
8

**EXECUTIVE SEARCH
COVER LETTERS**

The cover letter used to transmit your resume to an executive search firm, although a type of broadcast letter, differs from the general broadcast letter used to correspond with employers. This difference has to do with the needs of these two organizations. Let's examine these needs.

The employer's motivation when reading a cover letter and attached resume is to hire someone who will add value to the corporation. In this regard, he or she is looking for evidence that the candidate has the ability to solve certain key problems, apply new methods and technology, and generally assist in the attainment of the organization's strategic goals and mission.

If the employer has done the necessary homework, the basic knowledge, skills, and capabilities needed to successfully perform the key functions of the job have been identified. The employer then translates these factors into selection criteria against which prospective candidates will be measured.

Additionally, if proper care is taken to select persons who will be both successful and happy in the organization, the employer must also attempt to determine how compatible job candidates will be with the culture of the organization. To do this properly, the employer must define certain personal traits and characteristics, philosophy, and style that will best fit the organization's culture. These factors are added to the list of previously determined technical qualifications to arrive at candidate selection criteria.

When formulating selection criteria, forward-thinking companies also consider another dimension, which has to do with the strategic changes that the organization will need to make if it is to be successful in realizing its longer-term strategic objectives. The employer then translates these changes into new knowledge and skill requirements necessary to drive the required changes needed to realize corporate goals.

The final result of this in-depth analysis of the current job, organizational culture, and the organization's strategic needs is a list of specific selection criteria against which employment candidates will be measured during the interview and employment selection process.

Although an executive search firm may participate to some degree in defining these selection criteria, most of them have already been fairly well-defined by the employer prior to the search firm's arrival on the scene. Thus the executive search firm does not normally have the same level of in-depth understanding of the hiring organization's

requirements. Instead, in most cases, the search consultant simply discusses the selection criteria with the employer to make sure they are understood, and then sets off to find the candidate who best meets them.

In short, the employer is looking for someone who will be value adding, while the search firm is looking for someone who best matches the selection criteria. The search firm therefore typically has a more narrow perspective than does the employer, who has the benefit of knowing all of the various intricacies and special internal needs of his or her organization thereby reading the cover letter in search of evidence that the candidate will be value adding. The search firm, on the other hand, typically views the cover letter as a simple letter of transmittal, and moves quickly to the resume to make a comparison between the candidate's qualifications and the selection criteria.

The cover letter is far less likely to make a sale to the executive search firm than it is to the employer. This fact suggests, then, that the cover letters used to transmit your resume to these two organizations need to be handled differently.

Letter Elements

The basic elements of the executive search cover letter are as follows:

1. Return address.
2. Date.
3. Search firm address.
4. Salutation.
5. Introductory paragraph or statement.
6. Statement of job objective.
7. Brief summary of qualifications.
8. Value-adding statement (optional).
9. Reason for making change (optional).
10. Salary requirements (optional).
11. Geographical preferences/restrictions (optional).
12. Statement of willingness to provide additional information.
13. Instructions for reaching you.

14. Statement of appreciation.
15. Complimentary close.
16. Signature.

Introductory Paragraph

The introductory paragraph usually accomplishes two things. First, it acknowledges the role of the executive search firm in helping client organizations find key professionals and executives. Second, it states your job objective.

Here are some typical introductory paragraphs:

I am currently seeking a senior-level position in manufacturing management. Perhaps one of your current search assignments requires such an individual.

I am a seasoned financial executive with Fortune 100 experience. Please consider the enclosed resume in light of your current assignments for top financial management talent.

I have decided to make a career change and am currently seeking a position as a CEO or COO. Please consider my background for any appropriate active or future executive search assignments requiring someone with my credentials.

As you can see, the statement of job objective is usually included in the opening paragraph along with the request to be considered as a candidate for current or future assignments.

Read the sample cover letters at the end of this chapter for some additional ideas on how to structure your lead-in paragraph.

