

Professional Correspondence: Cover Letters/Prospect Letters/Thank You Emails

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Cover Letters: Their Purpose and Importance

The cover letter is your opportunity to provide further context regarding your qualifications and why you are an especially good candidate for the role. It is your ‘second sell’, the first being your resume (and, for designers, your portfolio).

As the name would imply, in the past, the cover letter would have been the first printed page presented within a job seeker’s application package, and would have served as an introductory document read prior to the rest of the materials. These days, the order in which your materials will be reviewed has flipped. If the employer has reviewed your resume and portfolio and has deemed you a candidate of interest, they will then look to the cover letter to glean more about you as a professional. Consequently, a well-written, tailored, error-free, and informative cover letter can help tip the scales in your favor, while a hastily-written, non-specific, or error-riddled cover letter can disqualify you from a role you may have otherwise been considered for.

Cover Letters: Getting Started

The following important points should be kept in mind when approaching the cover letter writing process:

1. Grammatical/spelling errors, as well as typos, will be noticed. The pool of applicants is large, so don’t give an employer an excuse to disqualify you over something careless like a writing error. Be sure to spell check and review your final draft!
2. The first person to review your cover letter and resume may not be a professional in your field, but rather an HR or Talent Acquisition representative who has been provided with a list of qualifications/details to quickly scan for. Therefore, don’t approach the cover letter as a design document, but rather as a brief and targeted piece of text with a very specific function: getting your whole application package in front of the hiring manager, i.e. the actual decision maker.
3. The cover letter is not about you—it is about what you can do for the employer, meaning how well you align with the job requirements they list in the posting.
4. Refer to the job listing to ensure you are responding to the specific requirements listed. This includes ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ skills, experience levels, and any other stated needs. Take note of any keywords they repeat within the posting: these are obviously important to them, so be sure they are addressed!
5. Ensure that the information detailed within the cover letter is also consistent within the resume: these documents work in conjunction and must be consistent. If a job is noteworthy enough to reference in the cover letter as an example of how you have used your skills within the context of a past role, it must be a job entry in the resume.
6. Double check the application directions, point of contact/recipient for the listing, the position title, and the company name.

7. Keep your cover letter to three paragraphs only. The only exception to this would be if you have so much relevant experience and skills that you can justify another full body paragraph (bringing the total to four paragraphs).
8. Your cover letter's style, branding, typeface, font, etc. should match that of your resume. The point size should be between 10 and 12 pt.
9. Always save your cover letters as PDFs with clear file names: FirstNameLastNameJobTitleCoverLetter.pdf, or something similar.

Cover Letter Etiquette: How and What to Send

There are different methods for submitting materials. It is important to read through the details regarding how to apply to any given opportunity. Some opportunities will be submitted via a web portal (ATS system) where the required documents (resume, cover letter, portfolio, references) are uploaded and the contact details are typed into fields.

Alternatively, you may be asked to send materials to a separate person at an email address. When emailing a Human Resources representative or Talent Acquisition staff member, since they are not the hiring manager, you may simply send an email with all documents as attachments and a simple introductory message accompanying the attachments. The subject line of your email should be clear and concise. If the job posting specifies a subject line, type it exactly as provided.

If it is a small company, and thus your email will likely initially be reviewed by the person actually making the hiring decision, the cover letter should be embedded in the body of the email. For ease of access, the cover letter should also be attached as a properly formatted PDF (see page 8 for full formatting example).

Cover Letter Etiquette: How and What to Send – Specifics

Web Portal (Applicant Tracking Software, otherwise known as ATS):

You will be asked to copy/paste your letter into a cover letter text field OR upload it as a PDF. The latter should feature extended cover letter formatting, i.e. addresses and sender/recipient details.

Email – Sending to an HR/TA representative (example on page 13):

Send email with all documents as attachments and a simple introductory message accompanying the attachments. The subject line of your email should be clear and concise. If the job posting specifies a subject line, type it exactly as provided.

