

# DYNAMITE COVER LETTERS

BECOME POWERFUL WITH A STRATEGIC MIX OF MARKETING KNOW-HOW AND WORD POWER WITH SPARKLING BEGINNINGS AND POLISHED ENDINGS.



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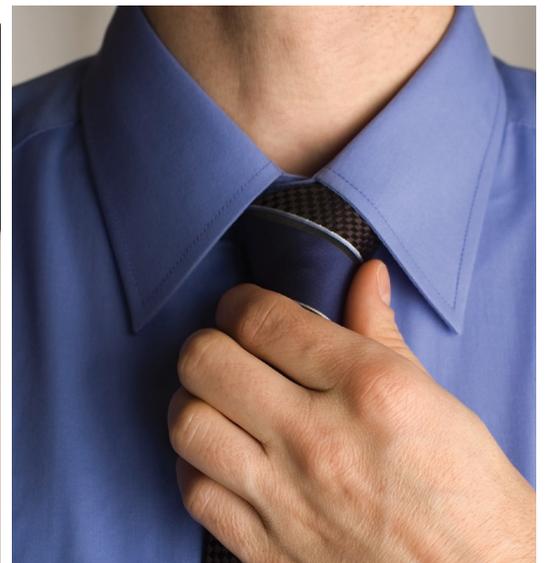
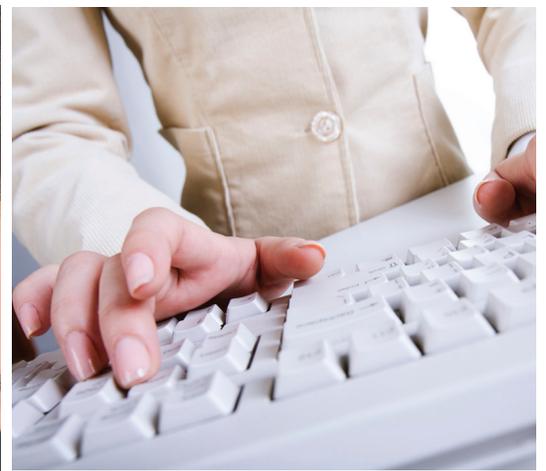
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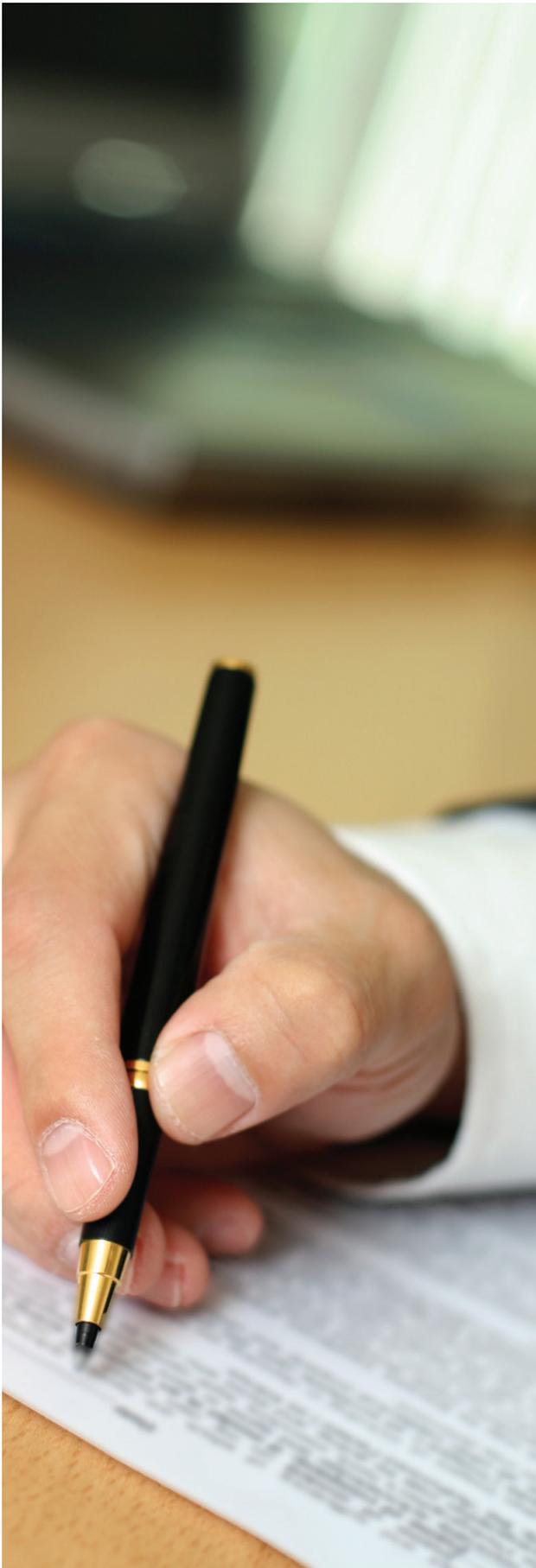
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## DEFINITION OF A COVER LETTER

