

The Basic Format of an Attorney Cover Letter

By Vanessa Vidal

What should an attorney cover letter do for you? At the very least, it should answer the question: Why should we hire you?

A legal cover letter should grab an employer's attention, and persuasively make a case as to why you, above all other attorney applicants, should be contacted for an interview.

Here is the basic format of a legal cover letter:

YOUR ADDRESS [Do not put your name here]

TODAY'S DATE

Mr./Mrs. Hiring Manager/Employer's name [If you don't have one, get one!]

TITLE

COMPANY NAME

COMPANY ADDRESS

Dear Mr./Ms. [Last Name]:

FIRST PARAGRAPH: This is the "why I'm writing to you" paragraph of your attorney cover letter. This paragraph should immediately tell the employer the position you want to be considered for. This is short, usually 2-3 sentences.

Points to cover:

- Why you are writing and what position you are applying for.
- When starting your attorney cover letter introduction, be sure to provide a quantitative description. For instance, rather than writing, "My name is John Doe," briefly provide an indication of your level of experience. For example, "I am an associate general counsel with more than ten (10) years of experience focused on the representation of companies in the manufacturing industry."
- Allow your research to demonstrate why you are interested in this position or company. The goal is to make a connection – do this briefly and specifically. Sweeping and generalized statements will not work.

SECOND PARAGRAPH: This is the "why I'm qualified" paragraph of your attorney cover letter. This paragraph should highlight some of your most relevant

experiences, skills, and qualities as they relate to the position for which you are applying. Choose 2 - 3 points. They should include:

- Specific experiences, skills, accomplishments, or qualities you have exhibited.
- Specific examples to support experiences, skills, accomplishments, or qualities you are mentioning.

This paragraph will change according to the particular position and organization to which you are applying. This is usually the longest paragraph of your legal cover letter. You may break this paragraph into two if it looks too lengthy, as points to be emphasized generally work best in separate paragraphs.

Points to cover:

- The first sentence should be a hard-hitting opener. It is a quick introduction, which is accomplishment-oriented and directed at the skills and qualifications needed for the job/company/industry.
- The body of the paragraph should provide evidence to back up what you've just claimed. Cite specific jobs/internships/activities/projects and accomplishments associated with those experiences.
- Use your resume to come up with specifics, but never reiterate passages from your resume word for word. Be sure to discuss how your experience and accomplishments relate specifically to the job and the company. Strong examples are critical.
- The final sentence is a summary of what you've discussed above. It's a good idea to mention the position title and company name to bring the reader back to the specific job in question.

FINAL PARAGRAPH: The final paragraph of your attorney cover letter should be short, 2-4 sentences. You should refer to your enclosed legal resume, request an interview, and let the reader know what will happen next (i.e. that you will contact them within specific period of time, unless it is a recruiting program). Finally, it is important that you thank the reader for his/her time and consideration.

CLOSING REMARKS

Sincerely,

Your Signature

Your Full Name

Enclosure(s) [a copy of you resume]

