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THE RESUME LETTER

The resume letter is not a true cover letter—that is, it is not a letter designed to simply transmit your resume to an employer. Instead, it is a letter that is intended to actually *replace* the resume, and to convey sufficient information about your qualifications to entice an employer to interview you.

In general, I am not a strong advocate of the resume letter and do not normally recommend its use. My views on this subject appear to be borne out by a recent survey of over 500 human resource professionals by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), where a full 91 percent considered a “detailed job history” as either important or very important. A one-page resume letter hardly seems to meet this criterion.

Generally speaking, the resume letter does not typically provide sufficient information (when compared to the standard two-page resume) for the employer to make a reasonable assessment of the job seeker’s qualifications and decide whether or not to grant an employment interview. In addition to the frustration it may cause the employer, it may also suggest that the applicant is either unable or too lazy to prepare a resume document. Thus, it is not likely to serve your best interests if you are truly interested in creating a favorable impression and persuading an employer to grant you an interview.

Despite these objections, we continue to see use of this approach by a small number of job seekers. To be complete, therefore, we want to give you examples of the best of this kind of letter.

It seems that the most frequent use of the resume letter is by senior level executives who wish simply to announce their availability and conduct a cursory search of the job market. Such letters are typically directed at the most senior levels of the target organization (e.g., board chairperson, president, chief executive officer, chief operating officer) and are intended to convey availability and general interest in discussing appropriate opportunities. The logic typically supporting use of such letters (versus the standard resume) is that the applicant’s current position and employment speak for themselves, and there is therefore no need for a full-blown resume document. In many cases, where a resume letter is chosen, the job seeker works for a direct competitor, and his or her qualifications are obvious to the prospective employer.

If the job seeker works for a direct competitor or is employed in an officer-level position for a well-known Fortune 100 company, a resume letter may be sufficient to generate interest. However, where the job seeker is employed in a lower level position, or the employer is a little

known company, the resume letter will not have the same effect. In such cases, I would strongly recommend use of the conventional resume document along with an appropriate cover letter.

The following are some examples of resume letters where the author is either working for a direct competitor of the company to whom the letter has been addressed or is employed in a fairly senior level capacity with a well-known company.

SAMPLE A *Resume Letter (Direct Competitor)*

125 Bridle Path Lane
Wayne, PA 19274
July 16, 2004

Mr. Matthew R. Weyman
President
Larson Paper Company, Inc.
200 Commerce Drive
Appleton, WI 12837

Dear Mr. Weyman:

Recent changes in the composition of the Board of Directors of Warsaw Paper Company have caused me to rethink my career plans. I am therefore electing to confidentially explore outside opportunities. I am sure you can appreciate the sensitivity of this matter. My employer is unaware of this decision.

As Senior Vice President of Operations for Warsaw, I report to the President and am responsible for all company manufacturing operations. This entails management of 6 operating divisions, 24 manufacturing sites, and 32,000 employees spread over 3 continents and 16 countries. Under my leadership, manufacturing operations have returned a documented \$300 million in cost savings during the last 5 years.

A Wharton-educated M.B.A., I have over 20 years of successful manufacturing and operations management experience with major U.S. corporations. My contributions to these firms have been significant and have resulted in rapid career advancement into the senior management ranks. I am now looking to further expand my career horizons.

Should you be aware of a suitable opportunity or should you be aware of others with whom I should be in contact in this regard, I would appreciate hearing from you. I can be reached, on a confidential basis, at (610) 557-9500.

Thank you for your consideration and assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

Robert T. Barnesworth

Robert T. Barnesworth

ftg

SAMPLE B *Resume Letter (Well-Known Company)*

2 Green Ridge Road
Schenectady, NY 12846
March 22, 2006

Mr. Stuart B. Kingsley
Chairman
Universal Systems, Inc.
300 Industrial Way
Baltimore, MD 19326

Dear Mr. Kingsley:

I have recently decided to initiate a career change and am now exploring career options in general management at the senior level. This inquiry is, of course, highly confidential since my company is unaware of my decision.

I am currently Vice President and General Manager of General Electric's Small Motors Division, where I report directly to the Senior Vice President of Operations for General Electric Corporate. In this capacity, I have P&L responsibility for a \$6 billion, 28,000-employee division with 26 manufacturing facilities in 18 countries. I also serve on the Board of Directors of the Dexter Engineering Company, a \$300 million company engaged in the design engineering of gas-fired utilities.

Although I have enjoyed my experience at General Electric and have been treated well, future growth opportunities appear limited, and I now have a strong desire to affiliate with a smaller, entrepreneurial, high-growth company, where my executive and leadership talents can be more fully utilized. I am therefore seeking a position as CEO or President of a firm meeting this profile.

In addition to my extensive experience in operations and general management, my credentials include an M.B.A. from Harvard Business School and a B.S. degree in Mechanical Engineering from Cornell, where I graduated with honors.

Mr. Kingsley, should you be aware of a suitable executive opportunity, I would very much appreciate a call. I can be reached at (503) 667-9500.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

Gwendolyn P. Bradson

Gwendolyn P. Bradson

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