Writing a good cover letter

A Cover letter has three important components: How did you learn about the position; why are you applying for the position and how are you going to follow up with the position. Each of these core components are a separate

Paragraph 1 – How did you learn about the position?
In this first paragraph, you are informing the recruiter specifically which position you are applying for and letting them know how you learned of the position.

- List the job title exactly as it is stated and include any reference numbers or job requisition numbers that might be listed in the job description/posting.
- Did you learn about the position from a job posting? If so, where was the position? You should name the specific website, newspaper or periodical that the position was posted.
- Did you learn about the position from someone specifically? List that person's name and title and how the recruiter would associate that person with the position.

Paragraph 2 – Why are you applying for this position?
This paragraph is not for you to rewrite your entire resume. It's available to you to highlight specific key skills or job experiences that are required for the position.

- Review the job description and pull from the description key words and phrases. Associate those words/phrases with specific experiences or skills listed on your resume.
- Pull in buzz words or jargon typical for this position into this area.
- List companies or organizations that you have worked with that might be familiar to the company you are applying.

Paragraph 3 – How are you going to follow up?
In this paragraph, don't put the burden of follow up on the recruiter. Be proactive here and let the recruiter know that you will follow up.

- For those that state, they will look forward to the recruiter calling them, might be waiting by the phone for a long long time.
- Be specific about the time and date, you will follow up but give the person at least a week to two weeks to receive and process your letter and application. Examples: I will call a week from next Tuesday about 3pm. I will call on Wednesday, October 4th at 4pm.
- You may provide a light schedule of your availability just in case. Examples: I am available Tuesday and Thursday afternoons or Mondays and Wednesdays 10am to 1pm.

Thanks you letters
Thank you letters should be sent to all people that have helped you in your job search process whether or not if that person has directly lead you to the position you ultimately receive.

**Key points:**
- Go buy some blank thank you cards and keep them easily accessible
- Have a book of stamps at all times for easy mailing
- Remember to ask people along the way for their business card or contact information. Put a notation on the back of their card on how they helped you, a key talking point you discussed, and any follow up dates or information. These notations will help you write any thank you cards and put some reminder to your conversation to the person receiving the card. It’s that personal touch that always makes receiving a hand written thank you card special
- Thank you cards should be hand written and mailed NOT emailed. Emails are too easy and are not special. You want the person to feel like you took a few extra minutes and that the help they provided to you meant something. Also, people tend to keep cards for several days on their desk. It will act as a constant reminder to that person about your and your skills.
- Thank you cards should be mailed within 24-48 hours.

**Networking Correspondence (Informational Interviewing)**

Networking is the number one way that people still find a position. Students searching for a job should be prepared to let everyone they know that they are in a job search. This includes: Parents, Neighbors, Friends, Friends’ Parents, University Faculty and Staff, etc. One never knows where you will get the job lead that will ultimately end in your successfully landing the career of a lifetime. This said, there are several formal ways to conduct your networking with people and acquaintances.

- Alumni: Alumni are a great way to connect with people already in your industry or chosen profession. Alumni can assist with direct industry contacts, advice on their profession, as well as vital information regarding industry organizations and associations that you should join. Most Career Centers and/or Alumni Associations have a database of Alumni willing to act as a contact or even Mentor. Be cognizant that they are volunteering their time. Be succinct, be brief and above all be thankful. It’s not their job to find you a job. Keep in mind that you will have the ability to contact young alumni (provide better information on how to conduct your current job search since they were more recently in your situation) to more mature alumni that might be better with higher level contacts and Career Path information.
• Community Leaders/Business Leaders/Recruiters: Typically your career center will have a database of employers and recruiters that are aligned with your University or College. Begin with this group of since they have previously worked with the institution either as a speaker, career fair attendee, or job posting.

• Parent Programs: Many Universities have begun Parental Networking programs. Similarly to an Alumni Database, the Parental Database is a list of Parents of current or past students. These parents are usually well established in their professions and can provide similar information to your more mature alumni. Check with your Career Center or Alumni Association for more information about your Institution’s current parent program.

• Former DEI members: Ask your Chapter Advisor or National Secretary for contact information. Let them know when contacting them that you are a current DEI member.

Your correspondence should/ could contain the following information:

• How did you come by their contact information? (You were listed in the Alumni Database; I received your contact information from Professor X)

• Why are you contacting them? (Learn more about their industry; need a contact within their or other similar companies’ HR department; information about job market in their geographic area)

• If asking them for networking advice, always make sure to request at least two names (typically one person will work out and one might not. Having more than one contact will keep your networking moving forward and not coming to a dead end).

• How did they find their job (which contacts, job boards, associations)?

• Describe their Career Path (How did they get to where they are today?)

• Is there anything that if they could, would have done differently in their own job search?

• Keep in mind that these contacts might be helpful beyond your career search. If your new job requires you to relocate, these contacts might help with learning more about your new city: best areas to live, how to get around, places to shop, social networks, etc.

If you are calling, again, be cognizant of their time.

• Have your statement prepared ahead of time and rehearsed. You will sound more professional with a prepared introduction and statement. Make sure to introduce yourself (if its an alumnus/ae inform them you attend their alma mater and how you came by this person’s contact information.

• Have your goal set and direct the conversation in that direction: Are you wanting to meet with this person or schedule a phone meeting? Are you looking for guidance or direction? Are you looking for leads or contacts?
• If you get this person's voicemail, leave a succinct message of who you are, why you are calling, a good time and number to return the call, and most importantly that leave a time when you will call again if you haven't heard back (example: I will try again next Tuesday at 3pm or I will try to call again the morning of the 15th).

If you are requesting an informational interview:
• Keep in mind that this is not a way around that company's formal interview process. Informational interviewing are strictly a way to learn more about a specific career, company, industry or field from a person with first-hand knowledge. It can lead to future job interviewing, industry contacts and leads, as well as starting to build a strong networking base.
• Will this meeting be in person or phone?
• As usual, be conscientious of their time.
• Have a list of questions prepared (your career center staff can assist with a list of questions or try sites such as
  http://jobsearch.about.com/od/infointerviews/a/infointervquest.htm
  http://agecon.tamu.edu/graduate/pdf/mabinfointv.pdf
  http://www.nesl.edu/CSO/handbook/INFOINT05.pdf
• Start off the questions by getting to know the person. Other typical questions to consider: What is a typical day like? What are things you like best about your job? Least? Avoid questions that might be too personal such as benefits and salary (Unless asked generally like what is a typical salary range for this type of position).
• It would be courtesy to send a few of the questions ahead of time to give the person being interviewed a chance to prepare some answers.
• If you are conducting the interview in person at their office, dress professionally. You still want to make sure you give a good first impression.
• If you are looking for additional leads or contacts, make sure to request at least two and ask them specifically how they should be contacted and if you can state how you were referred to them (will your contact allow you to use their name in the process)

Always ALWAYS send a thank you card to anyone that has provided you the time to assist you with your job search!!!!!!