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ADVANCING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FOR MATURE WORKERS SINCE 1983

ASSOCIATES FOR TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

Network to Work Meeting

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RESOURCE DOCUMENT – *COVER LETTERS*

Cover Letter Basics, Dos and Don'ts

A. What is a Cover Letter?

- It is a focused, concise document sent with your resume to complement it, not duplicate it.

- It contains just enough information – and a personal touch - to entice the hiring manager to contact you for an interview.

- It should be tailored to explain:
  - o why you are interested in the specific organization and position;
  - o how your skills and experience relate to the specifics of the job description; and
  - o **why you are a strong match for the job and the employer's job requirements**.

- Its focus is your experience relevant to the job you are applying for. Older applicants should stay away from recounting of all of your employment experiences.

- It can address questions that may be raised by your resume.

- It should mention your flexibility, adaptability, and willingness to learn – qualities often seen in the young and eager.

- It should showcase your current technology skills and knowledge.

B. Cover letter dos:

- Make an effort to customize the letter for each job. This shows you genuinely care about working for the company. Generic cover letters make a very poor impression.

- Carefully read the job requirements found in the posting and make sure you address them.

- Connect the dots between your experience and the requirements of the position.
  - o Speak about 4 or 5 skills and accomplishments that directly point to the job you are applying for. Showcase how you can meet the company's needs.

- Try to write a unique and engaging opening sentence that will make the reader want to continue reading.
  - o A sentence such as "*I'm writing to apply for the position of . . . "* is fine but overused. You can distinguish yourself and provide a better picture of you and your personality with a sentence such as:

- - "*My approach to retail sales is simple: greet the customer with a smile and provide unparalleled yet genuine service.*" **OR**
    - "*I've wanted to work in education ever since my third grade teacher, Mrs. Terrell, helped me discover a love of reading.*" **OR**
    - "*In my three years at (prior company name), I increased our average quarterly sales by X percentage.*"

- Make sure you meet all instructions contained in the job posting.

- Keep it to one page.

- Proofread, proofread, proofread!

- Have another person also check it for errors and readability.

- If you are attaching it to an email or uploading it on a website, be sure to put your name in the file's title.

- Use the same font style and size, and the same margins, as your resume.
    - Font: Arial, Times Roman, Garamond, Helvetica, Calibri, Cambria
    - Font size of 12 or higher
    - Margins of 1 inch.

C. Cover letter don'ts:

- Don't use "Dear Sir or Madam" or "To Whom it May Concern".
    - Look for name of hiring manager or department manager.
    - Worst case, say "Dear Hiring Manager".

- Don't overkill with excessive enthusiasm. For example, don't say something like "thank you *so incredibly much*".

- Don't use texting lingo.

- Don't talk about why the job is right for you. Focus instead on why you are right for the job.