Qualifications Summary

The executive search cover letter normally contains a paragraph that briefly summarizes the candidate's overall qualifications. This includes educational credentials as well as professional work experience.

When summarizing work experience, it is important to cite only what is supportive of your stated job objective. Don't bore the reader by including nonrelated assignments. Also, be brief. Stick to only the basic information needed to crystalize your qualifications, and don't

drone on and on with the details of your background. If well-written, your resume will accomplish all of this.

The following are some sample qualification summaries. Additional examples are found at the end of this chapter.

I hold an M.B.A. in Marketing from the University of Chicago and a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Michigan. My background includes nearly eighteen years in marketing and sales management, with the last five years as Director of Marketing for the Cranston Corporation, a Fortune 200 manufacturer of fastening devices.

A graduate of the University of Delaware with an M.S. in Chemical Engineering, I have been employed in the Central Research Group of the DuPont Company for the last nine years, where I have become thoroughly versed in synthetic fiber development. My creativity as a Research Scientist is supported by eight current patents with an additional six pending.

I am a seasoned project engineer with over twelve years experience in paper machine project engineering. I have successfully managed paper machine capital projects valued at over \$80 million. My professional credentials include an M.S. in Mechanical Engineering and a Professional Engineer license from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Value-Adding Statement (Optional)

A value-adding statement is intended to convey your ability to make meaningful contributions to the search firm's client organization. As indicated, although important to the general broadcast cover letter, it is considered optional in the executive search cover letter. If cleverly written, this statement can have a positive impact on the reader, but for the most part, it is considered to have little impact on the decision of the executive search firm, where the focus is on matching qualifications with the client organization's requirements, not on value adding. The search firm's main focus is thus on the resume rather than on the cover letter that introduces it.

The value-adding statement(s) usually consists of major job-related accomplishments. These are carefully tailored to the anticipated needs of the employer and normally fall into one or more of the following categories:

1. Related to the ongoing functional objectives of the job.
2. Related to the strategic goals of the hiring organization.
3. The ability to apply new methods and state-of-the-art technology.

The following are some examples of value-adding statements for your review. Certain of the sample cover letters at the end of this chapter also contain such statements.

The following key accomplishments as a manufacturing executive should provide evidence of my ability to make meaningful contributions to one of your client organizations:

- *Reengineered manufacturing organization resulting in 20% head-count reduction and annual savings of \$3 million.*
- *Installed Deming-based total quality program accounting for 22% scrap reduction (\$1.2 million annual savings) and 80% reduction in customer complaints.*
- *Instituted JIT methods for control of raw materials inventory—\$1 million annual savings.*

As a seasoned project engineering manager, I can make significant contributions to one of your clients. Consider the following achievements:

- *Successfully managed \$20 million capital expansion of Templeton Mill—completed on time and 10% under budget.*
- *Installed TDC 2000 control system in the converting department of Wilmington Plant—annual savings of \$2 million.*
- *Developed, designed, and installed new web forming device, increasing machine speeds by 18%—annual savings of \$1.7 million.*

My resume will attest that, as an internal Organization Effectiveness Consultant, I have consistently provided state-of-the-art leadership in applying the most recent thinking to major program development. Perhaps I can make similar contributions to one of your clients. Please consider the following accomplishments:

- *Transitioned major manufacturing organization from traditional departmental structure to customer-focused, product stream organization.*
- *Worked with Senior Vice President to successfully transition key division from traditional management philosophy to a participatory management-based system.*

- *Trained over 200 middle and senior managers in the use of facilitator skills and management process design concepts.*

In each of the examples, you will note that the author utilizes language that encourages the executive search firm to make the connection between the accomplishments cited and the value that could be derived through your employment by one of the firm's clients.

Reason for Making Change (Optional)

As indicated, providing the search firm with a specific reason for wanting to make a change is optional. From an initial screening standpoint, it seldom adds to cover letter effectiveness and may, in fact, be detrimental to your employment campaign depending upon circumstances.

