

Cover Letters That Knock 'Em Dead

By Martin Yate

Cover Letters – General

- Grab your reader's **Attention**. Do this with quality stationary and envelopes.
- Generate **Interest** with content. Do this addressing the letter to a person, not title, and quickly explaining what you have to offer. The first sentence grabs attention, rest give the reader the old one-two punch. Say it strong. Say it straight. Do some research.
- Now, turn the Interest into **Desire**. First, tie yourself to the job category. Next, call attention to your merits with short paragraphs that highlight one or two special achievements.
- Now turn Desire into **Action**. You achieve Action with brevity-leave the reader wanting more. Make it clear you want to talk. Explain when, where and how you can be contacted. You can now be proactive by telling the reader you intend to follow up at a certain point in time if contact has not been established by then. The closing must be strong and tight; keep it strong, make it light, and make it obvious that you are serious about entering into meaningful conversation.

What Goes In, What Stays Out

Job skills and behavioral traits are under close scrutiny. You must demonstrate your awareness and possession of the learned behavioral traits that make for successful professionals and good hires.

- Personal Profile
 - Drive: a desire to get things done
 - Communication skills: more than ever, the ability to talk and write effectively is a key to success
 - Chemistry: companies are looking for people who don't get rattled, ear a smile, is confident without self-importance, and gets along with others
 - Energy: someone who always gives that extra effort
 - Determination: someone who does not back off when a problem gets tough
 - Confidence: someone who isn't intimidated nor overly familiar with the big boys
- Professional Profile
 - Reliability
 - Honesty/integrity
 - Pride
 - Dedication
 - Analytical skills
 - Listening skills
- Achievement Profile
 - Money Saved-every penny saved by your thought and efficiency is a penny earned for the company
 - Time Saved-double bonus
 - Money Earned-generating revenue is the goal of every company
- Business Profile
 - Efficiency
 - Economy
 - Procedures
 - Profit

Your goal is to draw attention to as many of these traits as possible by direct statement, inference, and illustration

A Basic Checklist

- Address a person, not a title...a person in a position to hire whenever possible\
- Tailor to the reader, show that you've done your homework
- Show concern, interest, and pride...demonstrate energy and enthusiasm
- Avoid stuffiness
- Include information relevant to the job you are seeking
- Ask for the next step in the process, clearly and without apology or arrogance

Create Punchy Sentences

- Concise, punchy sentences grab attention. Sentences gain power with verbs that demonstrate action. Use verbs to show that things happened when you were involved.
- Vary sentence structure...using short, punchy sentences.

- KISS...(keep it simple, stupid) Use common words. Stay away from obscure words.
- Be consistent with the voice used.
- The initial letter should usually be one page. Generally, no job-hunting letter should exceed two pages.

Power Phrases

“Cold” letters to prospective employers-

My twenty-two year operations management career with a mult-billion dollar _____ company has been at increasing degrees of responsibility. While I have spent the last five years in top management, I am especially proud of my record. _____ I have consistently accomplished all goals assigned to me, particularly cost reductions, improved productivity, and customer service. Some of my achievements are:

Your recent acquisition of the _____ company would indicate an intent to pursue _____ market opportunities more vigorously than you have in the past several years. I believe that my _____ management background would complement your long-range strategy for _____ very effectively.

With the scarcity of qualified _____ personnel that exists today, it is my thought that you would be interested in my qualifications as set forth in the attached resume.

My accomplishments include:

As my resume indicates, I have demonstrated commitment to clients and to my employer's goals. That track record is consistent in my career endeavors as well as in my life as a whole. I dedicate myself to whatever task is at hand, marshal my resources and stay with the project until it is completed to my satisfaction. Since my goals and demands are even more stringent than my employer's expectations, I consistently exceed quotas and objectives.

I'm a clear communicator equally at ease with senior management, governmental officials and control agencies, vendors and contractors, construction/labor force. I'm a hard-driving manager who is project driven and is accustomed to inspiring the best job performance possible from associates and employees. I'm also creative enough to be in compliance with agency requirements without sacrificing profit or deadlines.

