

The Business Proposal Aspect of Your Resume and Cover Letter

By Emily Sanderson

Think of your resume and cover letter as a business proposal packed with statements of how much money you generated for a previous employer or how you have made operations more efficient. Consider yourself as a lean, mean, profit-making machine.



It's personal when you leave a company, whether you want it to be or not. You have invested a lot of time and energy in the job you are leaving. You have gotten familiar with a work routine and with the personalities of the individuals with whom you interact.

Choosing a new employer is also a huge decision that will impact your life. However, by gearing your job search toward strategic, profit-oriented, bean-counting business aspects, you will maintain an empowered stance that will give you confidence and help you stand

above your competition.

Your resume is not a memoir, an autobiography, an epitaph, or a record of added belt notches. It is a business proposal for a potential employer that discusses what you can do for him or her in conjunction with your present career focus.

Your resume provides a summary of your qualifications, experience, education, and skills gained. It provides examples of your specific accomplishments. Your cover letter discusses your interest in the company to which you are applying and emphasizes the highlights of your resume in reference to your relevant transferable skills. The better your research on a company, the more impressively you can prepare your resume and cover letter to pique the interest of company management.

The purpose of your resume and cover letter is simply to get you a first interview. These documents are intended to persuade them to consider you as a viable candidate for the position they seek to fill. And they need you to be a lean, mean, profit-making machine. Use your resume and cover letter to show them that you mean business.

Resumes and cover letters are communication tools which, when well written, use inferences and signifiers that indicate what you want to say indirectly. For example, you want to get across that you are sophisticated without sounding snooty. You want to say that you are immediately available for work without sounding desperate, and you want to say that you know a lot about the type of work their firm does in a subtle, nonchalant, and confident manner.



Some of my Preferred Resume clients have strategically worded their resumes and cover letters with particular audiences in mind, considering the questions that phrases or sentences might provoke, both while potential employers are reviewing their resumes and during interviews with potential employers. Then they have prepared appropriate answers to those questions. The following are some basic tips for applying winning communication tools in crafting your resume and cover letter as well as down the road in your phone exchange and in an interview.

1. Keep Your Language Positive.

Never speak ill of your former employer. Never speak ill of yourself or your performance. Always present yourself with as much confidence as you can. You should be able to do this without lying about your past. However, as David told his brother Linus when bringing home his girlfriend to meet the family in the 1993 version of *Sabrina*, "You can be creative." Nevertheless, you should always be sincere and genuine.

In an interview figure out a smooth way to change the subject if they ask you direct questions for which you don't have positive answers, but prepare a few compliments you can spout off about those with whom you have worked in the past. And do your very best to leave on good terms when you need to move on to a new job. Don't simply ask if you can use your boss or colleague as a reference; ask him or her to prepare a general letter of recommendation that you can submit to potential employers.

2. Keep Your Cover Letter Brief and to the Point.

Your cover letter should serve the primary purpose of being a transmittal interface. Remember that potential employers give each resume and cover letter about 15 to 30 seconds of their time, so make good use of that time.

In the first paragraph you should explain that your purpose in writing is to express interest in a position with the company. The body of your letter should discuss the highlights of your resume which exemplify the transferable skills and accomplishments that you have to offer the company. Your closing paragraph should request an action from the reader, such as a phone call to schedule an interview at his or her convenience.

3. Your Resume Should Focus on Only Relevant Work Experience.

Although you can mention other related work experience, your resume should be tailored to your specific job search as it pertains to your career goals. It can also be arranged to emphasize the experience most relevant to the company to which you are applying.

Only include your work experience from the last 10 years unless you have relevant work experience to mention previous to that which emphasizes your transferable skills you would like to use today. Support old work experience with related transferable skills gained in your more recent employment. Even if those skills were not the primary focus of your work, they are still legitimate and important to emphasize.

Conclusion

Your job search is like any other business dealing in your line of work. It involves both written and verbal communication skills, negotiation, and strategic business objectives, where you will consider financial aspects both on the part of your potential employer and in terms of your own salary. A job search is more personal than a routine sales pitch, but you will do well to treat it as such. You have tons to offer, so consider your job search as a chance to shine both in your job interview as well as in how you prepare your resume and cover letter.