Drafting a Cover Letter for a Professional Counseling Position

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While a resume or vita offers a history of your experiences and accomplishments, many employers use a cover letter to get a quick overview of your experiences and identify how you believe your qualifications uniquely fit into their position. The cover letter provides an opportunity to introduce and sell yourself to the employer.

When you write your letter, always focus on the needs of the employer (i.e., what they are looking for, how you fill their needs, etc.). To stand out and avoid a generic letter, be specific in tailoring your cover letter and consider the following:

- Address the letter to the person reviewing your resume. A simple phone call or reviewing the hiring announcement can help you find the correct information.
- Highlight skills or experience you would bring to the position. Do not just duplicate your resume but target ways that would help the employer fill their need.
- Consider making your cover letter not only informative but also persuasive.
- Make it easy for the person to contact you: list your phone number and times you can be reached.

Cover Letter Outline

Opening Paragraph: Who and Why?

- Utilize a strong opening to attract the reader's interest.
- Name the title of job for which you are applying and briefly describe how you learned about it. This lets them know you have done your research and that your letter is directed specifically to them.
- Mention the name of a person (if any) who referred you to the organization.

Second Paragraph: Your Skills and Qualifications

- Acknowledge the skills required for the open position and odd hours if required.
- Discuss the skills, education, certifications and other strengths you bring to the job, making parallels to the needs of the position. Display a tone of confidence but not arrogance.
- Consider briefly describing a related achievement or success story and discussing how it will transfer to the job.
- Comment on your knowledge of the company (their products, services, or special projects) and why you are interested in working for them.
- Briefly state how you think you and the company would be a good fit (their mission statement, training, job description, etc.).

Closing Paragraph: Action Step

- Restate any important themes, creatively tying them together into a cohesive, emphatic sales pitch.
- Refer to enclosed resume.
- Let them know that are available for a personal interview at her/his convenience and list your contact information.

Email Correspondence

More frequently, employers are requesting online or email submissions of resumes and applications. There are some general guidelines when using email as follows:

- Remain formal. Although email is typically a more informal communication system, becoming informal too quickly or without invitation could lose you the job.
- Use the subject line effectively. Employers receive hundreds of emails each day; therefore list your name, the position, or other pertinent information that might be used in a quick search if they need to find your information.
- Always include your full contact information in the signature line so they can easily contact you if necessary.
- You may attach a cover letter with your resume or when using the body of the email as your cover letter, condense it into 1-2 paragraphs.
- Double check that you have typed in the correct email address and if you have not received a response from them within a week (or timeframe they have listed), send a follow up email (or call) to ensure your resume was received.
The Final Review

Just as you would have someone review your resume, it is essential to have someone look over your cover letter to ensure it best demonstrates how you fit their position. Employers often spend less than 30 seconds on each cover letter as they are sifting through resumes. Therefore it is important to ensure your cover letter grabs the employer’s attention and lets them know you

Sample Counseling Cover Letters

- Recent Graduate Mental Health Cover Letter
- Recent Graduate: School Counseling Cover Letter
- Mental Health Therapist Cover Letter: CV Tips
- Networking Cover Letter: Resumagic