COVER LETTER WRITING

Bren School’s Career Development Program
Winter 2014
WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

The Big Picture
Purpose, Focus, Tips, and Content

Blunders
Avoiding Mistakes

How to Write a Cover Letter
The Process and Getting Help
COVER LETTERS: The Big Picture

The Purpose

• Introduces yourself/your resume to an employer
• Explains why you are writing/applying for the job
• Details why you are a good match for the organization and the position
• Demonstrates your abilities and helps to establish your credibility and professionalism
• Draws the readers' attention to specific qualifications
• Provides a sample of your writing skills
• Explains when you plan to contact your prospective employer (if applicable)
Cover letters should be:

- Targeted
- Professional
- Effective
- Reader-friendly
- Easily-edited
- Attention-grabbing
COVER LETTERS: The Big Picture

Focus: Keep it Targeted

- For **which job** are you applying?
- **Who referred** you?
- Why are you interested in **the company**?
- What makes you the **most qualified**?
- Why can’t they do without you?
- What **action** will you take?

Focus on what sells you the most!
COVER LETTERS: The Big Picture
Tips for Writing a Good Cover Letter

- Dear...
- Avoid H.R.
- No errors
- Qualifications = job requirements
- Personalize
- Clear objective
- Nice balance
- Appearance - bullets & branding
- Friendly
- Passion/Interest
- Skills/Experience
- Close with action
- Contact name
- 80% to 100% Rule
COVER LETTERS: The Big Picture

Important Cover Letter Content

• Accomplishments/Results
• Publications/Awards
• #s, %, +, -
• Names (when appropriate)
• Key words/hooks
• Experience
• Degrees
• Quality/Quantity
• Skills
• Related Courses/GP
COVER LETTERS: Blunders
**COVER LETTERS: Blunders**

Common Cover Letter Mistakes

- Unrelated goals
- Clichés
- Form letters
- Erroneous company information
- Omitted signature
- Long/boring/rambling
- Confessing shortcomings
- Misrepresentation/lies
- Personal information
- Tone trouble (e.g., desperate or demanding)
- Leaving the ball in the employer’s court
- Repeating your résumé
COVER LETTERS: Blunders

Common Cover Letter Mistakes (continued)

• Telling the employer what the company can do for you instead of what you can do for the company
• Not addressing the letter to a specific person
• Unsupported claims
• Sending cover letters without résumé or vice versa
• Similar language
• Writing a cover letter when you should be writing an email
• Forgetting to save things for the interview
• Failing to take a close look at the job description and not addressing as many job requirements/qualifications as possible
HOW TO WRITE A COVER LETTER: The Process
HOW TO WRITE A COVER LETTER
Process: Before You Start to Write

Make a list of job requirements/desirable qualities

• Job requirements
• Job duties
• Description of the company
• Company website and other documents
• Other (ex: Reference to location)

Make a list of your top selling points

• Specific to the job as well as in general
JOB DUTIES/PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Environmental Education: The Toyota International Teacher Program sends teachers overseas for 2-week study visits to countries facing environmental challenges and exploring innovative solutions. In support of this program, the intern will analyze/make recommendations on environmental education curriculum developed for secondary teachers, research environmental education policies in the US and make recommendations of environmental/conservation groups in selected markets.

ESQ Website: Environmental, Safety and Quality Communications recently launched a dedicated website to promote key ESQ programs and promote education and sharing of information related to environmental, safety and quality products. The intern will work cross-departmentally to cultivate new and edit existing environmental content to keep the website fresh and relevant.

Advanced Technology Market Preparedness Project: In 2010, Toyota began placing a limited number of plug-in hybrid vehicles and fuel cell vehicles with lease-fleet customers around the US. These vehicles are clustered regionally in urban areas with appropriate infrastructure and urban design elements to support mixed mobility in an effort to prepare the market for sales to the general public in the near future. The intern will assist with ongoing program implementation, including activities such as updates to communication tools for program partners, scheduling of vehicle placement for events and outreach, and support of the ESQ website development to track progress of vehicles and demonstration programs. This project will give the intern significant insight into the vehicle launch process and the opportunity to interact with multiple departments throughout the company.

