

Chapter 6

Great Lines for Success

In This Chapter

- ▶ 27 Knockout opening statements
 - ▶ 35 Powerhouse mix-and-match phrases
 - ▶ 16 Action closing statements
 - ▶ A last line that's impossible to ignore
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Suppose you receive a letter that begins
Time flies when you're having fun.

That oldie probably won't entice your reading interest.

But suppose you receive a letter that begins

As Muppet Kermit the Frog says, "Time's fun when you're having flies."

That line is different. That line is funny. That line lassoes your attention, roping you into reading further to find out what message is being communicated with such a goofy statement. (What's *your* guess?)

I'm not suggesting that you start job letters with frog quotes or other whimsical statements. Instead, I am pointing out that you must work to grab immediate reader attention and then hold it tightly throughout the complete text of job search correspondence.

This chapter outlines strategies and words designed to do exactly that. You can use a variety of approaches, ranging from riding on the coattails of a personal connection, to responding to the requirements of a job ad, to creating drama with words that intrigue, words that excite, words that *zing!*

Starting Your Letter



The best information to pop in your opening line is a known name. A personal referral works wonders. In this approach, you begin with the name of a mutual connection. Someone whom the letter's recipient likes or respects or, at least, has heard of. Name dropping virtually guarantees that your letter will be read. Additionally, you can score points by identifying yourself as a member of an affinity group, such as the alumni of a college or member of a civic organization. Name is the game!

In addition to names, here's another high-octane approach: Launch your letter with a clear statement of what you want, quickly followed by the qualifying benefits you offer that directly relate to the requirements the hiring company seeks. Or turn it around — lead with the skills and benefits you offer before saying what you want.

Still another way to energize your opening: Create a narrative hook (*Time's fun when you're having flies*). In the broadest sense, a narrative hook is a literary technique in the opening of a story that "hooks" the reader's attention to keep eyes scooting down the page. A cover letter hook often is a thematic statement, followed by a flashback to the history the reader needs to understand it.

Here's an example of a thematic opening hook that was successfully used by a woman who, after a two-year absence, wanted to return to her original career in the automotive industry:

Any claim that the grass is greener outside the auto-industry fence is a myth! At least it is for me. After 20 years of rock-solid experience in our industry, a series of outside opportunities briefly tempted me to cast eyes elsewhere. But not for long.

My inner voice keeps shouting loud and clear that the auto side is where I belong, and that's why I'm selectively contacting you. I hope you will see how adding me to your quality operation will be a big win for Stanford Motors.



Don't waste valuable opening-line real estate by focusing on the source of a job post — *I saw your ad in the KoKoMo Express last Sunday*. Handle sourcing head-on in the regarding ("RE:") line in the upper, right-hand quadrant (cruise the sample cover letters in Part III). Example: *RE: Your job ad in the KoKoMo Express, June 14*.



Sell, don't tell! As I mention in Chapter 1, cover letters in today's marketplace are really sales letters. Rather than whispering through an old-school letter of transmission — *Please find my resume attached, Your Royal Honor*. — open with a strategic bang!

A Sampling of Grand Openers

So what do contemporary openers look like? Review the following 27 Stand Out opening line examples that are sure to make a job letter jump out of the pack right from the start. Read and grow creative.

- ✔ I recently met with James Smith from your firm, and he strongly recommended that I send you my resume. Knowing the requirements of your open position for a financial analyst, he concludes that I am the ideal candidate. Your opening does seem to be tailor-made for my experience at CityWide Financial Services.
- ✔ During your visit to UCSB last fall, I had the pleasure of hearing you address the issue of FuelCO oil rigs off the coast of Santa Barbara. As a UCSB June graduate, I . . .
- ✔ My computer skills developed from childhood, plus my well-honed interest in technology advances, and my recently completed education in computer science make me a strong candidate for a position as an entry-level software engineer at your highly regarded company.
- ✔ I recently graduated with a 3.75 GPA from the University of California, where I was a research assistant to Dr. Joe Famous, engineering department chair.
- ✔ Since you will soon be working on photo sessions for the spring catalog, I enclose my portfolio showing how ideal my background in photography and design is for your marketing strategies.
- ✔ Juliette Nagy mentioned your company has opened a division of sporting goods and suggested that I contact you. As a former high school coach for several sports, I believe I have the mix of skills and knowledge you're looking for.
- ✔ Your speech was inspiring, Ms. Luna-Mendez. Soon I will have completed my master's in physical therapy, just in time for your entry-level openings in the PT ward.
- ✔ The breakthrough research being conducted at Hughes Medical Labs is too exciting to miss out on! I'm looking forward to following up our phone conversation with a sit-down meeting to explore how I can make a contribution as a member of the early warning symptoms task force. I provide a link to relevant information about exactly what I can add as a biology researcher who has managed several challenging projects.
- ✔ I enjoyed our meeting at the Rancho Santa Fe Garden Club and, as you suggested, am sending you this additional information to review before we get together.