Email – Sending directly to the hiring manager (example on page 12):

The cover letter should be embedded in the body of the email. For ease of access (and potentially forwarding/recordkeeping), the cover letter should also be attached as a properly formatted PDF.

Cover Letter Do's and Don'ts

DO

- ✓ Research the employer and analyze the job description carefully.
- ✓ Tailor your cover letter to each company and position. Show how you meet the needs of the position to which you are applying.
- ✓ Write concisely and format effectively. Remember, this is a writing sample. Use action verbs and descriptive statements to assist the reader with identifying why you should be called in for an interview. 3-5 paragraphs max.
- ✓ Proofread for errors and accuracy. Make sure any names are spelled correctly.
- ✓ Follow up with the employer if you hear nothing after 1-2 weeks. Inquire if any further information is needed and reiterate your interest. Be polite.

DON'T

- ✗ Explain what the employer can do for you instead of what you can do for them.
- ✗ Be generic.
- ✗ Be lengthy.
- ✗ Make careless mistakes.
- ✗ Wait to be contacted.

Cover Letter Content: Yes or No

YES!

- The title of the specific job to which you are applying
- Where you found the job
- Why you're interested in applying (briefly!)
- Evidence that you possess the skills and relevant experience they seek
- Examples of how you utilized those skills
- How those skills and experiences make you a qualified candidate
- Thanks for their time and consideration

NO!

- Five+ paragraphs
- A summary of how much the role aligns with your own interests/dreams/goals
- Information that conflicts with or is inconsistent with the contents of your resume
- Salary requirements
- Reasons for leaving previous roles
- A picture/likeness of yourself
- References

Constructing the Letter: Standard Format Overview

Due to their text-heavy nature, writing a cover letter can be an intimidating prospect at the onset. However, because they are very formulaic documents, it is possible to build a usable framework for the document which can then be augmented for a multitude of different opportunities. If you are applying for a number of roles which require similar qualifications, you may not even need to augment the letter very much between jobs.

Cover letters should adhere to a standard three paragraph format, where the introductory paragraph briefly states how you became aware of the role, your educational and professional background, and that you are confident your relevant skills make you an excellent candidate for the role. The body paragraph is where you describe the relevant skills and abilities you possess (as they pertain to those listed in the posting) and briefly describe your experience utilizing those skills. In the conclusion paragraph, you should briefly restate that the above skills make you a good fit for the job and thank the reader for their time and consideration.

Overall, keep in mind that the body paragraph is the most content-heavy and impactful component of the letter, as it is where you articulate exactly which of the job qualifications you meet and provide examples of having utilized your relevant skills to perform similar duties in the past. The content of the introduction and conclusion paragraphs does not need to change very much between letters, as much of it is focused on conveying professional pleasantries and more generalized statements regarding your candidacy.

Constructing the Letter: The First Paragraph – Introduction

1. Introduce yourself and your current professional title. If you are a student, you can state that you are current student at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design pursuing a Bachelor's degree in your specific declared major.
2. Explain how/where you found the specific job listing, such as on the company's website, via a Handshake posting, or on a particular job board/platform. If you were referred by someone known by the employer, you can 'name drop' by stating that this person brought the role to your attention. If you share a person's name, ensure that they are definitely known to the employer and that you have the individual's overt permission to mention them in your application materials.
3. State why you are interested. Be brief, as the main reason for your interest should be because you are so well qualified for the role, but you can mention a shared commitment to the company's goals, etc. You should have researched the employer thoroughly enough that you are aware of their ongoing initiatives and values.
4. State that your relevant skills and experience qualify you for the position

Example: First Paragraph – Introduction

I recently became aware of the Graphic Design Intern opportunity currently available with ABC Graphics via your company's careers webpage. As a junior at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design pursuing a BFA in Graphic Design, I possess the creative and technical skills outlined in the job description, and I would welcome the opportunity to leverage these abilities alongside the skilled team at ABC Graphics. Consequently, I am very interested in pursuing this exciting opportunity.