This subject was discussed in detail in Chapter 6, "Cover Letter Inclusions/Exclusions." Review Chapter 6 for the guidelines. For the most part, however, explaining your reasons for change is unnecessary and adds little to the effectiveness of the executive search cover letter.

Salary Requirements (Optional)

Generally, the inclusion of salary requirements is considered optional in the executive search cover letter. It is usually to your benefit, however, to exclude such information. In this way, you assure yourself of maximum flexibility and control by not automatically screening yourself from consideration on the basis of income requirements that are considered too high for a given opportunity. Nevertheless, there are times when you may want to include your compensation requirements in the letter. This is particularly true when you are currently employed and unwilling to consider a lower compensation level, regardless of the opportunity.

If you elect to include your salary requirements in the cover letter, however, remember that there is always the unusual opportunity that, regardless of short-term income reduction, may offer significant future advancement and corresponding income growth potential considerably beyond that of your current position.

Geographical Preferences/Restrictions (Optional)

As with salary requirements, inclusion of a statement concerning geographical preferences or restrictions may be somewhat limiting, and

might serve to screen you out from a career opportunity that you might otherwise deem very desirable. Why take this chance?

It is felt that inclusion of geographical factors does little to enhance the overall effectiveness of executive search cover letters and, in most cases, can actually prove detrimental. Remember, if the executive search firm approaches you about a particular opportunity with one of its clients, you can always decline the chance to pursue it should geographical factors not be to your liking.

By being open to geographical considerations, you at least allow yourself the chance to weigh this factor against other, perhaps more important criteria, such as future growth and potential. If the opportunity for advancement is unusually good, you may just decide to waive geographical considerations. By excluding them from the cover letter, you at least preserve your options rather than prematurely foreclose on what might be an excellent job opportunity. The decision, of course, is up to you.

You may now wish to review the following sample executive search cover letters for some ideas on structuring your own. I hope you will find them helpful.

SAMPLE A *Executive Search Cover Letter*

108 Baker Lane
Mobile, AL 36688
January 16, 1998

Mr. Orson B. Smathers
Senior Partner
Smathers & Cooper
25 Wacker Drive
Chicago, IL 60601

Dear Mr. Smathers:

Could one of your Chicago-based or national clients use a successful and experienced engineering executive or program director to head up a major effort?

My broad manufacturing, engineering, and development background in the computer equipment and office automation industries, coupled with an excellent track record of new product introductions, may well be of interest to one of your client companies.

My credentials include an M.S. in Electrical Engineering coupled with over 15 years engineering and electronics product development experience in the computer and related electronics field. This includes over six years as Technology Director for Dynatech, a \$300 million manufacturer of computer chips and printed circuit boards. My specific accomplishments are well documented on the enclosed resume.

Although technical and managerial challenges are of highest priority to me, you may wish to be aware that my total compensation has been in the \$135,000 range in the last few years.

Should my background be of interest to you, please contact me during the day at (305) 795-2375 or at my home at (305) 688-4275 during evening hours.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Carolyn A. Baker

Carolyn A. Baker

cab

Enclosure

SAMPLE B *Executive Search Cover Letter*

309 Grant Blvd.
Richmond, VA 12736
September 22, 1998

Ms. Cynthia A. Baxter
Senior Partner
Lane, Baxter and Roe, Inc.
220 Oliver Street, N.E.
Atlanta, GA 13648

Dear Ms. Baxter:

I am seeking career advancement opportunities as a manager or executive in the field of Organization Development. Positions in either manufacturing or consulting would be of interest to me. Perhaps one of your clients may be interested in my candidacy.

As a Ph.D. in Organization Design and Development, my eight years of corporate-level assignments have encompassed the full range of Organization and Management Development activities, advancing from stand-up trainer to strategy development at the corporate management level. More recently, I have been serving as part-time evening faculty in the Organization Development Masters degree program at the University of Richmond. This has been augmented by a variety of Organization Design and Development consulting assignments with local and national companies on a part-time basis during the day.

