

## Making More Effective Job Applications

If you're a student, chances are the job application process is something well known to you. If not, then it will likely be as you progress further into your studies and start to focus on getting a job in your career.

There is lots of advice about how to write a cover letter or resume, some of it good, some less so. Some people might tell you that there is one kind of cover letter and resume you need to write, but this can be risky to believe because there might be certain approaches which work better in different situations than others. A better way to look at cover letters and resumes is to first consider the role they have to play in your job applications then to think about the things you might be able to bring to the roles you're interested in.

### Cover Letters

Cover letters have one main purpose, that is to get the reader to continue on to read your resume. Once this has been achieved, that's not everything though, the cover letter can also serve as a major asset in other things that will showcase your value. You can use the cover letter to show a degree of your personal side to the reader, for instance if a particular job excites you, you might share this by saying something along the lines of "I'm really excited to apply for this job because of my interest in..."

Your cover letter is a good chance for you to show your written communication skills, and that you know how to write in an interesting way. Some jobs you might be applying for will have many applicants, even hundreds, so make sure that you carefully check your writing for spelling and grammar errors, as mistakes are often used to cut back applicants.

Your cover letter should be written specifically for each job application you make, the last thing a reader wants to experience is a generic cover letter which does not relate to the job or any previous conversations you've had with them. If there are too many applicants for the hiring person to go through, a mismatched cover letter might be what someone needs in order to remove one more application from the pile they have to go through.

A cover letter needs to only highlight the most important parts about your professional story, and because the tone you use will be less summarised than in your resume, you will take up more writing space. For instance, if your team has achieved some quarterly sales growth of 40%, in your cover letter you might write "while working in a team of mostly new team members, we were able to establish a really good sense of teamwork and culture, this was key to us being able to achieve a quarterly sales growth of 40% where the average was 20% among other teams"

## Resumes

Resumes have their own distinct purposes which are aimed to complement the cover letter. The main purpose of a resume is to outline your qualifications, experience, skills and to help the hiring person see why you might be suitable for the job.

There are lots of resume generators you can find online, they can seem to help you make a nice looking resume, but they focus on being quick. If you want to produce a carefully planned resume which showcases your unique value, these generators are probably best to stay away from.

Planning your resume, and also being willing to give it an occasional overhaul at certain points in your career is key to being able to make sure that your professional story, and value is always evident to others.

Some of the main features of a resume are to cover the following areas:

**Your study and qualifications** - If you have studied a short course, something at TAFE or University, put it here. If you've also got some study or academic achievements that are relevant, this is also a good chance to outline them, especially if they are relevant to a job you might apply for.

**Your skills** - We all have many different skills, so in this part you can put a list of the relevant skills you have, if you can show the skills in a unique manner also, that's even better. Take communication skills for example, many people mention this, but not many people mention that they can explain complex technical issues to non-technical audiences. If you hold a unique combination of skills, see how you can make that uniqueness stand out.

**Your work and volunteering experience** - This is where you can show the kind of work you've had and how its relevant to the jobs you're applying for. If you're trying to get a job as a junior consultant for instance and you've only got work experience in hospitality, this doesn't mean your experience is irrelevant, just that you need to take care on what you focus on. One thing that hospitality and consulting have in common, is customer service and making sure you correctly understand what the customer needs. Using an understanding of these connections can help you demonstrate how whatever experience you have is relevant and beneficial to potential employers

## Working with imperfect information

Sometimes you'll see a job ad which appeals to and excites you, and you'd like to really focus your resume and cover letter towards this job opportunity. Often thinking carefully about the job and trying to analyse the purpose and importance of the role to the organisation, can help you get your thinking focussed on how you can maximise the value you present in your cover letter and resume. All you need to do this is a job advertisement, but if you're not sure exactly where to start, we've prepared an exercise for you to do. This activity should only take you 10 minutes to start doing, and it's something you can use to

check if your cover letter and resume is focussed appropriately for the jobs you might want to apply for.

The activity can be [downloaded here](#).

Good luck with your job applications!