Constructing the Letter: The Second Paragraph – Body

1. Outline the skills and experiences you possess which are the most relevant to those included in the job description.
2. Provide specific examples of how you utilized those skills in the past to perform similar duties to those listed in the job posting, whether within the context of a similar job you held, a volunteer role you participated in, or even a class project or assignment you completed (if you have no work/volunteer experience to leverage).
3. Include any additional skills, accomplishments, or unique qualifications which are notable and directly relevant to the job, therefore being of benefit to the employer.
4. Weave in mentions of your relevant 'soft' skills as they pertain to past experiences, often by including adverb phrases which demonstrate the manner in which you applied your skills and add valuable context: explain how (and under what circumstances) you exercised your abilities (you can also mention any resultant positive outcomes), i.e. 'As part of a collaborative team...', 'ensuring all deliverables were completed prior to established deadlines', 'in alignment with client's specifications'.

Example: Second Paragraph – Body

My intensive design coursework has provided me with extensive abilities in visual design, including print and digital publication assets, brand identities, logo design, layouts, and motion graphics. I am capable of utilizing Photoshop, Illustrator, and InDesign, in addition to DSLR cameras and a variety of traditional mediums, and leveraged these skills for the purposes of a recent Publication Design class assignment. For this assignment, I was tasked with developing a print magazine concept alongside a small group of fellow designers. We collaboratively ideated initial concepts and identified the optimal design, then each designer independently crafted publication components which aligned with the overall visual identity of the selected concept. My contribution consisted of impactful and visually-appealing front and back covers, which I crafted within InDesign. To develop these covers, I applied my knowledge of cohesive typographical elements, clear layouts, and the best practices surrounding print production. I am confident that my comprehensive skill set equips me to succeed in the role of Graphic Design Intern.

Constructing the Letter: The Third Paragraph – Conclusion

1. Restate that your relevant skills and experiences would make you an exceptional candidate for the position.
2. Indicate your desire to discuss your qualifications further.
3. Thank the reader for their time and consideration.
4. Let the employer know that you look forward to their response.

Example: Third Paragraph – Conclusion

My extensive array of proficiencies within the field of graphic design situates me as an excellent candidate for this position, and I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to further discuss how I can utilize these qualifications in order to assist ABC Graphics in the development of design solutions which consistently surpass client expectations and spark imagination. Thank you for taking the time to review my resume; I look forward to your response.

Cover Letter Structure (Attached PDF)

Date (Start the date 2 inches from the top of the page)

<

< 2 Spaces

Individual's Name

Title

Name of Organization

Street Address

City, State, Zip Code

<

<

<

<

< 5 Spaces

Dear Mr./Ms. (Individual's Name):

<

< 2 Spaces

First Paragraph: Introduction and context

State the reason for writing. Name the specific position for which you are applying. Explain where/how you learned of the position or company. State that you were immediately interested in applying due to your relevant skill set and/or educational/professional background.

< 1 Space

Second Paragraph: Demonstrate what you can contribute (examples/descriptions) and articulate how you meet the qualifications outlined in the job posting

Explain why your past experiences and training make you a great fit for this position and specify how you have the skills stated in the job description. Provide past examples of utilizing those skills. Include something special or unique about yourself (keep it relevant) that would benefit the employer. Remember, the reader will consider this an example of your writing skills.

< 1 Space

Third Paragraph: Closing and invitation to interview

State that you are confident that your relevant skills and experience in the subject of the job make you an ideal candidate for the role. Indicate your desire to meet with the employer in order to further discuss how you can assist the employer achieve their goals/further their initiatives. Finally, thank the employer for their time and consideration and let them know that you look forward to their response.

< 1 Space

Sincerely,

<

<

<

< 3-4 Spaces

Your signature in blue or black ink

Your typed name

Street Address

(Address Optional)

City, State, Zip Code

Phone number with Area Code

Email address

<

< 2 Spaces

Enclosed: Resume

Sample Cover Letter—Sample 1

Date

Ms. Grace Coolidge
Director of Human Resources
ABC Graphics
1234 Valley Drive
Minneapolis, MN 56316

Dear Ms. Coolidge:

It has come to my attention via the Indeed website that the position of Graphic Design Assistant has been made available with ABC Graphics. I possess the creative and technical skills outlined in the job description, and feel I would be an asset to your organization. I am very interested in pursuing this exciting opportunity.