- ✔ Chaim Isenberg of the Grenwich and Co. accounting firm suggested I contact you regarding opportunities in your warehouse division in Champagne. My background documents considerable success in the areas of loss prevention and asset recovery, which I understand are high on your list of requirements.
- ✔ Noting your posting for a civil engineer with environmental experience, here's my question: Will your environmental services department reach its Green Acres corporate goal of providing a "turnkey" approach to environmental investigation and remediation, or will it always struggle with solving complicated projects, from engineering and design issues through remedial construction? You'll never know without the best person for the job to follow through for you. Arguably, that's me and here's why: (bulleted highlights of achievements, experience, education, awards, and quotations from satisfied clients).
- ✔ I thrive on challenge. When I read your posting for a corporate fitness trainer, I thought lightning had struck and that you wrote about that opportunity hoping to find me. I have three years' experience in freelance fitness training following my military service, and, IMHO, an opinion confirmed by clients, I'm fired up and ready to go!
- ✔ You mention several things in your posting for a reality show screener that make me think you're looking for someone with my proven assets. Let me briefly explain.
- ✔ Terry Ann Torre, who supervised my work as an intern with your company, recommends that I apply to you for the position of assistant customer service manager. Here are some of the reasons Ms. Torre is recommending me: (bulleted list of reasons).
- ✔ Serendipity! As a graduating senior, I am delighted to learn that *Wonderful Merchandising Magazine* has just named Better Bargains Inc., a company I've long admired, one of the top ten best places to launch a career!

After developing good skills in fashion merchandising, personnel practices, and salesmanship in my cooperative education program, I have begun to search for a position in retail marketing. I will graduate June 2 and am crossing my fingers that you'll be one of my first interviews.
- ✔ After working four years on The Hill as a legislative assistant on the House Rules Committee, I understand the inner workings of the political system and could prove to be a valuable asset to a firm such as yours. A few of my areas of expertise: (no more than six bulleted items).
- ✔ Are you in the market for a sales pro who has set sales records for four different companies and trained dozens of high-performance sales reps?
- ✔ Congratulations on the opening of your new insurance branch. Watching your progress over several years, I've seen that A-123 Insurance Company has earned "street cred." That leads me to believe that you and I see the insurance business through the same lens: excellent customer service!

- ✔ I have a successful and reliable work history dealing with the public that would make me an excellent employee for your new store. Interested? My resume would like to meet you, and so would I. Here's why:
- ✔ Velia Acevedo has suggested I forward my resume to you for consideration for a current administrative assistant opening in the escrow department. Through conversations with Velia at a continuing education class, I learned what it takes to be a successful support professional at your firm. I am confident that I have the head for numbers and word processing skills to make the grade.
- ✔ Road-tested but not battle-scarred, I offer the necessary qualifications and experience to deliver real revenue results during my first 30 days as a senior sales representative. Please allow me to document my abilities when we sit down and talk about my becoming part of your team.
- ✔ Preparing to respond to your ad in today's Chicago Tribune, I did some research and discovered that we're both Northwestern grads. Is this serendipity or what? I hope our mutual alma mater is a harbinger of good things to come and that we'll be cheering on the same side in the workplace as well. As this letter very briefly outlines, my qualifications and your requirements for an industrial engineer are joined at the hip.
- ✔ Chances are excellent that I'm the multi-talented graphic designer you seek in your "multi-talented graphic designer" post on Job-Hunt.org. With extensive experience in multimedia, marketing, and print design, I work within budget to deliver world-class catalogs and brochures, logos, Web site design, Flash, video photomontages, and DVD cover design.
- ✔ As a new USC graduate, I've been hoping to find the kind of position you're staffing because I have exactly the background you're asking for. Specifically, the following columns match item for item: (The company's requirements are listed in the left column, and in the right, your matching qualifications.)
- ✔ I understand that your firm is in search of individuals with (skills) and (qualifications). I think I've hit the jackpot, and maybe you have as well. Don't you love finding the perfect match?
- ✔ In reviewing my resume, you will find that I possess all the attributes of a perfect match, from (skills) to (experience or attributes). I am excited to learn of your job opening because I have been searching for a company just like yours to make real use of my experience.
- ✔ (Mutual contact) thought my resume measures such achievement in the function you supervise that he assured me he would pass it on to you; in the event it hasn't yet reached your desk, here's a copy.

