

Attorney Cover Letter Secrets To Success

By Vanessa Vidal

At a time when employers are inundated with legal cover letters and resumes, how can you make your attorney cover letter stand out in the crowd?

An effective attorney cover letter can go a long way to getting you noticed. Usually, legal cover letters are an afterthought, something that tags the legal resume. However, when done well, an attorney cover letter can be a powerful marketing tool.

Here are five commonly asked questions about attorney cover letters that can help you create a legal cover letter as part of a successful hard-to-resist sales package:

1. Why is an Attorney Cover Letter Necessary?

A good attorney cover letter will fill in the gaps that a legal resume does not cover, and convince a prospective employer that you are the perfect candidate for the position.

The impressions your legal cover letter gives to prospective employers about you often have a tremendous bearing on your ability to get an interview. A well-written attorney cover letter will provide an employer a window into your background, motivation, and level of interest in the position, essentially enticing them to interview you or take a second look at your legal resume.

2. What are the Biggest Attorney Cover Letter Mistakes?

- **Typos.** They show lack of attention to details.
- **Poor Formatting.** It shows a tendency towards poor work product.
- **General Salutations.** Using "To Whom It May Concern" or "Dear Sir or Madam" shows the employer that you were not concerned enough to find out the name of the hiring authority.
- **Lack of Specificity.** Attorney cover letters should not focus on "what you can do" but rather on "what you can specifically do for the company in this position."

3. What Kind of Attorney Cover Letter Will Work Best for Me?

The right kind of attorney cover letter, whether you are a law student or a general counsel with over twenty years of experience, will be one that is specifically tailored to a company and position. The more you know about a company and position, the better you will come across in terms of your level

of interest and commitment. The one-letter-fits-all is a waste of time, and will turn off rather than entice potential employers.

4. Should I Mention Salary Requirements in my Attorney Cover Letter?

You should mention salary requirements only if they were specifically requested by a potential employer as part of your application. The key with salary requirements is to be honest and flexible.

5. What's the Best Format for an Attorney Cover Letter?

That will depend on your level of experience and the position you are applying for. Again, there is no one-size-fits-all legal cover letter. However, at minimum your attorney cover letter should mirror the formatting used on your legal resume. Only in the rarest of circumstances should your legal cover letter be longer than a page, and considerably less than a page is best.

6. Should My Attorney Cover Letter Mention That I Was Fired, Quit, or Laid Off?

The best policy is complete honesty. If you are not currently employed, the attorney cover letter should definitely broach the circumstances under which you have left your former employer. There is no need to dwell on the subject, but it should be mentioned. When there is an obvious gap in your legal resume, or current employment status, not addressing it may cause more concerns to a prospective employer than addressing it in an honest, concise and positive manner.