Presently, I am enrolled at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design, and I expect to graduate in May of 2019. I have extensive training in computer graphics, electronic imaging, and production. I am skilled in Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator, and InDesign. While working in a team environment, I have created and developed logos, branding, and innovative marketing concepts. I feel this experience would be highly beneficial in the Creative Design Department at ABC Graphics.

I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to further discuss my background and qualifications. Thank you for taking the time to review my resume and consider my qualifications. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Jessica Thompson
15 South 9th Street
Minneapolis, MN 55402
612-234-5678
jthompson@gmail.com

(Address Optional)

Enclosed: Resume

Sample Cover Letter—Sample 2

Date

Mr. Samuel Roth
Talent Acquisition Manager
National Lens
14 Mountain View Street
Minneapolis, MN 56316

Dear Mr. Roth:

The available Photographer position with National Lens recently came to my attention via LinkedIn. Given that my skill set includes the creative and technical skills outlined in the job description, I was eager to apply. I believe I would be an asset to your organization.

In my current role as Assistant Photographer at Camera Obscura, Inc., I have photographed for a variety of clients. My extensive experience spans from equipment utilization—operating Sony and Canon DSLR cameras—to post-production, including such skills such as applying presets and color correcting in Adobe Lightroom. In addition, I have completed several creative projects on tight deadlines using Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator, and InDesign. While collaborating with diverse teams, I have contributed images, booklets, and essential assets to marketing materials within established brand identity guidelines.

Above all else, I am interested in this position because I want to support quality photography. I am confident that my demonstrated production skills would be beneficial to National Lens, and I would appreciate the opportunity to interview for this position at your convenience. I can be reached by email at ebarton2@gmail.com and by phone at 612-432-1007. Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Edward Barton
612-432-1007
ebarton2@gmail.com

Enclosed: Resume

Sample Cover Letter (Email Body)—Sample 3

Dear Mr. Smith:

Your recent animation internship posting on the Minneapolis College of Art and Design's career development website greatly intrigued me. GoGames is a leader in cutting-edge game design and I have been following the company's rise for the past few years from a three-person operation to your current status of over one hundred employees worldwide. As an animator with an extensive repertoire of skills, I am very eager to utilize these skills to the benefit of a company which I admire.

As detailed within my resume, I have worked on many classroom projects which have increased my proficiency in 3D animation and design. In particular, I am adept at developing effective and creative storyboards and creating 3D models, as well as ensuring accurate lighting. I am capable of utilizing Flash, 3D Max, and After Effects, as well as employing Photoshop and Illustrator to sketch and flesh out conceptual designs. In addition, I have experience working cohesively as part of a team and completing projects prior to established deadlines.

I am confident that my ample skills in the field of animation make me an excellent candidate for this position and I am eager to discuss my qualifications and portfolio in detail. I appreciate your time and consideration and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Many thanks,

John Doe
johndoe@gmail.com
555.555.5555

Sample Cover Letter (Email Body)—Sample 4

Dear Ms. Doe:

It came to my attention from the Minneapolis College of Art and Design (MCAD) Career Development department that Main St. Media has an available summer internship opportunity. Currently, I am a filmmaking major with extensive skills in video camera operation, film editing, and lighting support, and I am eager to utilize these skills alongside seasoned professionals in the field.

My focus in filmmaking at MCAD has been in documentary videography and storytelling. Recently, I completed a 20-minute feature on a local artist, which won first place at the Fun Film Festival. I have also further developed my technical capabilities in the area of video editing during a collaborative project in my Film Studies course. In my role as a team member, I was responsible for utilizing Adobe Premiere and After Effects to complete both the rough and final cuts of the footage shot by my teammates while adhering to tight deadlines. Furthermore, I participated in the creation of the original storyboard for the shoot.