What makes these opening lines work?

- ✔ Some drop names.
- ✔ Some connect to a common experience.

- ✓ Some reveal knowledge of the company involved.
- ✓ Some use a narrative hook.
- ✓ Some aim at alumni of a graduate's college.
- ✓ Some ask a question.
- ✓ Some refer to the content of an employer's ad.

All show that the person writing the letter is someone who goes an extra mile to do a superior job. A person who has just the kind of motivation that employers hope to hire.

But not everyone gets it.

Avoid Leadoff Losers



This section shows you how *not* to open your letters. These leadoff losers are snatched from real correspondence supplied by recruiters and HR specialists. Comments in italics that follow each line colorfully express the employer's silent point of view. Read and be warned!

- ✓ I was recently let go due to a reduction in force, which is why I wish to apply for your position in merchandising.
Nothing like starting on an upbeat note.
- ✓ Having recently completed an assignment in the Commonwealth of Independent States (the former Soviet Union), I am interested in pursuing and advancing my career opportunities into this arena.
Arena? What arena? Here. . . . There. . . . Where?
- ✓ In most organizations, job performance, whether excellent or inept, doesn't count, as long as you conform and play politics. I believe that performance does count! I have recently been notified by Dinnie Pharmaceuticals that my R&D position will be eliminated in the near future.
Does this translate to: I wasn't much of a team player? Is that why the job seeker's position is being eliminated?
- ✓ I am currently in search of a job; I have no particular preference for any area, for as you can see from my included resume, my experience includes a broad range.
One who will take anything masters nothing. As movie pioneer Sam Goldwyn once said, "Include me out."
- ✓ I am writing in response to the advertised position for a production coordinator. I am very interested in advancing in my field and making a transition into the aspects of the communications profession described in your ad.

Do you want to advance in your field (which is what?), or do you want to make a transition, or do you want to do the work I need done?

- ✓ If you or someone you know could use a graphic designer, please pass my resume on to interested parties, or call me as soon as possible.

If you're asking me to be your agent, remember, agents get 15% off the top.

- ✓ My partner and I are dissolving our business after 15 years of working together. I am interested in a position at Fred & Associates and have enclosed a resume for your review.

A business divorce is rarely just one person's fault: Are you a pain in the back country? And what is it you want to do for me?

- ✓ When a customer calls for a quote, your firm's future is in the hands of the sales staff. I have big hands.

Huh? Close but no cigar. And keep your hands to yourself.

- ✓ To maintain solid growth, a company must have marketing and sales professionals who can jump on a market before the competition does. My background proves I can do that.

Tell me something I don't know. I've been in this business for 30 years.

Learn from your false starts. As the Japanese proverb has it: "Fall seven times, stand up eight."

Skip Salutation Snoozers

Although not the dead-letter-walking mistakes of the leadoff losers in the preceding section, these salutation snoozers do have sedating effects:

- ✓ In response to your recent job posting for a hospital clown, please accept the enclosed copy of my credentials.

Earth to bozo: The sick kids in this hospital need cheering up by an imaginative, funny clown who colors outside the lines. Next!

- ✓ In a recent edition of Craigslist, your ad for a television producer piqued my interest and I have therefore enclosed a copy of my resume.

Yawn.

