

Do You Really Need a Cover Letter?



Do you remember the last time you were looking for a new job? How time consuming it was? You had to fill out the application, customize your resume and write a cover letter. Even the initial steps of applying for a job can take hours. And when you're faced with a mountain of applications, it's easy to lose patience and cut a corner or two. That corner is usually a cover letter because it can take the longest. So, the question remains, are cover letters really that important?

The answer is yes. Even though they're time consuming and seem a bit silly, there are plenty of reasons why submitting them is important.

Add Value to Your Application Package

A [good resume](#) fits on 1-3 pages, depending on your experience level. While good resumes include actionable words, give dates of employment and highlight your experience, they're not much more than a bullet-point list at the end of the day. When accompanied by a quality cover letter however, a hiring manager can get a keen glimpse into who you are as a person, intimate details about your experience and accomplishments and how you communicate.

You Have the Opportunity to Stand Out

Cover letters give you the freedom to say what you want about yourself and your experience. By taking the time to customize them, you can match your skills with the job description. This goes a long way with [hiring managers](#) and if your cover letter is crafted specifically for the job, you're putting yourself well ahead of

applicants.

You Go the Extra Mile

Most people on the job market are concerned with applying for as many jobs as they can. They send out dozens of resumes and pray they get an interview somewhere. Applicants that take the time to write a customized cover letter however, become memorable because most people don't do it. Even if your qualifications aren't precisely what hiring managers are looking for, you'll stand out because you went the extra mile. That alone can be what gets you across the finish line.

You Take Control

In the closing of your cover letter, let the employer know that you'll be calling back at a specific day and time to check in on how the process is going. Even though this might seem a little too forward and counterintuitive, it shows that you're not afraid to take initiative.

What's more, you leave ambiguity out of the equation. Instead of wondering when the employer will get back to you and where you stand, you'll get an answer one way or another. Worst case scenario is they tell you they've decided to go to another direction and you can get back to work applying for the next job.

You Get to Show Off Your Writing Ability

One of the most critical qualities employers look for is communication. No one wants to hire a person who's a poor communicator. The good news is that writing an effective cover letter is an opportunity to show that you're a good writer and probably an excellent communicator too. Just make sure you proof read it for any possible errors since that can undo the good work you did by creating your cover letter in the first place. If you can master this skill, you show that you're a great communicator before you even meet the hiring manager in person.

You Can Explain Employment Gaps

Employment gaps are a major red flag in the eyes of hiring managers. Even if your resume jumps out, the first question an employer is going to ask is why you didn't work for an extended period of time. This is something you can, and should, address in your cover letter. Were you out for six months on maternity leave? Were you taking care of a sick family member? Did you just need time to consider a career change? Your cover letter is where you can give an explanation. If you don't, employers are going to frown on your time between jobs.

There's a new school of thought that says cover letters are a dinosaur. Most of them don't get read, they take too much time to write, the list goes on. While some of that might be true to an extent, you're best not to leave any stone left unturned. Even though the effort of writing a well-crafted cover letter seems arduous and adds time to the already tedious process of applying for jobs, it just might be the difference in landing an interview and getting the job, or not.

As a [recruiter in the life sciences industries](#), I can help candidates who are seeking jobs in the [pharmaceutical, biotech, or medical device fields](#) improve their cover letter for job applications. Contact me if you are looking for a career change in the life sciences industries or if you are looking for a quality and regulatory employee in the Bay Area. You can reach me at jking@rqfocus.com or (541) 639-3501.