

## **Writing a Lawyer Cover Letter**

*By Claire Bellon*

A lawyer cover letter is one of the most essential documents of a job application. Yet, it is also one of the most overlooked by job seekers. Most legal employers will look at the cover letter and read its content before reading the content of the resume. Therefore, not including a lawyer cover letter as part of your application can affect your chances of securing an interview.

Including a lawyer cover letter as part of your job application documents should not just serve to comply with the requirements of a job posting, a company, or a hiring manager, but to serve as an independent and important part of your overall candidacy. In other words, cover letters should include substance and make a case in your favor.

Here are some writing tips to create a meaningful and effective lawyer cover letter:

- Be succinct, but effective – This means writing in a concise manner. To achieve this, you must do away with unnecessary details and information, and get to the essence of what you are trying to convey in one page or less. You need to get to the point quickly so as not to bore your cover letter reader. At the same time, you need to make an effective statement as to the reasons why an employer should hire you.
- Be professional, but natural – This means that your writing style must be the same as with a business letter, formal and polished. However, there is a tendency to want to show off one's writing skills, which can come off as unnatural and arrogant. The language content of the lawyer cover letter must be professional, but retain a natural tone to be easy to read and understand by a hiring manager.

The content of the lawyer cover must demonstrate that you have the skills and experience to be successful in the position you are applying to. In other words, your cover letter reader must somehow get a virtual image of you in that position. In order to accomplish this successfully, you have to emphasize how your skills and experience match those that are required by the position. It's not as simple as listing skills, or claiming to have them. You need to prove that you have what it takes, and that requires providing concrete and specific examples of your accomplishments.

In the first part or paragraph of the cover letter, you need to give the hiring manager a quick overview of who you are and what you do. Typically, this means including a sentence such as: " I possess ten years of professional legal experience working as an attorney focused on immigration and civil litigation matters." Let the employer know your level of experience and practice focus.

In the second to the third paragraph of the lawyer cover letter, highlight the qualifications and experiences that are relevant to the company and its opportunity. This is where you will be providing specific points or examples that give clarity and quantify your accomplishments, rather than providing vague impressions from lists of skills and experiences. Most importantly, be honest, sincere, and enthusiastic. One of the key elements of an effective lawyer cover letter is being able to convey to an employer your level of interest and enthusiasm about a particular career opportunity. Finally, be sure to thank your reader for his or her time, and provide a courteous close.

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