- ✓ Please accept this letter and resume for the product marketing manager position as referenced on your company's Web site. I am sure that my work history and educational background will benefit the future endeavors of your company.

Your letter is boring; you're probably boring, too. About 500 people answered our ad, and most are just as mediocre as you seem to be.



Should you use a template?

Has this frustration happened to you? Short on time, you scout the Web for one of those free cover letter templates, fill in the blanks, send it off to an employer with your resume, and watch your hair turn gray waiting to hear back? What went wrong?

Among many things that may have doomed your candidacy is the cover letter itself. When that happens, the cover letter you sent did not adequately distinguish you from the crowd as being worthy of the time and cost of interviewing you in the flesh.

Interview-generating cover letters are customized and persuasive, not perfunctory and canned. The communications that open interviewing doors in competitive job markets are really sales letters disguised as cover letters.

The winning ones take time to add zest, energy, and marketing muscle.

No advocate of wheel-spinning, I can't recommend the use of the free cover letter templates that are widely available online. They simply don't pack the wallop you need to stand out like the only red tulip in a field of yellow tulips.

Nonetheless, some job seekers just can't get started on cover letters without a support system. If you're raising your hand on that one, check out Susan Ireland's *Ready-Made Cover Letters*, (www.susanireland.com). Her package of downloadable software is available for a fee, offering customizable cover letters for a wide range of job seekers. Ireland, a talented writer and author of several job search books, is a leading cover letter authority.

✓ I am very interested in opportunities within your company. Enclosed please find my resume for your review.

Sure you are. You and hundreds of other unfocused job hunters who will take whatever jobs they can get.

Cover letters and resumes begin to blur after skimming a dozen or so of them. Just imagine the glazed-over eyes after a hiring professional reads hundreds of cover letters! Some letters jump out of the stack, enticing the reader to tackle the resume; in other words, they make the cut. Others may as well be stamped with invisible ink: *Ignore me.*

As your mom probably told you: You really don't get a second chance to make a good first impression. Openers count!

Power Phrases to Use Anywhere

After you've punched out your openers, keep your cover-letter mojo going as you flesh out the middle with paragraphs and lines that strongly emphasize your belief in yourself and your strengths.

Don't be shy about listing qualifications, skills, competencies, accomplishments, and achievements. Use numbers wherever you can. If you spot a concept you like in the 35 following examples, think of a way to adapt it to your situation. Or mix and match the ideas expressed.

- ✔ I am particularly well-qualified for your (job title) position, as the following highlights illustrate. I would enjoy the opportunity to meet with you to explore how I can contribute to your organization.
- ✔ For your convenience, I will keep this letter especially brief. The job you're trying to fill (job title) seems to have my name on it, thanks to my qualifications in (skills) and (experience).
- ✔ Your position for (job title) strongly appeals to me because (tell why).
- ✔ If our meeting confirms my understanding of your open position for (job title), I am confident that with my skills in (name skills), I can make an immediate and valuable contribution to (name of employer).
- ✔ My successful background demonstrates the skills you require in (name of position). Briefly, I offer (bulleted lists of accomplishments and achievements).
- ✔ As my resume shows, I have substantial and successful experience in (field/position/skill).
- ✔ As we discussed earlier, my extensive professional experience can benefit virtually any employer. However, (company name) is of special interest to me because (explain why).
- ✔ (Name of employer's company) ranks Number One in companies I prefer to join.
- ✔ I look forward to meeting with you to further discuss my background and to show you some of the (skills or competencies) that I have developed.
- ✔ I'm working to be a part of a company that wants to be recognized as a leader in both ___ and ___. When I have the opportunity to meet with you, I believe you will agree that you want to use my skills and competencies on your watch.
- ✔ What you're asking for and what I can deliver sound like a match!
- ✔ As one of six siblings, I was born in a team environment and understand the payoff of pulling together in an endeavor.
- ✔ During my three years in purchasing with Tidewater Productions, I've been credited with yearly savings in the \$50,000 to \$75,000 range. This resulted from a combination of skillful negotiation and replacing underperforming vendors. Wouldn't you like me to save money for your company?
- ✔ My experience with women's health issues, coupled with demonstrated successful performance in the offices of medical school clinics, suggests that I could make a significant contribution to your practice. Perhaps we could meet to more thoroughly explore this possibility.