My specialized training in filmmaking and my experience working effectively in a team has provided me with the tools I need to make a real contribution to Main St. Media. I would appreciate the opportunity to further discuss your available internship position and my qualifications. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Mary Smith

Sample Introductory Email to HR (with Attachments)

Subject Line: Design Coordinator Application

Dear HR Team:

Attached are the required materials (resume and cover letter) for the **[insert the position title here]** opportunity. Please let me know if there are any file issues.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Letter of Inquiry/Letter of Interest/Prospect Letter

A letter of inquiry/letter of interest/prospect letter is a document which can be sent to employers with which you are interested in working, but who have not posted or advertised any available opportunities. Since it is essentially the emailed equivalent of a 'cold call', it may or may not result in a response. However, it is an option you may wish to utilize when seeking employment and/or internship opportunities.

The letter follows the same three-paragraph format of a cover letter, and the content is very similar, with two main differences:

- The first difference between a cover letter and a letter of inquiry is that a cover letter is written as a response to an opportunity posting which outlines the specific qualifications/requirements associated with the advertised role, but a letter of inquiry does not have a posting to reference and respond to. Therefore, the relevant skills/abilities/experiences described in the body paragraph of the letter must be anticipated by the letter writer. In order to determine which skills, abilities, and experiences would be most valuable to the employer, thorough research is required.
 - Examine the type of work the employer produces, what the company culture is like, and what kind of projects they are currently undertaking.
 - When writing the letter, select the skills and experiences you possess which align best with the information you discovered from your research and describe them in the body paragraph.
- The second difference between a letter of inquiry and a cover letter lies within the conclusion paragraph. In a cover letter, the third paragraph is where you state your confidence in your candidacy and ask for an interview. In a letter of inquiry, it is where you state that you possess skills which could be of value to the company and ask whether they might have any positions available, either now or in the future, which align with your abilities. You may state that your resume is attached and that you would welcome the opportunity to discuss how you could leverage your skills and experience to contribute to the company's continued success.

Sample Letter of Inquiry/Prospect Letter (Sent Within Email Body – Most Common Method)

Dear Ms. Doe:

Most recently, Main St. Studios came to my attention from Susan Smith, a client who speaks to your exceptional videography work. I was impressed by the clear attention to detail and professionalism exhibited by your team while completing the project for Ms. Smith. Therefore, I wish to inquire whether any summer internship opportunities might be available with Main St. Studios. As a junior filmmaking major at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design with extensive skills in video camera operation, film editing, and lighting support, I am very eager to utilize them alongside seasoned professionals in the field in order to contribute to the success of the company.

My focus in filmmaking at MCAD has been in documentary videography and storytelling. Recently, I completed a 20-minute feature on a local artist, which won first place at the Fun Film Festival. I have also further developed my technical capabilities in the area of video editing during a collaborative project in my Film Studies course. In my role as a team member, I was responsible for utilizing Adobe Premiere and After Effects to complete both the rough and final cuts of the footage shot by my teammates while consistently adhering to tight deadlines. Furthermore, I was integral to the creation of the original storyboard for the shoot.

My specialized training in filmmaking and my experience working effectively in a team has provided me with the tools I need to make a real contribution to Main St. Studios. If any internship opportunities arise within your company now or in the near future, I would greatly appreciate being considered for the role; accordingly, I would be happy to provide my resume and portfolio for your review at any time. Thank you very much for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Jane Williams

Sample Letter of Inquiry/Prospect Letter (Sent as Attached PDF)

Date

To Whom It May Concern
ABC Graphics
123 First Street
Minneapolis, MN 55402

To Whom It May Concern:

I was recently reviewing your website and I immediately became intrigued with your organization's concepts and designs. My skill set includes the creative and technical skills which are demonstrated throughout your website and product line. Therefore, I am very interested in exploring possible graphic design opportunities with ABC Graphics.