Although I would prefer to remain in the Richmond area, I would be quite open to the prospects of relocation should the right opportunity present itself.

Should one of your clients have a suitable opportunity, I would appreciate hearing from you. I can be reached at my office on a confidential basis during the day or at my home in the evening. Both phone numbers are included on the enclosed resume.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Martin D. Trainor

mdt

Enclosure

SAMPLE C *Executive Search Cover Letter*

25 East Main Street
Columbus, OH 13948
November 30, 1999

Mr. Cortland B. Darring
Senior Principal
Darring, Smith and Braxton
Executive Search Consultants
20 Ivory Tower Suites
315 Capital Parkway
Washington, DC 18236

Dear Mr. Darring:

My resume is enclosed for your review against the needs of your clients for a Senior Financial Officer or Corporate Controller. In the event that you do not have an active assignment for such a position, I would appreciate if you would retain my file for future reference.

My background includes an M.B.A. in Finance from the Wharton School, coupled with over 15 years of increasing management responsibility in the fields of accounting and finance. I am currently Corporate Controller of Utex Corporation, a \$200 million manufacturer of commercial spraying equipment, where I report directly to the President and manage a staff of 32 employees.

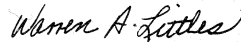
Growth prospects at Utex are nonexistent, and I have recently elected to pursue outside career opportunities. My primary interest is in becoming C.F.O. of a medium-sized growth company, however, I would also seriously consider a position as a corporate or division-level Controller for a major company.

My current compensation is in the \$130,000 range, however, job challenge and career advancement are primary motivating factors at this point in my career.

If one of your clients is seeking someone with my credential, I would appreciate a call. If necessary, you can reach me at my office at (319) 874-9028. My preference is for evening calls at (319) 699-0407.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Warren A. Little

wal

Enclosure

SAMPLE D *Executive Search Cover Letter*

32 West Carlton Lane
St. Louis, MO 13829
August 15, 1998

Ms. Janet B. Longwood
Vice President
Beesley, Kilmer & Schmidt
205 Industry Circle
Houston, TX 71395

Dear Ms. Longwood:

I am seeking a senior-level position in Operations management. Perhaps a current or future client may have an interest in my capabilities.

I hold an M.S. degree in Industrial Management from Ohio State University and have over 16 years experience in Operations, with 8 years in a management capacity. Currently Director of Operations for Baxter Corporation, a \$250 million specialty pumps manufacturer, I manage a staff of 25 and direct all manufacturing for a six-plant operation.

In my current position, I have saved nearly \$18 million through various innovative programs implemented over the last four years. These have included major initiatives in reengineering, TQM, JIT, MRP, and product stream management. I pride myself in staying current in the latest, state-of-the-art developments in the field of Operations management, and am frequently one of the first to try them. I am firmly committed to the concept of continuous improvement.

If one of your clients is seeking a professional Operations executive, who has established a strong record of cost reduction and productivity improvement, perhaps I may be their candidate. Please keep me in mind as appropriate search assignments develop.

Should you wish to contact me during working hours, I can be reached at (512) 374-0947 on a confidential basis.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Bernard C. Schwartz

bcs

Enclosure

SAMPLE E *Executive Search Cover Letter*

12 Conner Road
Portsmouth, NH 12847
June 21, 1998

Mr. Donald S. Kingston
Senior Vice President
Brammer, Simpson & Cramer
Consultants in Executive Search
135 Wilshire Highway
Dallas, TX 13829

Dear Mr. Kingston:

It has come to my attention that your firm specializes in executive search in the Logistics-related fields. I am seeking a senior management position in Procurement, and would welcome your review of my credentials against current search assignments in this field.

The enclosed resume will show that I have an M.B.A. in Industrial Management from the University of New Hampshire and an undergraduate degree in Industrial Engineering from the same school. My professional experience includes over 20 years in Logistics-related areas, including over 10 years in Procurement management.