“Resurrection” letters-

I turned down your job, but for reasons that I will go into when we meet, I would like to reopen our discussions. If you think such a conversation would be mutually beneficial, I hope we can get together. I'll call next week to see when you have a half hour or so of free time.

As you continue your search, I would like to ask that you keep in mind the following accomplishments and experiences that I would bring to the job.

I am still in the market for an executive position that matches my qualifications and abilities. I am open to relocating throughout the United States and overseas. If any positions become available, I would be interested in hearing from you.

Thank-you letters-

I am writing not only to share this good news with you, but most importantly, to thank you for your efforts on my behalf. If there is ever anything that I can do for you, please do not hesitate to call on me.

I want you to be among the first to know that my job search has come to a very successful conclusion.

I appreciate all the help and support you have provided over the last several months. It has made the job search process much easier for me. I look forward to staying in contact with you. Please let me know if I can be of any assistance to you in the future.

Examples-

For a Product Manager-

If you are looking for a successful executive to take charge of new product marketing, you will be interested in talking to me.

Ten years of experience in every aspect of marketing and sales in different industries gives me the confidence to be open to opportunities in almost any field. My search is focused on companies that innovate, because I am

particularly effective at new product marketing. I have successfully managed new product-marketing research, launch planning, advertising, product training, and sales support, as well as direct sales. In my current position with ___, I created several products and marketing approaches on which other operating divisions in the company based their programs.

My business education includes a Marketing MBA from _____, and provides me with a variety of useful analytical tools in managing business problems and maximizing opportunities. My superior sales track record guarantees that I bring the reality of the marketplace to each business situation; I know that sells and why.

Since I am currently weighing several interesting opportunities, please contact me immediately if you are conducting any searches that might be a good fit. Relocation is no problem.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

For Sales-

Please accept this letter as application for the _____ position currently available with your company in the _____ area.

I offer a successful background in sales and marketing as well as an education in the sciences. My experience has afforded me exposure to many aspects of sales, including prospecting, account acquisition, territory management and development, and customer service. I have been recognized by my current employer for numerous achievements, and I am confident that I can make similar contributions to _____.

My education has given me a broad exposure to science and psychology, knowledge which I am sure will be valuable in this position.

Since beginning with _____, my average commission has progressed from \$___ to \$___ weekly. My current salary and commission requirement would range upward of the mid _____, with specifics flexible and negotiable.

I look forward to hearing from you in the near future to schedule an interview at your convenience, during which I hope to learn more about the position, your company's plans and goals, and how I can contribute to the success of your sales team.

For Senior Marketing Executive-

I recently learned of your firm's excellent record of matching senior marketing executives with top corporations. I also have learned that you have an officer-level marketing assignment in process now-I am a serious candidate for your client's vacancy. Please consider some successes:

- After joining _____ as Marketing Director, I revitalized a declining processed-meats product category in less than a year, introducing better-tasting formulas and actually reducing product costs by over \$100,000. Dramatic new packaging enhanced appetite appeal, and fresh promotion strategies doubled previous sales records.
- I have carefully crafted and fine-tuned many new product introductions and line extensions, such as ___ turkey, ___ processed meats, and ___'s deodorant maxi-pads.
- My sales/marketing experience dates from 1975, when I formed a direct sales company to pay for my ___ MBA (now the top-rated program in the USA, I'm proud to say). Much of my subsequent success springs from strong working relationships with sales management and joint sales calls with field reps and marketing brokers. I have designed events like the ___ program, and ___'s sponsorship of the Indy 500 Williams racing team.
- I have strong personal and professional interest in consumer electronics. I consult professionally and have successfully adapted marketing techniques for home and commercial satellite systems, "high-tech" audio/video, and radio communications equipment.

Please inform your client I am fluent in French and I quickly absorb other languages. If your client challenges executives with the greatest of responsibilities and rewards them for remarkable performance, please contact me as soon as possible. I'll quickly repeat my past successes.