

Cover Letter Writing

Cover Letter

The cover letter introduces you to potential employers and should always accompany a résumé. A cover letter is an important marketing tool that clearly highlights the strengths of your candidacy. It is used to initiate contact with an employer, capture the employer's interest, demonstrate your credentials, and ultimately to secure an interview.

Types of Cover Letters

PROSPECTING/INTRODUCTORY LETTER

This type of letter is used to inform the employer of your interest and to inquire about available opportunities.

APPLICATION LETTER

This type of letter is the most common and is sent to an employer in response to a specific job or internship posting.

Cover Letter Content

Cover letters are written in a business letter format. A cover letter should not exceed one page in length and should consist of three to five paragraphs.

OPENING PARAGRAPH

Use the opening paragraph to introduce yourself. State your reason for writing and how you learned about the organization and/or position. If someone referred you, include the person's name and affiliation with that employer. Also, include two to three sentences demonstrating your level of interest and knowledge about the organization.

MIDDLE PARAGRAPH(S)

Use the middle paragraph(s) to emphasize and elaborate on your strongest qualifications and key experiences relevant to the position for which you are applying. Address any specific qualifications the employer may have listed in the job description. Use your résumé and cover letter to convey the complete picture of what you want the employer to know about you.

CLOSING PARAGRAPH

Generally, the closing paragraph is used to thank the reader for his/her consideration, to request an opportunity to discuss the position, and to indicate how the employer can reach you. For those conducting long distance searches, let the employer know if you plan to visit their geographical area, in hopes of arranging an interview during your stay.

Sample Cover Letters

Marie Hough

Slivka Hall · 2332 Campus Drive · Evanston, IL 60201 · (309) 555-2323 · Marichough@northwestern.edu

January 18, 2013

Penguin Group (USA)
Human Resources Department
Attn: Internship Coordinator
375 Hudson Street
New York, NY 10014

Dear Internship Coordinator:

I am a junior majoring in Comparative Literature with a minor in Public Health. Yet, to the librarian at home in New York, I am still the kid who bribes her friends for library cards each summer in order to evade the 30-books-per-week-limit. I was also the one who secretly hoped for rainy days in elementary school – it meant spending recess in the library.

Now that I am at Northwestern University, I have had the ability to branch out in my passion for reading. I have become interested in the legal processes of the literary world, and I am eager to see how a powerhouse publishing company responds to changes such as the rise in e-books. Since publishing is a field closed off to most students, I am eager to explore each Penguin Group department in both the Young Readers and Adult divisions, and was excited to find the posting on CareerCat. I would like to be considered a candidate for your summer internships in the following areas: contracts, editorial and subsidiary rights.

My interest in the publishing process began with forays in journalism. During my freshman year, I joined the copy desk of *The Daily Northwestern* and studied investigative reporting by editing articles. The following year, I used what I learned and began working on short clips, an activity culminating in my own investigative article about late-night dining options in Evanston. I then contacted the editor of *Newsday* newspaper and he invited me to join their copy desk that summer as their first undergraduate intern. Although the newspaper industry is a different type of print publishing, it was fantastic being part of the group revision process. I would walk out of the office each night with my nose stuck happily in a copy of the next morning's paper.

An internship with Penguin Group would introduce me to a new area of the publishing industry—one without which, story pitching and writing would be void. Working in the newsrooms has given me a wider view of research and writing than any class could have offered. Furthermore, it has given me an irreplaceable set of time-management skills. I hope to use the skills I have accrued in the long, but rewarding journey that goes into introducing a new novel to the bookshelf.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss my qualifications with you in more detail. I will be returning to New York for my Spring Break mid-March and would be available for an on-site interview. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Marie Hough
Marichough@northwestern.edu

Cover Letter Tips

- Address your cover letter to a specific person.
- Customize your cover letter for each employer.
- Solicit feedback on your cover letter.
- Proofread before submitting your application materials.

JOB POSTING

Penguin Group (USA) offers paid internship opportunities in various business areas such as contracts, editorial, finance, graphic design, managing editorial, marketing, online marketing, production, publicity, sales, subsidiary rights, and operations. Internship opportunities are available in our Young Readers and Adult divisions!

Research and writing experience, along with time-management skills are highly desirable qualities we look for in candidates.

The internship program consists of three 10-week long sessions. During the spring and fall, interns work 14 hours per week. During the summer, interns work 28 hours per week.

A series of lunch events are planned for summer interns. Brown Bag lunches give interns the opportunity to learn about different departments, and group lunches are designed to allow interns to network with each other as well as employees across the company.

The highlighted sections demonstrate how you can tailor your cover letter to the job description.

JOB POSTING

Associates work closely with BCG teams and the client organization as they conduct interviews, analyze data, communicate findings, and drive change. You will become adept at helping clients find answers to their toughest questions and implement necessary changes. No two experiences are the same, but all offer opportunities and challenges. BCG also offers career paths that include promotion directly to consultant, graduate school assistance, and career transition opportunities worldwide.