As detailed within my resume, I am a recent graduate from the Minneapolis College of Art and Design (MCAD). My education and training in the field of graphic design has afforded me the opportunity to refine my creative and design abilities. I am proficient in Photoshop, Illustrator, and InDesign. In addition, I possess exceptional skills pertaining to conceptual layout, branding, and typography. I am an innovative creator with the ability to work effectively and collaboratively. Furthermore, I have a strong commitment to task management and pride myself on consistently meeting deadlines. I am confident that my skills, talents, and abilities would be an asset to ABC Graphics.

If a position should become available to which you feel my background and qualifications would be a match, I would greatly appreciate your consideration and welcome the opportunity to present my credentials in an interview. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best regards,

Hedda Hopper

Thank You Letter Etiquette

Following an in-person interview, it is important to send a thank you email within 24 hours. The purpose of this thank you message is two-fold. One purpose is to properly thank them for their time. Secondly, this email demonstrates your initiative to follow up, active listening skills, and your attention to detail. The message should restate your interest in the position, bringing your name to the forefront again. The thank you letter is your opportunity to reinforce why you should be the candidate of choice.

Thank You Letter Structure (Email Body)

Dear Mr./Ms. (Interviewer's Name):

<

< 2 Spaces

First Paragraph: Thank the interviewer for discussing the opportunity with you. Be sure to name the specific position. Include a reference to something you spoke about and address how you would meet the needs/qualifications of the organization.

< 1 Space

Second Paragraph: Elaborate on how, after the conversation, you feel your skills align with the position. Demonstrate that you were actively listening by providing more thoughts about something you discussed in the interview. Remember, like the cover letter, the reader will consider this an example of your writing skills.

< 1 Space

Third Paragraph: Include one last thank you and share your enthusiasm to hear back from them or your plan to follow up.

< 1 Space

Sincerely,

< 1 Space

Your typed name

Sample Thank You Letter—Sample 1

Sent via email within 24 hours of interview.

Dear Ms. McElroy:

I enjoyed meeting with you and Mr. Smith yesterday morning. Thank you for the opportunity to review my work and discuss my background and qualifications as they pertain to our industry. The business philosophy at ABC Graphics and your vision for the future is very exciting!

Per our conversation, I feel confident that my education, training, and experience in the field of Graphic Design would be of great benefit to ABC Graphics. You discussed the importance of teamwork—please know that I work very well in a team environment, as well as independently.

Again, thank you for your time and I look forward to the possibility of working with you in the future.

Sincerely,

Jessica Thompson

Sample Thank You Letter—Sample 2

Dear Mr. Tyler:

Thank you for the opportunity of interviewing for the Sign Maker position last Monday afternoon, especially during a busy work day. I also wanted to thank Sarah and the others for the tour of the facility. I am impressed by the enthusiasm displayed by the staff. The atmosphere made me feel welcome and I am sure customers feel that way as well.

I am very interested in pursuing an opportunity in the area of sign production and very much appreciate your consideration for this position. The prospect of working in a position that is varied and includes hands-on skills is very appealing to me. If you should have any additional questions concerning my qualifications, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best regards,

Joy Johnson

Sample Thank You Letter—Sample 3

Dear Mr. Roth:

I enjoyed meeting you and your colleagues this afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to review my work and discuss my background and qualifications as they pertain to our industry. The business philosophy at National Lens and the vision for your organization's future is very exciting!

Per our conversation, I feel confident that my education, training, and experience in the field of photography would be of great benefit to National Lens. As you mentioned, it is important that your candidate of choice is creative, possesses a positive attitude, and works well in an established team environment. Please be assured that I would not only meet but exceed your expectations.

Once again, thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Edward Barton

References Document

Some job postings may ask that you submit a references sheet at the point of application, whereas some may only ask for it after a candidate has progressed through to the final stages of the hiring process. In either case, a references sheet is always saved and transmitted as a separate document, not as part of a resume/cover letter itself or attached to either of these as a secondary page within the same PDF file.

