

Things No One Tells You about Cover Letters

1. Should you address your cover letter to a specific person and username? Or should you use a general citation?

Yes, you should always address your cover letter to a specific person. So the people that you can address cover letters to typically, what I recommend is calling the firm and asking who you can send your cover letter to if you don't have the name of the person. And that can be very helpful. If it's a small law firm, you want to send it to one of the named partners, typically the one who has the first name listed. It's the same thing with every firm. Every firm needs to have a person that you're addressing your cover letter to. If you're not addressing your cover letter to a specific person, then that's a real problem. You just don't want to do that.

Some companies and law firms may tell you to just send it to recruiting. But you're actually better off sending it to a person. And typically, sending it to one of the more important people in the firm is crucial. One thing I want you to remember--I know I've said this in several posts--you always want to make sure that you're sending your cover letter in a printed format as well as email. You should address your cover letter to a specific person in that one, as well.

2. Is there a service that can write your cover letters for you to all the places you want to submit them to? I don't have the time. Would you recommend using a service like this?

You can use a service that does this. But I think a cover letter is very personal. So the more personal connection you can find with firms, the better off you're going to be. And the more you can tailor it, the better it is. Remember, every law firm receives hundreds of applications from law students. And when they have openings, they typically receive a lot.

If you just want to do a mass mailing of law firms, what I'd recommend if you don't have the time to personalize it or any of them, is you need to think about exactly what it is in your background that will make your cover letter stand out. So, an example would be, if you've worked with children and children's rights, there's a whole branch of law that deals with that. Then, you find every law firm around the country that does that type of work and send them a letter and tell them you're interested in children's rights.

I worked with a girl once at a company called Legal Authority, which is a resume mailing service. But they're not going to super personalize all of your letters the way I'm talking about. I remember one time I was talking to a girl in Florida. And this is after the company had been in business for 10 or 12 years. I didn't do the calls very often. We had other people who did them back then. I still don't, but the woman had gotten a degree in education law or something like an LLM.

She said everybody from her firm could use this Legal Authority company, and all they did is exactly something you can do yourself. So I'm definitely not trying to sell you on using an outside service because you can do it yourself. You're probably better off if you personalize things yourself. But if you don't have time, you can use Legal Authority.

So everybody who graduated from this LLM program at Fordham Education Law had always used the Legal Authority service and gotten jobs. So all that this Legal Authority service did was it sent a mail to all the firms--there were not many firms that did education law. So she did a mailing to 300 education law firms and got several jobs because it was focused.

There are not many people who have an interest in education. I don't know if it was 300 or 800 firms or how many. But if you have an interest in a specific practice area or if you have something specific in your background, or you have a specific connection to an area, you should be contacting most of the employers in

that area, and that will help you get a job. If you don't have the time, just try to make your cover letters as focused as you possibly can.

3. How do I find out who will be opening to read my cover letter? Would you recommend that finally talking about a connection is an individual connection in the firm?

If you really want to work someplace, I would recommend calling the firm and finding out who is in charge of recruiting and who you should send your resume to. If you already know who that person is, call that person and chat with them and tell them your name, and tell them you're sending a resume, and that sort of thing. That can actually be helpful and then also using the name of the partner as well. There are some more questions there if you don't have that person.

4. Should I highlight my accomplishments in my cover letter? Or would that seem like I'm making it all about me?

Your accomplishments can be listed on your resume. And you want to highlight not your accomplishments, but your interest in a practice area or your interest in the firm. So that's a very good question. You're saying, How should I hide my accomplishments in my cover letter? Or would it seem like it was all about me? It does make it all about you when you're talking only about your accomplishments. Instead, you need to highlight how whatever you're interested in matches with what the employer does. So it could be about a practice area. It could be about a connection or something like that.

5. You mentioned in the last session that we could individually have materials reviewed by you, what's the best way to send the materials?

I will send everyone on the call and remember this call, I'll have an email sent to you after this call, and you can send that, and I will review your materials with you and send you a short little video, or maybe it'll be longer, depending on your materials, talking about your resume and cover letter, and also reviewing your resume, and I'll give you my feedback.

I can also have someone else talk to you from our company about it as well after I review it, and I'm happy to do so. I certainly appreciate that question and apologize. We didn't receive that last week. So thank you, everyone, for being on the call. I know this was a long call, but it was a very important topic. And I really hope that everyone listens to this advice because it's going to make a huge difference in your career if you're able to make a connection with your cover letter.