BCG offers you an experience that spans many industries, clients, and business issues with learning coming in all shapes and sizes, from intensive orientation programs to ongoing training and on-the-job apprenticeship. As an associate, you will be challenged to develop firsthand knowledge of clients' critical business issues, building client-management, problem-solving, and communications skills. You will be given ownership of significant segments of client projects, as well as responsibility for supporting the broader problem-solving effort. You will conduct interviews with key market players and industry specialists and analyze clients' performance. Your findings, and contributions to team discussions, will help deliver impact for clients.

In addition to a strong academic record, we seek candidates who are team contributors, having excellent problem-solving skills, exceptional communication skills, strong quantitative and analytical skills, and are proven leaders.

Baxter Rosi

1234 Chicago Avenue Apt. 2A, Evanston, IL 60201 · brosi4@u.northwestern.edu · 847.555.3211

September 29, 2014

Jack Smith
Director of Human Resources
The Boston Consulting Group
300 N. LaSalle
Chicago, IL 60654

Dear Mr. Smith:

I am writing to apply for the Associate position at The Boston Consulting Group. Currently, I am a senior at Northwestern University and a double major in Political Science and International Studies with a minor in Business Institutions. The Boston Consulting Group stands out to me because of its wide range of capabilities in the global market and the customized approach it takes to address client's challenges. In addition, the opportunity to chart my own course in a supportive and challenging environment is very important to me. I have spoken at length about this position with Ann Johnson, a current Associate with BCG, and our discussions have reinforced my enthusiasm for working at your organization upon graduation.

My internship and leadership experiences, as well as my academic performance, have given me the interpersonal and analytical skills to succeed at BCG. This past summer I worked at Target Corporation as a business analyst intern. My primary responsibilities included developing a strategic plan to increase Target's sales and cut costs through better product transition processes and creating a long-term plan to implement my recommendations. I, along with my other teammates, developed a plan to address the disconnect between the timing and scope of product transitions compared to the customer shopping trends and frequency, which led to a potential sales increase of \$10 million and receipt savings of \$9.3 million. Although the core of the internship involved quantitative work and trend analysis, the knowledge that I gained through the positive relationships I built with team members across the division was critical to my success.

In addition to my professional experiences, I have served as a leader at Northwestern in both the classroom and other capacities. Currently, I am the chair of the Northwestern program team for campusCATALYST, a student-run organization that pairs students with a non-profit to carry out a 10-week consulting project. I began my involvement with campusCATALYST as a sophomore, when I participated in the program as a community analyst during my winter term. I interned at a non-profit called GlobeMed, where I analyzed its current and prospective media strategies to determine how it could implement a more effective media campaign for its upcoming expansion. Last year, I was chosen to join the program team for campusCATALYST as a non-profit liaison. My responsibilities included recruiting and managing non-profit clients and the MBA mentors who worked with the students during their projects. In the spring of 2011, I was elected chair of the organization, and will be managing the 9-person program team as well as serving as the student liaison to our board of directors.

I believe my education, work experience, and leadership abilities make me a strong candidate for the Associate position. Enclosed is my resume that further outlines my education and work experience. I am excited to learn more about The Boston Consulting Group and look forward to the opportunity to discuss this position with you in person. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 847-555-3211 or brosi4@u.northwestern.edu. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to meeting with you soon.

Sincerely,

Baxter Rosi

Cover Letter Example

2133 Sheridan Rd.
Evanston, IL 60208

October 2, 2014

Oloroso Engineering
Morton Schapiro
2145 Sheridan Rd.
Evanston, IL 60208

Dear Mr. Schapiro,

I am writing to express my sincere interest in the Engineering Internship position that Oloroso Engineering is offering this summer. I am a sophomore chemical engineering student at Northwestern University, and I noticed this position through McCormick Connect. After reading more about the position and your company, I believe my talents align perfectly with what Oloroso Engineering is looking for.

I've developed a very diverse background throughout my collegiate career, and have been exposed to both research and industry as a chemical engineer. As a freshman I received an REU grant to perform research on microbial fuel cells. I worked with a team of undergraduates to optimize the fuel cells using anaerobic bacteria. This academic year, I gained exposure to industry by working on a project for Chicago Chemicals, Inc. through my student organization involvement. As a student process technician, I had the opportunity to join a team of consultants and engineers to get a pilot process off the ground. This experience gave me insight into chemical engineering and opportunity to apply material I have learned in school into practice. The experience also strengthened my ability to analyze data, and allowed me to further develop a more intuitive skill of looking at information and making decisions based on it.

While I have a technical background, I enjoy collaborative environments. I've held leadership positions in engineering clubs on campus, as well as executive roles in my fraternity. Further, I have always been a contributing member in group projects from many disciplines, which has fine-tuned my work ethic and my communication skills. As such, I believe I have both the technical and soft skills that would make me a strong employee in your firm.

The Engineering Internship that Oloroso Engineering is offering appeals to me because of the unique challenges I would face. This position is an excellent starting point for my career, and I would appreciate the opportunity to learn more about this role. I can be contacted at 555-555-5555, or through e-mail at billgates@u.northwestern.edu. Thank you for your time and consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Regards,

Bill Gates
Northwestern University
McCormick School of Engineering, Class of '13