REQUIRED SKILLS/QUALIFICATIONS:

Good computer skills. Detail-oriented. Good communication skills (intern will be working with many departments and therefore should be personable and have the ability to interact with others easily). Self-starter/self-directed. Applicant should be a candidate for master’s degree in environmental management or environmental science.
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January 14, 2014

Jana Hartline
Environmental Communications Manager
Toyota Motor Sales, USA, Inc.
19001 S. Western Ave.
Torrance, CA 90501

Dear Jana Hartline:

Bren Brennie
2400 Bren Hall, UCSB, Santa Barbara, CA 93106
805-893-2743 | bbren@bren.ucsb.edu

HOW TO WRITE A COVER LETTER
Process: Header — Sample
HOW TO WRITE A COVER LETTER

Process: The 1st Paragraph

• State the position for which you are applying
• Establish a connection
• Compliment the company and demonstrate knowledge
• Sell yourself (1 or 2 max lines)
• Express confidence that you are the right candidate
• Show enthusiasm
Dear Jana Hartline:

It was inspiring and exciting to hear you speak about the Corporate Communications and Contributions Internship during the Toyota Career Talk at the Bren School of UC Santa Barbara because it aligns perfectly with my professional interests. I was particularly intrigued by the extensive website development opportunities and the chance to work in research and development for the launch of a new “green” product, the RAV4. Furthermore, your emphasis on creativity and encouragement of interns to seek projects across departments indicate that this will be a dynamic, challenging, and rewarding internship. I am confident that my skills, experience, and drive will ensure that I hit the ground running and excel in this position.
This is where you will highlight your skills and qualifications, either by utilizing bullet points or in paragraph form.
I am currently pursuing a master’s degree from the Bren School with a specialization in Corporate Environmental Management and an emphasis in Strategic Environmental Communication and Media. My aim this summer is to gain extensive practical experience in order to complement my theoretical understanding of how corporations like Toyota effectively manage and communicate environmental achievements. This position is the ideal opportunity for me to learn practical skills while also making substantial contributions to a number of exciting Toyota projects.
Please consider my additional qualifications:

- **Excellent writing skills** - undergraduate degree in English Literature from UC Berkeley; previous experience as a Language Arts teacher as well as a scientific writing and editing consultant.

- **Detail-oriented** - extensive planning and organization coupled with clear communication of details to staff, volunteers, and visiting teachers as Coordinator for the Chabot Space & Science Center (CSSC). Worked with professors and academics to edit and perfect details of grant proposals and papers as scientific writing and editing consultant.

- **Self-directed** - spearheaded and managed a redesign of CSSC’s school programs website; generated new content for site.

- **Strong verbal communication skills** - effectively communicated with groups of varying sizes, ages, and backgrounds as an educator. As the Development Intern for the Environmental Defense Center, communicate extensively with donors, organizations, and local business owners.

- **Extensive curriculum design experience** - designed and implemented creative and engaging English and Environmental teaching units.
HOW TO WRITE A COVER LETTER

Process: The Closing Paragraph

Transition to Close
- Soft skills paragraph
- 1-2 sentence selling/summary statement
- Mention that you have attached your resume (optional)
  - Ex: I have attached my resume for your review.

Re-state position that you are applying for / Express interest in being interviewed for the position
- If you agree that I am a strong candidate for the Chief Environmental Officer position, I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the value that I can add to your organization.

Mention further contact in the close
- Ex: I will plan on following up with you on Monday to confirm that you received all of my application materials.

Final Close/Thank you line
- Ex: Thank you.
I have included my resume to give you a more thorough understanding of my background and qualifications. On a personal level, I have worked within highly collaborative environments throughout my career and have always been able to earn the respect and friendship of my colleagues. I would jump at the opportunity to apply my goal-oriented, driven work ethic and passion to further Toyota’s Environmental, Safety, and Quality Communications department. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Bren Brennie

Bren Brennie
HOW TO WRITE A COVER LETTER

Process: After the First Draft

- Cut
- Peer review/check for typos and organization information mistakes
HOW TO WRITE A COVER LETTER

Getting Help

Reference online materials and handout
- Bren School Online Community – Career Development Resources

Office Hours – Cover Letter Critique
- How do you address issues/problems?
- Did you put your best foot forward and package yourself correctly?

Communications Center
- Sentence structure, grammar, highlighting writing ability

Peer Review
- Did you convey what you were hoping to convey?
- Catch the typos!
ANY QUESTIONS?