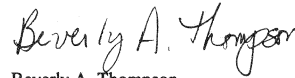
I have an excellent track record in orchestrating major cost reduction and efficiency improvement in the various Procurement functions I have managed. My forte has been in successfully negotiating major long-term raw materials and vital supplies contracts that have saved millions and helped my employers maintain a competitive edge. Initiation of JIT delivery has substantially reduced in-house inventory investments and freed up nearly \$30 million in operating capital for my current employer. Perhaps I could make similar contributions to one of your clients.

My compensation currently stands at \$120,000 per year, and I am open to relocation with the exception of the East Coast metropolitan areas.

Should you require further information, I can be reached during business hours, on a confidential basis, at (912) 349-5869.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Beverly A. Thompson

bat

Enclosure

SAMPLE F *Executive Search Cover Letter*

31 North Grove Street
Cedarville, NC 13486
May 26, 1998

Ms. Connie D. Dennison
Senior Principal
Dennison & Smith, Inc.
233 North Tower Road
Atlanta, GA 13285

Dear Ms. Dennison:

Perhaps one of your current assignments calls for a seasoned Director of Research in specialty chemicals, who can provide strong leadership to the firm's technology efforts. If so, they may find my credentials quite interesting.

A Ph.D. in Organic Chemistry from the Georgia Institute of Technology, my background includes 18 years in specialty chemicals research and development, both as a scientist and as a manager. Currently Director of Research for Wexler Chemicals, a \$350 million manufacturer of specialty chemicals sold to the Pulp & Paper Industry, I report to the President and manage an 80-person research staff focused on advance research and applications development of paper machine wet-end chemical specialties.

In the last five years as Wexler's research director, I have led the development and successful introduction of over 30 new products. These have increased company sales from \$110 million to \$350 million and increased profitability by a corresponding 300%. Perhaps I could significantly boost one of your clients technology efforts as well.

I am open to relocation, but would prefer an East Coast metropolitan area where available. Annual compensation is in the \$115,000 range, and I am looking to significantly improve upon this with my next move.

Should you have an interest, please contact me during the day at (326) 773-8847.

I appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,



Barry W. Sanders

bws

Enclosure

SAMPLE G *Executive Search Cover Letter*

126 Weymouth Road
Springfield, MA 32816
April 23, 2005

Ms. Carolyn S. Heddeman
Senior Partner
The Heddeman Partners
1442 Liberty Street
Boston, MA 53729

Dear Ms. Heddeman:

According to the *Directory of Executive Recruiters*, The Heddeman Partners specializes in the placement of senior level Human Resources executives. I am therefore submitting my resume for your consideration in connection with senior HR search assignments on which you may be currently working.

I hold an M.S. in Industrial Psychology from the University of Minnesota, and have over 15 years experience in the field of Human Resources, 10 with PepsiCo and the last 5 with Kimberly Clark where I am now Director of Human Resources for the Corporate Staff. I am seeking a position as Vice President of Human Resources for a medium or large-sized consumer products company where I can further expand my scope of responsibility and more fully challenge my executive management skills.

Significant accomplishments include:

- Implemented HRScope™, a competency-based strategic software system that fully integrates HR and business strategy and provides a sound quantitative basis for human capital management.
- Successfully negotiated 3-year labor contract with the United Pulp & Paper Workers, with major concessions in medical insurance and premium pay provisions (annual savings of \$4.2 million).
- Key member of acquisition team in the successful acquisitions of Jackson Paper Company and Valley Pulp, Inc., providing initial due diligence and then leading post-acquisition integration.
- Provided corporate leadership as the principal O.D. consultant in the company's shift to a team-based, high-performance culture, resulting in major reorganization and a 25% reduction in staff.

Although open to relocation, I have a slight preference for the Southeastern states. Compensation requirements are in the \$150,000 base range plus performance-based incentives.