- ✔ Because I haven't yet notified my current employer of my intent to leave, I count on your treating this response to your posting with appropriate sensitivity. (*Employers often prefer to hire employed candidates, rather than unemployed candidates.*)
- ✔ I am happy with my job and am considered to be a high performer by my current employer. Unfortunately, I do not see a path to advancement in the foreseeable future. That is why I am contacting you about future openings in the (career field or functional area) at (name of organization).
- ✔ One of my friends, Salvador Rondavi, works for your company. He recommends that I contact you about a position as a management trainee. He is more than satisfied with his work and from what he says, I am sure I would like it as well and will do my utmost to win your professional praise.
- ✔ Please allow me to highlight some of my accomplishments that are relevant to your requirements.
- ✔ Staying current with new technologies and products, and applying those that offer improved profit results, is a point of pride for me.
- ✔ As a versatile IT trainer, I bring significant experience and fast-moving flexibility as new products are introduced to your workforce. Additionally, my BA in psychology has given me a useful depth of knowledge in successful motivation practices.
- ✔ I am long on effort and enthusiasm, although short on experience. Examples of my passion for doing the job well are in references I gained as a student from my employers and customers, such as the following achievements: (list references).
- ✔ I completed a number of successful projects for the physics department in my capacity as student administrative monitor. I believe the knowledge I acquired there would transfer extremely well to your engineering department.
- ✔ Jason Luo, my former manager, now retired, complimented me for being the hardest working and most reliable assistant he'd had in his 40 years in the casino business. He was especially impressed with my (name top achievement).
- ✔ As a member of The World Tomorrow Society's Green Futures Committee, I focused on the impact of reusing and recycling waste on various industries, including ours. I'd be delighted to share that data with you when we meet to explore ways I could be useful to Command Construction.
- ✔ When my last fundraising goal went over the top, I was credited with a big slice of its success because I encouraged everyone's input and buy-in. My talent for inclusiveness brings in record contributions.
- ✔ I'm proud of a track record that's tops with managers, clients, and coworkers, as this single example from Shelly Kornfield, my former supervisor illustrates: "Give the assignment to Pam and you won't have to think about it anymore."

- ✔ In my last position, managing an assisted-living facility, I saved 8% of the annual budget without compromising care; I would welcome sharing the details with you in a meeting to discuss the possibility of my joining your well-respected organization.
- ✔ After completing two baccalaureate degrees in just four years, I believe that my education, student employment experience, and dedication to hard work and problem-solving make me an A-list candidate to join your workforce.
- ✔ My senior year's academic result: A 3.7 GPA with President's Honors, despite my student job requiring 30 hours a week, illustrates that I know how to dig in and get the job done.
- ✔ Given my global supply chain experience, I'm confident that we may have mutual interests.
- ✔ My recent earnings reflect gains I brought to my employer; with your firm's reputation for paying fair market rate, I'm wide open to discussing compensation when we sit down to talk.
- ✔ With my technical skills and understanding of your market, I can step into the position and be immediately productive.
- ✔ At my previous position on the East Coast, within two years I received praise for playing a key role in raising my branch's basement ranking for customer service (#57 out of 60 stores) to top ranking customer service (#3 out of 60 stores) in the nationwide organization.
- ✔ Accustomed to doing more with fewer resources, I can help your firm ride out a financial storm in a tight economy. After meeting with me and assessing my ability to run a tight ship that sails upright, you may decide you can't afford not to hire me.
- ✔ While I was the fundraising chair for my PTA organization, I planned the campaign, wrote the appeal to potential donors, and organized an e-mail solicitation tree. The result: We raised \$27,000, a 130% increase over the previous year.

The power phrases in the preceding list are anchored with accomplishments, achievements, skills, the promise of a benefit, or personal characteristics that suggest you will be a likeable model of efficiency, making money or saving money for your lucky future employer.



For the record, I've always had trouble separating accomplishments from achievements. After looking it up for the zillionth time, I can report that *accomplishments* are extended events — for example, the act of John's climbing a mountain. *Achievements* are culminating, instantaneous events — the act of John's reaching the top of the mountain. That's the long and short of it. Go forth and craft statements alive with accomplishments and achievements and gain that interview.



