further develop coursework in areas of interest to students.

*me  
in community*

Recent accomplishments include presentations at the Martin-Marietta Corporation and the annual convention of the Colorado Language Arts Society, a workshop in women's communication skills for the International Society for Personnel Women, and the acceptance of a paper to be presented at the convention of the Speech Communication Association this November.

I have requested that the SCA forward my placement file to you. Please let me know if I can provide you with further information. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

*Alice White*

Alice White

7439 S. Josephine #640  
 Denver, Colorado 80210  
 March 27, 1981

Greta Holmes  
 Head  
 Division of Arts and Humanistic Studies  
 Eureka State College  
 Eureka, California 92201

Dear Dr. Holmes:

I would like to be considered for the assistant professor opening in organizational and group communication that you have available for the fall of 1981. As you review my resume, you probably will come to a conclusion similar to mine: the job and the applicant are a good match.

In reviewing my credentials, please note that all of the courses I took during the summer of 1978 are either germane to or in the area of organizational communication. On the practical level, I designed an independent study under the direction of Alton Barbour that focused on establishing helping relationships via the telephone. I coordinated this study out of the Regional Cancer Center, an organization that provides counseling and information through an eight-state telephone network. In addition, I have conducted workshops dealing with organizational communication.

In the area of business and professional speaking, the public speaking course that I currently teach meets the business school's requirements for its students. I provide the students with a variety of real-world experiences through the class, and their responses to these opportunities, as well as their evaluation of the curriculum, have been highly positive.

Small group communication is an area of particular interest to me, and I have taken both laboratory and theoretically-based courses. I incorporated both of these aspects in the courses I teach in this area. Small group communication is the focus of my dissertation and a direction in which I am interested in pursuing additional research. I am particularly interested in the relationship between an individual's conceptual view of power and his or her communicative behavior in a small group.

I am familiar with the basic speech courses that are a part of your curriculum. When I taught Communications 200 at your Arcata campus, I viewed it as a way to introduce students to a balanced perspective of the theoretical and experiential dimensions of communication, as well as a way to whet their appetites for more intensive study of our discipline.

I am a competent and accomplished teacher with eighteen years of diversified experience. Students are responsive to my classes and appreciate my academic challenges and my concern for them as individuals. The ability to enrich both the self image and intellectual advancement of the students I teach is one of my strongest assets.

*please note  
 - attended  
 - subject matter  
 - time to  
 - include  
 - program*

*read over*

Because of the quality education I have received at both the University of Denver and Northwestern University, my commitment to professional development, and my extensive teaching experience, I believe that my qualifications are consistent with the dimensions of the position you have available.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Aileen Banks". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Aileen Banks

*acceptance*

1446 Emerson Street  
Denver, Colorado 80218  
March 30, 1981

Susan R. Smith  
Chairperson  
Department of Communication  
University of Delaware  
Newark, Delaware 19711

Dear Dr. Smith:

I would like to be considered for the position open in your department to teach courses in rhetorical theory and organizational communication.

If your department is typical of today's communication program, you are seeking a faculty member who has demonstrated expertise in the areas of rhetorical theory and organizational communication and who can attract students to the department at the beginning of a decade in which college enrollment is expected to drop twenty percent. The enclosed resume shows my abilities and qualifications in these areas. You may be particularly interested in the following:

• I have taught organizational communication for the past three years at the University of Denver. I have found that I am able to create enthusiasm for the subject and to motivate students to learn and apply the concepts being taught. The teaching evaluation committee at the University gave me an "excellent" rating as an instructor.

• My education in communication has focused on the area of rhetorical theory and criticism, and my research interests lie in this area. One of my primary goals in all of my courses is to teach students to approach experiences from a rhetorical perspective.

✓ I have had the opportunity to study and teach principles of communication outside of the university classroom. I have provided communication training to employees in various local businesses such as the Johnson Steel Company and the Colorado Power Company. As a result, I am able to combine theory with practice in the classroom.

I would be willing to discuss further, at your convenience, how my abilities and experience can best serve the needs of your department. I will be at the Western Speech Communication Association convention in February and would be able to meet with you there.

Sincerely,

*Taryn S. Robertson*

Taryn S. Robertson

*add my  
res. to Denver  
staff  
Hark. Phil  
obj. of  
Presby. related  
behavior cont  
College.*

4321 S. York, Apt. 601  
Denver, Colorado 80218  
March 16, 1983

Constance Wyatt  
Supervisor  
Norfolk Division of Social Services  
270 W. Brambleton Avenue  
Norfolk, Virginia 23510

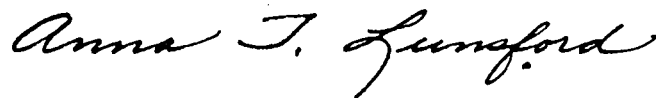
Dear Ms. Wyatt:

As the budget cuts of the Reagan administration are implemented, social service agencies are going to be faced with a major challenge: providing assistance to increased numbers of individuals in the most efficient and cost-effective manner. This challenge can be met only with staff members who have effective communication skills for dealing with clients, yet who also can process forms and documents quickly and accurately.

With a master's degree in speech communication and an emphasis in sociology, I have a record of success in these areas that I believe you will find interesting. The enclosed resume provides brief examples of my accomplishments.

Since I will be in Norfolk next week, I hope you won't mind a call then to set a time to discuss possible employment.

Sincerely,



Anna T. Lunsford



*Resume is*

500 Malvern Avenue  
Denver, Colorado 80208  
June 3, 1983

Jonathan Cleveland  
Director  
Rose Medical Center  
4567 E. 9th Avenue  
Denver, Colorado 80217

Dear Mr. Cleveland:

With increasing concern among the public about the high cost of medical care and a greater willingness to protest care received through the filing of malpractice suits, effective communication between patients and your hospital staff must be a source of concern to you.

As shown by the enclosed resume, a person with a knowledge of the communication process and with communication skills can do much to create positive relations between patients and the hospital staff. I feel sure that I can help with your communication efforts as a patient representative.

May I come see you or a member of your staff to discuss some of the ways in which my skills can contribute to patient-staff relations at Rose Medical Center? I will call your secretary this week to determine the time best for you.

Sincerely,

*Emily G. Kramer*

Emily G. Kramer