Should you have an appropriate opportunity, I would welcome a call from you or a member of your staff. It is best to contact me at (610) 322-3857 during evening hours or via email at WilBar@AOL.com.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Wilbur D. Barlow

Wilbur D. Barlow

Enclosure

SAMPLE H *Executive Search Cover Letter*

827 North 16th Street
Costa Mesa, CA 13885
July 17, 2006

Mr. Jonathan S. Saunders
Partner
Clearfield & Saunders, LLP
200 College Avenue
Irvine, CA 23847

Dear Mr. Saunders:

My research shows that Clearfield & Saunders, LLP is one of the leading executive search firms in the field of Operations Management. Please, therefore, accept my resume for consideration against the requirements of any appropriate client Operations Management search assignments on which you may currently be working.

I am a successful manufacturing executive with a M.S. in Mechanical Engineering and over 14 years experience in production management, the last 6 of which have been as Plant Manager of Walden Pump's 650-employee Riverside manufacturing facility. I am now seeking a senior level Operations Management position at the corporate or division level, with multi-plant P&L responsibility.

As the enclosed resume will confirm, I have established a strong reputation as a turnaround expert with the ability to quickly convert losing operations to cash positive contributors. I am a skilled participative manager and team builder, who believes in the concept of leadership-by-example. I am credited with converting two downtrodden, low morale plant workforces into highly energized, motivated, and productive organizations that now take great pride in the quality and efficiency of their work.

If one of your clients is seeking a skilled and seasoned operations executive with a strong track record as a motivational leader and bottom-line contributor, I would welcome a call from you.

I can be reached, on a confidential basis, at (301) 775-3957 or by email at MarKen@MSN.net.

Thank you, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Martin F. Kennedy

Martin F. Kennedy

Enclosure

SAMPLE I *Executive Search Cover Letter*

215 Prince Avenue
West Reading, PA 19348
April 22, 2004

The Kirkland Group
816 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19113

Dear Sir/Madam:

I am an experienced Accounting executive seeking a new opportunity to advance my career in the fields of Accounting or Financial Management. Several of my accomplishments have been highlighted on the enclosed resume.

My technical credentials, along with the ability to successfully manage rapid growth and develop subordinates, are well documented and should allow me to make significant contributions to the right company.

I have no geographical restrictions, and compensation requirements are in the mid \$100 K range. Compensation is negotiable as appropriate with the specific opportunity.

Since my employer is unaware of my decision to seek other employment, please treat this inquiry with appropriate sensitivity. I can be reached discreetly at work, (610) 442-9987, or via email at MarStan@ATT.net.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Margaret A. Stantford

Margaret A. Stantford

Enclosure

SAMPLE J *Executive Search Cover Letter*

River Walk Apartments, # 26A
235 Front Street
St. Louis, MO 21385
June 16, 2005

The Kennett Group
Executive Search Consultants
1625 Wacker Drive
Chicago, IL 31286

Dear Sir/Madam:

As a leading search firm in the field of Sales Management, you may have an interest in my credentials. Please consider my qualifications for appropriate search assignments in sales management at either the regional or national level.

As the enclosed resume shows, I hold a B.A. degree in Marketing from Ohio State University and have over 10 years sales management experience in the consumer products industry. During the last 4 years, I have been Midwest Regional Manager for Procter & Gamble in the sale of its Charmin paper products line to large retail chain stores and consumer discount buyers' clubs.

Some key accomplishments include:

- Increased regional sales volume by 28% in the last 2 years, despite poor economy.
- Propelled Charmin to the # 1 supplier in 3 key national accounts (Wal-Mart, Target, and Krogers).
- Instrumental in the development and coaching of the company's top 2 District Sales Managers (both since promoted to Regional Manager).

I am a highly motivated sales executive with strong reputation for consistent development of superior performers. Compensation requirements are in the \$160 K range, and I am geographically flexible.

I look forward to hearing from you, should you feel you have a suitable opportunity appropriate to my qualifications.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

David R. Crosby

David R. Crosby

Enclosure

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.