A letter of application sent with a resume in response to an advertised position, a letter of introduction for no job advertised, or to a Headhunter.

Neglect the importance of a dynamite cover letter – and other types of job search letters - and you neglect one of the most important elements in a successful job search.

## ADVANTAGES OF A COVER LETTER

- > Gives employers a quick summary of how your qualifications match their needs.
- > Highlights unique, specific contributions you would bring.
- > Makes a positive first impression.
- > Attracts and holds interest, inspiring employers to find out more about you from your resume and in an interview.



## WHAT DOES YOUR READER NEED TO KNOW?

### Step #1: Opening paragraph

- > Concise, punchy sentences grab attention!
- > Identify your target job.
- > Where you saw the ad.
- > If someone who knows the employer referred you, give the name of that person.
- > Your interest in the position.

### Step #2: Second paragraph

- > Highlight your strongest qualifications.
- > Demonstrate how these qualifications will benefit the employer.

### Step #3: Third paragraph

- > Demonstrate your knowledge of the company. Create interest by showing your value.

### Step #4: Fourth paragraph

- > Give a detailed description of your experience. Show employers (do not tell) your qualifications.

### Step #5: Closing paragraph

- > Thank the employer in advance for their consideration and that you are looking forward to meeting with soon.



## PURPOSE OF A COVER LETTER

Your cover letter should:

1. Explain why you are sending a résumé. Do not send a résumé without a cover letter (unless you are explicitly asked to do so.) Do not make the reader guess what you are asking for or what you have to offer; be specific: Do you want a summer internship opportunity or a permanent position at graduation? Are you inquiring about future employment possibilities?
2. Tell specifically how you learned about the position or the organization (for example, through a flier posted in your department, a specific directory in the Career Development Centre, or a family friend who works at the organization). It is appropriate to mention the name of someone who suggested that you write (if you have their permission).
3. Convince the reader to look at your résumé. The cover letter will be seen first and should complement your résumé. Therefore, it must be very well written and targeted to the employer.
4. Call attention to elements of your background – education, leadership, experience – that are all relevant to the position to which you are seeking. Be as specific as possible, using examples that make you uniquely qualified.
5. Reflect your attitude, personality, motivation, enthusiasm and communication skills.
6. Provide or refer to any information specifically requested in a job advertisement that is not covered in your résumé, such as your availability date or the inclusion of a required writing sample.
7. If possible, provide “extra value” statements which will increase your desirability.

## COVER LETTER PITFALLS

- > Too many sentences start with “I”
- > Focuses too much on how you will benefit
- > Too vague; expects readers to find everything in resume
- > Is dull; does not capture the reader’s attention

# TOP TEN SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES BC EMPLOYERS ARE LOOKING FOR

Adapted from the Business Council of BC 2010 Biennial Skills and Attributes Survey Report found at [bcbc.com/Documents/TEF\\_SS\\_2010\\_CompleteReport.pdf](http://bcbc.com/Documents/TEF_SS_2010_CompleteReport.pdf)

From the list of Attributes, employers were asked to choose ten key Attributes they sought in all new job hires. Take these into consideration when you ask yourself “what is it that employers are looking” and how can I fill these roles