When writing your References sheet, keep the following points in mind:

- Have three to five professional references prepared.
- Select individuals who have direct knowledge of your job abilities/skills and will speak positively about your performance and professional comportment.
- Ensure that you have the express permission of your references before you include them in the document.
- If someone agrees to serve as your reference, be sure to provide them with a copy of your resume, and inform them ahead of time which employer may be contacting them regarding your application.
- Bring printed copies of your references sheet to all interviews in case the employer requests them at that time.
- The format/style/typeface/etc. of the References sheet should be consistent with that of the resume and cover letter.
- Always save this as a PDF with a clear file name such as FirstNameLastNameReferences.pdf, or something similar.

Example: References Document

REFERENCES

Jane Smith
Program Director
ArtThink Summer Program
456 Somewhere Lane
Minneapolis, MN 55402
(612) 555-5555
jsmith@anyserver.com

John Doe
Gallery Lead
Dallas Gallery
123 Anywhere Street
Dallas, TX 75231
(612) 555-5555
jdoe@anyserver.com

Billie Johnson
Manager
ABC Restaurant
321 United Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55110
(612) 555-5555
bjohnson@abcrestaurant.com

Promoting Yourself in 30 Seconds or Less (Elevator Speech)

Properly presenting yourself in person or over the phone is very important when making the appropriate first impression. You should develop a brief self-presentation that promotes yourself in 25 seconds or less. Your self-presentation can be used at job fairs when you approach an employer's booth, when you are cold calling employers, over the

phone when you are conducting informational interviews, or during the first few minutes of an initial interview.

Your self-presentation should include:

- Your name
- How you learned about the job/company
- Your current employment or education status
- What type of position you are interested in
- What skills and experiences you have to offer

Presented below is a script you can use in developing your self-presentation:

Hello, my name is _____. I was referred to you by _____ from ______. I am a (graduate/student) of the Minneapolis College of Art and Design. I have a / or am studying towards a (Bachelor's, Associate's, Master's, Certificate) degree in _____. I am seeking a position as _____, and I believe my skills and experience in _____ closely match the skills that are required by this position. I would appreciate the opportunity to speak with you further concerning my education and professional background, and how that applies to your available position.

Conversing on the Telephone

Follow up with a call a couple of days after submitting the application materials. Always conduct initial research on the company you are trying to get an interview with. Typically, the first call will go to voicemail, so leave a nice introduction of yourself and explain the purpose of the call.

Your goal is to talk to a live person, not a voicemail of someone who is in charge of hiring or who is involved in the hiring process. When you get them on the phone, confirm that they received your resume, if they had an opportunity to review it, and if they had any questions concerning your background and qualifications.

Ask if the position is still available and reiterate your strong interest in pursuing the opportunity. Also inquire whether it is possible to schedule an interview.

Typically, the employer will respond with "We're currently screening through applicants and we will give you a call back when we decide to bring candidates in for interviews." Thank them for their time and consideration.

Ask them to give you a time frame of when you can expect to hear back. Let them know that if you do not hear from them, you will be giving them a call (if appropriate).

Always ask questions before you get off the phone, such as "Can you tell me a little more about this opportunity?"

After a couple of questions, make sure that they know you are interested. "This sounds like a great opportunity; based upon my skills and abilities and your job description, this appears to be an excellent match."

If the position has been filled, or you are not qualified, continuing talking. "I understand that you do not have any additional openings, but do you know of anyone outside the company that you would recommend that I speak with?" Make sure they know that if a position opens later for which your background and qualifications are a match, you would greatly appreciate their consideration.

Following Up by Email After Submitting Application

After you submit your application, typically the employer will respond with "We're currently screening through applicants and we will contact you when we decide to bring candidates in for interviews." This may be an automated email. Refer to employer's policies about following up. Unless otherwise instructed, you may follow up with another email a couple of days after to find out if the position is still available, the timeframe for interviewing, and if it is possible for you to schedule an interview.

If the position has been filled, or you are not qualified, respond, "I understand that you do not have any additional openings, but do you know of anyone outside the company that you would recommend that I speak with?" Or, "If a position should arise within your organization that is in alignment with my skills and experience, I would appreciate your consideration."