

How to Write a Cover Letter

With the new age of email correspondence as a method to inquire about employment opportunities, some have foregone the tradition of writing a cover letter to accompany their CV when applying for a practice opportunity.

Some may feel that the first introduction of themselves to the physician recruiter, program director, or hospital CEO, can be adequately captured in a paragraph or two in an email when sending their CV. Sending a cover letter maybe considered old fashion; however, this is a very important component of the job search process to express interest in a position.

What is the Purpose of the Cover Letter?

The purpose of a cover letter has not diminished although some feel it's just an easy to compose a nice email along with attaching their CV. The cover letter is the opportunity for you to introduce yourself to the prospective employer; this information will be shared with many other stakeholders that will take part in the review process of your candidacy. With a cover letter you are able to share personal and professional information that would include pertinent historical clinical and leadership training and experience you have accumulated over the years.

The reader's first impression of you can be established with the opening paragraph of your cover letter; you want to be able to connect with the reader that shows your ability to engage on a human level that will matter to both the reader and patients. Elaborate on items that will be beneficial for the review of your CV. With the cover letter, you are able to highlight special areas of interest rather it be teaching, research, or community outreach; skills that you have gained throughout your training.

Now that we have established the purpose and benefits of the cover letter, let's dive into the preparation of writing your letter.

How to Write a Cover Letter:

1. First step is to do your research on the opportunity; find correlations between your training and experience with those required of the position. This will provide you with the opportunity to highlight your skills while drawing the connection for the reader.
2. When evaluating the opportunity rather it is with a small private practice or large healthcare system, it is essential that you find out as much information as possible – the types of procedures they are able to provide for patients; structure of the organization; locations of practice sites; and background information on all of physicians that are part of the group. This way you will be able to identify where your skills will fit best. This will also identify if you possess a particular skill set that may be missing from the group.
3. If the position you are interested in, is posted on a website, you will have the name and title of the individual you should address your letter to. If you are unable to find out the name of the physician recruiter or head clinical leader, it is more than acceptable to address your letter "Dear Hiring Manager".

4. Your first paragraph is the opportunity to introduce yourself along with stating the purpose of your letter. If you are responding to an open opportunity you may have seen, this is a great place to reference that information; or, you may be sending your information should there be a need for a physician within your area of specialty in the near future.
5. Include some personal information; if you have a trailing physician spouse that may be seeking employment as well. Make sure to mention their specialty, it's not necessary to go into too much detail. If you are from the area or training in the area where the position is, make mention of that as well. Noting any professional connections is also helpful.
6. Last but not least, the cover letter doesn't have to be lengthy, you don't want to lose the attention of the reader. Hit your high points early; be clear and concise.
7. In closing, thank the recipient for reviewing your CV, make a statement indicating you look forward to hearing from them soon.
8. Make sure you proof read your letter, as well as having someone else proof read for you. Attention to detail is critical just as it is for your CV. Listing your contact information on your cover letter is just as important as it is on your CV. Include your email address, best contact number and mailing address.

Now that you have the basic steps to building your cover letter, this document can easily be interchangeable for more than one opportunity you may apply for; you can always delete pieces of information that may not be pertinent.

Most recruiters will accept an email in place of a cover letter as long as you are able to include as much details as possible; however, a professional cover letter shows that you have taken the time to compose your letter specifically to introduce yourself and outline why your education and training sets you apart from others that may have applied.