Words that stick when you're stuck

When you're struggling to capture the exact verb that expresses the vigor of your background, glance at this mini-list to jog your word-smith talents.

Do you need more ways to say what you've done? Try this quick free fix: Type "list action verbs" on Google or another browser. Stand back for an avalanche of words.

accomplished	formulated	played a key role
achieved	headed up	produced
actively participated	investigated	profitably
administered	led	project managed
co-developed	leveraged	restructured
dealt effectively	managed	scoped out
decreased costs	marketed	solved
delivered	negotiated	supervised
established	orchestrated	took the lead in
exceeded target	persuaded	turned around
facilitated	planned	upgraded

Keep Control with an Action Close

After you write a great letter extolling your major match-up for the job you're chasing, maintain momentum with a close that brings you closer to your goal: an interview. You have three basic choices: an action close, an action close plus, and a no-action close.

Action close

Close your letter by telling the reader when you will call for an interview. By setting the agenda, you assure your reader that you will follow up with an action step that brings together a competent candidate with a lucky employer. An action close says that you're on the scene to help and will contact the employer at a specified time:

I'm ready to make money for you and look forward to speaking with you personally. I will call you early next week.

Action close plus

Pump up an action close with a suggestion for action sooner rather than later — “I’ll call you, but if you’re ready to roll, you can call me right away.”

An action close plus is the best choice for many situations. Your enthusiasm suggests that you’re organized and vigorous, but adding a note of urgency by inviting an employer to call you may motivate the employer to prioritize the interview and move up the timetable for a meeting.

Turning an action close into an action close plus is simple, requiring merely one line at the end of the close. The line is “If you would like to meet with me sooner, you can reach me at (phone number).”

I'm eager to sit down with you to discuss the contribution I can make to ABC Organization as it works to create a regional planning group. I'll follow up with a call next Wednesday. Or, you can reach me immediately on my mobile phone at 888-888-8888. Thank you for your time and consideration.

No-action close

A no-action close hands control of the interviewing process over to the reader. It essentially says that you’ll sit tight and wait by the phone for an employer to call. This is the weakest way to close your cover letter.

A copy of my resume is enclosed for your review and consideration. If you have an interest in my background, I would be pleased to hear from you.

Letting the employer chase you

A-list job seekers with high-demand skills — a rare bunch — can make a case for using a no-action close to avoid looking too eager. The strategic merit of presenting yourself as so attractive a candidate that employers will bust their chops to hire you was straightforwardly expressed by master yogi Baba Hari Dass: *If*

you chase the world, it runs from you. If you run from the world, it chases you.

Everybody else: Resume cover letters are a form of marketing. Hang onto control of your interviewing process by using an action close.

Examples of the Action Closes

You need a competitive edge to get ahead in a competitive market today. Here are 16 solid closes to help you score that interview.

- ✓ I look forward to our conversation. I'll e-mail you in a few days to coordinate a time that's convenient for you.
- ✓ Because e-mail can't replace face-to-face discussion, I'll call soon to set up an interview.
- ✓ Thank you in advance for reviewing my resume. I enthusiastically anticipate discussing my qualifications in an interview. I'll e-mail you on Thursday to validate your interest.
- ✓ I look forward to speaking with you personally to discuss your specific needs and my ability to meet them. I'll call your administrative assistant next week to see what time would be most convenient for you.
- ✓ I welcome a personal interview to discuss how my qualifications can augment your company's excellent reputation for purchasing acumen. I'll e-mail you on Tuesday to see whether we can meet.
- ✓ I'm excited about employment opportunities within your agency and hope to explore contributions I can make. I'll e-mail you within the week to see when your calendar is open.
- ✓ I hope to play an active role in the future prosperity of your organization. I'll contact you next week to talk about this job or other positions where your needs and my talents meet.
- ✓ As you requested, here's my resume. I'll check back with you next week to flesh out any blank areas. Thanks for your interest.
- ✓ My resume follows. I'll telephone you next week to answer any questions you may have and, I hope, set up a time convenient to meet in person.
- ✓ Recognizing that you may be difficult to reach, I'll check with your secretary next week to set a convenient time for us to meet. Flexibility is my middle name, and I'll be glad to meet during or outside normal business hours. Thanks, and I look forward to meeting with you personally.
- ✓ Thank you for calling me back today. I'm sorry I was not in but will telephone you tomorrow to find a convenient time to speak with you on the phone and meet you in person.
- ✓ I'll contact you within a few days to determine if and when your schedule will allow us to meet. Meeting you will not only be a pleasure but offers profitable vistas for both of us. My thanks for your time.
- ✓ As a resume is limited in the information it conveys, why don't we meet in person? If you need additional facts before arranging an interview, call me at 888-888-8888. Otherwise, I'll e-mail you next week to confirm your interest.