## TOP ATTRIBUTES

- > Positive attitude/motivation/energy/passion – 96.8%
- > Self-motivated/able to work with little or no supervision – 93.5%
- > Honesty/integrity – 93.5%
- > High performance standards – 87.1%
- > Accountability/responsibility – 83.9%
- > Dedication/hardworking/tenacity – 80.6%
- > Customer service oriented – 74.2%
- > Flexibility/adaptability – 74.2%
- > Willingness to work and learn – 71.0%
- > Leadership/management skills – 67.7%

## TOP SKILLS

- > Speaking/listening – 93.3%
- > Judgment/decision making – 93.3%
- > Teamwork – 90.0%
- > Problem solving – 86.7%
- > Writing – 83.3%
- > Critical thinking – 80.0%
- > Flexibility/adaptability/multi-tasking – 76.7%
- > Planning/time management – 76.7%
- > Computer competency – 73.3%
- > Efficient use of technology, tools and equipment – 67.7%



# COVER LETTERS THAT INCREASE SALARIES AND LAND MORE INTERVIEWS

To increase the likelihood of an employer taking the time to read your cover letter you need to use design that saves them time. Just like your resume, your cover letter is also part of your marketing package and should also incorporate the primary components of an excellent advertisement design and content. You can create a cover letter with excellent design, by using main headings are bolded statements that match the positions for which you are applying. Such strategies will direct and control the employer’s eye path and sell your top skills in 4–5 seconds.

## POWERFUL CONTENT

After you’ve gotten an employer’s attention, the content of your cover letter must convince an employer to interview you. I always think of cover letters being much like the opening and closing statements that lawyers give when representing a client in court. Before making such statements lawyers carefully analyze facts that prove why their clients should win. They structure and prioritize their arguments for maximum impact. You want to do the same thing with your cover letters. To build a convincing case of your qualifications it’s important that you analyze and address each employer’s needs. Most people write very weak cover letters that don’t build a convincing case for their qualifications. By following the strategies you’re about to learn you’ll create powerful letters that put you way ahead of your competition.

## EXERCISE #1

I’d like you to pretend that you want to apply for the position shown below. Read the ad and consider writing a cover letter for it. In the space provided for notes, make a list of the personal traits, characteristics and abilities you think would be important to put in your letter in response to this ad. You’ll learn more if you do this exercise, before reading further.

**DRIVER/DELIVERY PERSON**  
 2+ years’ experience driving and delivering high value products in the Burnaby area  
 Customer Service experience dealing with corporate accounts  
 Salary \$36,000.  
 Send resume to Ms. Perry, Personnel,  
 XYZ Company, 1234 Harbourview Ave, Burnaby, BC V59 5B7

How many personal traits and skills did you list? Which of the lists below do you think will be more likely to grab an employer’s attention for this ad? This exercise illustrates why most people write such weak cover letters. Job seekers often go off on tangents that seem to relate to what the employer wants to hear, but such cover letters fall short because they don’t address the specific skills employers are requesting.

What Most People List		5 Skills or Areas of Knowledge Requested
Bondable	Knows the Area	2 + Years Driving Experience
Trustworthy	Likes to Deal with People	Delivering high Value Products
Dependable	Attention To Detail	Knowledge of the Lower Mainland Area
Excellent Driving Record	Accounting Skills	Corporate Accounts
Self-Motivated	Time Management	

**With this delivery ad in mind, study the two cover letters on page 8 and 9.**

1. Which letter has the strongest design and content?
2. Which one emphasizes the five skills or areas of knowledge requested in the ad?
3. Of these letters who would you call for an interview?
4. Who do you think you would be willing to pay more money to?

# SAMPLE LETTER #1

**Gerald Johnston**  
5556 Gilmore Avenue  
Burnaby, BC V90 J67  
604-123-0000

September 20, 2xxxx

Ms. Stacy Moffat  
Personal Manager  
XYZ Delivery and Shipping  
1234 Harbourview Avenue  
Burnaby, BC 3N7 2M9

Dear Ms. Moffat,

Enclosed is my resume for the Driving position you recently advertised in the Sun paper.

