

Cover Letter Writing for Musicians

(From contact to contract)

by Vince Corozine

Always use a cover letter when your first contact with an employer is by mail. The cover letter enables you to point out how your qualifications can be valuable to an employer.

Remember that your cover letter:

- Should be addressed to a specific person
- Must be typed, in business form, and free of errors
- Should not repeat what is in your resume

Like your resume, make your cover letter an individual expression. In some cases, your cover letter will be considered a sample of your writing ability.

Frequently Made Errors in Writing Cover Letters

- Using pre-printed, template form letters rather than individually typed letters.
- One or more spelling errors, typographical errors, or grammatical mistakes.
- Using overly formal language, rather than writing as if having a conversation with the reader.
- Lack of organization. Failing to have an attention-getting opening, a persuasive middle section, and/or a motivating end.
- Double-spacing the letter so that it takes two pages to cover what could be said in one.
- Lacking graphic appeal. Typed too high on the page, margins too narrow.
- Paragraphs too long and uninviting to read.
- Forgetting to sign letter, indicating a lack of attention to detail.
- Using one or more initials rather than first name, projecting coldness or leaving reader ignorant of whether a response could go to a "Miss," "Mrs," "Ms," or "Mr."

The role of cover letters:

- The cover letter is second only to your resume in creating a first impression in our prospective employer's mind.
- A cover letter should indicate that you have a clear understanding of your career goals and job objectives. It should reflect the thought and research you have put into your employment search.
- Cover letters should be used to briefly and succinctly tell the recipient who you are and why you're different from other applicants.

- Letter should be short and to the point.
- Always include a cover letter when sending an application or resume' to an employer.
- Send your cover letter to a specific person, not a generic "Personnel Department." If you can't determine a specific name, call the company's personnel department and ask to whom you should send an application for employment.

Content tips:

- Every cover letter you write should be unique---a form letter will not do it. It is acceptable to compose a couple of standard paragraphs, but remember to revise these paragraphs for every letter.
- Write your cover letter for the specific industry and company to which you are applying. Explain why you are interested in this industry, this specific company, and this particular position.
- Tell the reader what you have to offer the company. Stress your particular skills that set you apart from other possible applicants, and how your strengths are applicable to this position.
- Write your letter with the job description in mind. Emphasize the things on you resume' that are most applicable to the job.
- Stress your past activities and responsibilities that are similar to the requirements of the job.
- Tell the reader why you want to work for that particular company. Be enthusiastic and excited about the position.

Format tips:

- Either formal or semiformal formats are appropriate ("Letter-Cover" is in the formal style; "Letter-Thank you" is semiformal). Use whichever format seems appropriate for the particular company.
- Use short, easy-to-read paragraphs.
- Aim for a total length of one-half to three-quarters of a page.
- Use the same font for your letters as you used for your resume'.
- Use the same high-quality white, off-white, or light gray paper as you used for your resume'. Send your letter in a matching envelope. Address envelopes on a printer, never address by hand.

Thank-you letters

- Always follow up with a thank-you letter after each interview. This is an excellent way to remind an interviewer who you are, and to show interest in the position.
- As with the cover letter, this letter should be tailored specifically to each position.

- Use this letter to highlight specific points about yourself that the interviewer found particularly interesting during the interview.
- The same format tip apply to thank-you letters as to cover letters.

Cover Letter Outline

Cover letters serve as an introduction to your resume' and an opportunity to say something specific about how you qualify for the job. Letters should be organized as follows

- Paragraph 1: State objective, benefits you can provide, and the source of your lead.
- Paragraph 2: Indicate why you are interested in the position, how you are qualified for it, and why the company (or job if known) appeals to you.
- Paragraph 3: Request a specific form of response, and thank the reader for their consideration.

Follow-Up Letters

Follow-up letters show interest and appreciation. They continue a dialogue that your competition may not be doing. Letters should be organized as follows:

- Paragraph 1: Thank the reader for the phone call, interview, advice, and so on.
- Paragraph 2: Summarize your qualifications or highlight a unique qualification for the job.
- Paragraph 3: Indicate your interest in taking the next step.