When an ad forbids you to call

How can you use an action close in responding to a job ad that says “No phone calls” or “Don’t call us; we’ll call you if you match a job opening”? Here are a couple of moves to consider in writing your cover letter.

- ✔ **Substitute e-mail.** You can still use an action close by changing your promise from “I’ll call you” to “I’ll e-mail you.”
- ✔ **Play the coincidence card.** Send your cover letter (with an action close) and resume to

the company president or hiring manager. Don’t mention the ad. The employer’s assumption will be that your timing is serendipity — you just happened to apply at the same time the company needs someone with your assets. The company president most likely will forward your material to the hiring manager or HR department with a note calling attention to you.

- ✔ My salary needs are in line with the position’s description and what I bring in abilities. I’ll e-mail you Tuesday to see when we can explore specifics.
- ✔ I would like to discuss with you why this position has my name on it, and I’ll call you at the beginning of next week to see what your schedule allows. Or if you need to reach me sooner, my number is listed above.
- ✔ Perhaps we could meet and jointly explore the many ways I could save your organization considerable time and money. I’m flexible on timing during business hours or afterwards. I’ll check your availability next week.



The purpose of your cover letter is to sell an employer on reading your resume and being motivated to take your call for an interview or to contact you for an interview. Without an interview, you’re unlikely to be offered employment.

P.S. A Final Important Point

Your effort to write a Stand Out letter is time well invested in your future. And now for one last cover letter tip that direct marketing writers have known for light years — add a P.S. after your signature. And not because you’re forgetful.

Adding a P.S. (postscript) to your letter is a spotlighting technique that marketers advise. In this usage, the P.S. does not communicate a point that you overlooked; instead, it communicates a point that you want to stand out and be read. What information can you put in your P.S.? You have two basic choices. They are:

Letters that give something to get something

The following illustration of a graduating senior's cover letter to the marketing manager of a large private student loan company is a bit of a tease. The letter's promise of a substantial benefit — two unpublished survey data points and the hint of more later — speaks directly to the marketing manager's need to identify criteria that can attract potential customers to his product. All he has to do to gain this benefit is agree to meet with the job seeker.

Dear Mr. ____:

Students on my campus are scrutinizing private education loans with a new intensity following a batch of high-profile bad press in recent years.

After becoming aware of their increased caution while working as an intern in my college's financial aid office, I followed up with a

personal research project surveying 300 students about their criteria for choosing a student loan provider. The project was the basis of a term paper required for my degree in marketing.

Among the marketing conclusions I reached as a result of my research project are these two points:

(Use a paragraph to describe each of the two points).

I hope you will find this information useful, Mr. ____, and also will consider me for your next marketing associate position. To make that decision, you'll need to know more about my background and abilities; my resume is attached. I'll call you Thursday morning to set up an interview. Many thanks.

- ✔ Communicate the single most important thing you want an employer to remember about you. Dangle a benefit. Here's an example of dangling a benefit:

P.S. I'm anxious to tell you how I increased the net profit by 12% for my employer in 2008. Let's talk soon.

- ✔ After your action close (*note: not an action close plus*) and signature, say something to drive the employer to call you first. Here's an example of urging an employer to pick up the phone and check you out:

P.S. I would work my heart out to be your best hire of the year. As mentioned, I will call you next week, but if you want to visit sooner, my cell phone is 999-999-9000.

Great Lines Woo Reluctant Readers

If your cover letter and resume duo fall in a noisy and crowded marketplace and no one is paying attention, will it make a sound? Make your words clear, concise, and interesting to read, and your message will wake up the neighborhood!

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