I have several years driving and delivery experience. My work history is stable and I am looking for a position that offers challenge and adequate compensation.

I have enjoyed working with customers in the right employment setting but prefer independent work as a driver/delivery person. My driving and customer service experience seems to qualify me for this job.

I look forward to an interview. You may contact me at 604 – 555-5555. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Gerald Johnston

## SAMPLE LETTER #2

**Gerald Johnston**

5556 Gilmore Avenue  
Burnaby, BC V90 J67  
604-123-0000

September 20, 2xxxx

Ms. Stacy Moffat  
Personal Manager  
XYZ Delivery and Shipping  
1234 Harbourview Avenue  
Burnaby, BC 3N7 2M9

Dear Ms. Moffat,  
Enclosed please find my resume for the Driving position you recently advertised in the Vancouver Sun.  
As you will note, my experience includes:

- Over 5 years driving experience within the Lower Mainland area.
- Making deliveries of up to \$250,000 in cash and high value merchandise.
- Providing customer service to corporate accounts such as TELUS.
- Excellent driving and safety record with history of reliability and trustworthiness.
- A highly motivated, diplomatic, and flexible professional.

My experience delivering high value merchandise within the Lower Mainland area combined with my Customer service experience makes me well qualified for this position.

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 your company's plans and goals and how I might contribute to the success of its service team. In the mean time I can be reached at 604-111-0000.

Sincerely,

Gerald Johnston

# SAMPLE COVER LETTER

## RESPONSE TO ADVERTISEMENT

Today's date

Full name of person letter is addressed to  
Address of Company

Dear Mr. / Ms. Contact person for this post  
*(always try to get a name; do not use "To Whom it may concern")*

I am very interested in the *position you advertised* in *Source of Job advertisement* and I believe I have the qualifications to successfully fulfill your requirements.

How I have demonstrated these abilities include the following accomplishment:

*Fact 1*

*Fact 2*

*Fact 3*

(Match the above facts with the requirements of the job you are applying for: Employers like to see quantifiable facts and achievements)

I feel confident that I could be a valuable asset to your company and look forward to an interview to discuss how I may be able to contribute to your profitability and efficiency.

Thank you for your time and consideration, I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,

*Your Name*

# PROSPECTING COVER LETTER SAMPLE 1

May 15, 2XXX

John Doe  
Energy Communications for Southwest BC  
3301 East Pender Street  
Vancouver, BC, V5K 5J3

Dear Mr. Doe,

You are receiving this letter because my research into the Vancouver GIS sector has identified Energy Communications as an innovative and forward-looking firm. I am hoping that you might have 10 -20 minutes in the next few weeks to have a conversation with me.

Clearly, I am in the process of exploring how to move forward with my career in Canada utilizing the experience and education I have acquired in Canada and Europe in the field of Geographic Information Systems. My purpose in seeking a meeting with you is twofold:

- Enclosed is a draft of my current resume. Your comments on its usefulness in my pursuit of a new opportunity would be invaluable.
- There are several questions I would like to pose to you concerning the state of the industry, my potential at this time, and other information you might be willing to share.

I fully understand and recognize that you are busy, but I hope you would be willing to share your perspective, and experience with me. I am excited about prospects for the future, and look forward to discussing them with you. It is my intent to make a professional contribution to your company in which I am confident that my education and experience to date provide me with such.

Thank you in advance for your consideration, if at any time you would like more information I can be reached at 604-XXX-XXXX.

Sincerely,

John Doe

## PROSPECTING COVER LETTER SAMPLE 2

**SCOTT A. MACDONALD**

6600 Cypress Street  
Vancouver, BC  
V3M 0M1

June 23, 20XX

Mr. Tom Jackson  
Director of Marketing and Sales  
Computer Consultants  
1234 Broadway  
Vancouver, BC XXXXXX

Dear Mr. Jackson:

As I am just completing the requirements for my Bachelor of Commerce in Accounting at BCIT, I am exploring potential opportunities with a well-established firm that will lead to a career as a CGA. I hope to join an organization where I can learn and grow within the accounting profession and build a long-term relationship. With these goals in mind, I have enclosed for your consideration and review a resume that briefly outlines my credentials.

Some of the key experiences I can bring to a junior position with your firm include:

Administered Accounts Receivable and Payroll for an engineering firm that was also engaged in construction and custom manufacturing for a practicum.

- Prepared individual tax returns as part of a volunteer program in conjunction with BCIT.
- Served as Treasurer of a campus organization, Delta Beta Gamma, which encompassed maintaining financial records and provided financial reports to the auditing CGA and to the national organization.
- Proficiency with basic Windows and Microsoft Office applications; as well as a keen interest in technology and high-tech businesses.

Thanks so much for your consideration. I am confident that my education and experience to date provide me with skills that would be beneficial to your firm and its clients. I am eager to learn more about the challenges facing your organization, and to discuss how I can make a difference. I will be in contact next week to see if we are able to schedule a meeting date for an interview. I look forward to speaking with you soon. I can be reached at (604) 555.1XXX.

Sincerely,

**Scott MacDonald**  
SM  
enclosure

# EXERCISE #2

## WRITE A PERSUASIVE LETTER

Imagine you are an Accountant in a Vancouver Firm in 1882. Yesterday evening, you read the report in the Province paper about the new electric lighting. You think this lighting should be installed in your office building. Write a letter to the company president explaining why electric lighting is good for the company. Make notes on the line below. Then write your final letter on a separate sheet of paper.

1. The first paragraph in your cover letter should tell the president who you are, your position in the company, and that you read the article last night.

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2. Your second paragraph should summarize for the president, the advantages of electric lighting which the reporter mentioned.

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3. Your third paragraph should list the reasons why you think the company should install electric lighting. The most persuasive arguments will be those that lists how the company will be more efficient or cost-effective, and will make more money as a result. Keep in mind that installing electric lights will be very expensive, so you will have to justify to the president why the expense is a good investment and how it will pay off in the future?

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4. Finally, list some of the other advantages you can think of, such as the reporters comment “those electric lights did not give people headaches.”

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5. End the letter with an expression such as, “I look forward to discussing this matter with you further.
6. Sign and write your name; under your name, give your job title and department.
7. Now rewrite your draft notes as a formal letter on a separate sheet of paper.

## POINTS TO REMEMBER IN COVER LETTERS

- > A cover letter is a brochure, or an advertisement that informs potential contractors and employers of **what you can do for them!**
- > Remember to use the technique S.A.R. (situation / action / result).
- > Speak to the requirements of the job, especially when responding to a job advertisement.
- > Distinguish your cover letter from those of other job-seekers by quantifying and giving examples that amplify and prove the claims you make in your letter.
- > Try to answer the question that the employer will be asking while reading your letter: “why should I hire this person?”
- > Try to limit your paragraphs to no more than four or five sentences and your sentences to a maximum of two lines. The first sentence in a paragraph introduces the topic to be covered in that paragraph.
- > Ensure a neat, uncluttered and well-organized appearance.
- > Check your first draft for the number of times you have written “I”, monotony of sentence structure, and rambling text; these defeat your goal of writing an effective letter.
- > Edit your draft for clarity, tone, accuracy, proper spelling, punctuation, and grammar.

## FINAL CHECK

- > Personalize the letter to the organization you are sending it to. Savvy employers can tell when the letter they are reading has been mass produced.
- > Write about what you can contribute to the company, not how the position will contribute to you.
- > Vary the sentence structure; starting every sentence with “I” makes the letter dull and repetitive.
- > Ensure that the spelling and grammar is picture perfect. Fresh eyes can catch errors that writers may miss – so have someone else check it too!
- > Send it in a clean and crisp 9x12 envelope. Never fold or staple cover letters, resumes or application forms.

**Tip:** When emailing your application, type your cover letter into the body of your email address. Then combine your cover letter and resume into one document, name that document with your name (e.g. Lucy\_Chen.doc), and attach it to your email. When the employer opens your email, he or she reads your persuasive cover letter content and you make a professional first impression. Then he or she can download and save your complete application and then delete the email. So you are sending your cover letter in two formats.



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