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COVER LETTER GUIDE

AUGUST, 2020

Colby

YOUR COVER LETTER

Cover Letter Benefits:

A cover letter provides a storyline and valuable context about your experience and interests. Although some employers do not want cover letters, you should embrace the opportunity to submit one whenever possible because it can persuade an employer in ways a resume alone cannot.

- Tells story in a way that a resume can't: *Articulates why this company, job, career path*
- Convinces reader you can excel in the job: *Connects skills & experience to job needs (important when not much direct experience)*
- Distinguishes you from other candidates: *Can express passion for company, how you'll add value, fit with the culture*
- Persuades reader to champion you: *Prove communications skills, amplify accomplishments, convey instant contribution*

Creating a Cover Letter:

The job of the cover letter is to get you an interview, so make it easy for the reader (or software program) to quickly identify you as a strong candidate.

Step 1: Match your skills to the job description (Worksheet 1).

Read through the job description, pulling out:

- Key responsibilities
- Skills (required/preferred)
- Experiences
- Attributes
- Specific, unique language or buzzwords

Connect 3-4 job requirements with your skills and experience.

- Identify where your experiences, skills, and interests match key elements of the job description
- For strongest matches, note specific examples; if no direct matches, cite experiences showing comparable skills
- Select the job's 3-4 most important elements and your strongest stories to include in the cover letter

Step 2: Create an outline for your cover letter (Worksheet 2).

A cover letter consists of 3 parts – the Hook, the Sell, and the Ask – so create an outline answering the following questions for each section.

1) Opening: The Hook (Keep Them Reading)

- Who are you, why are you writing, which job?
- Attention-grabbing, hard-hitting, entice readers to learn more - what do you know about them from your research?
- Leverage company enthusiasm, research, people a few you spoke with
- Share qualifications, results, anecdote, connections

2) Body: The Sell (Connect Job Needs with Your Qualifications)

- Layout: Succinct with either 1-2 longer or 3 shorter bulleted paragraphs (see Cover Letter samples)
- Select 3 job requirements & tie them to your skills, experience, attributes - show them how you did it
- Illustrate accomplishments and lessons learned by quantifying your value-add (STAR: Situation-Task-Action-Result)
- When appropriate, make the case for different industries or roles by showing your transferable skills

3) Close: The Ask (Request Action)

- Add what you are doing at Colby to position yourself to this employer/industry
- Recap what you can CONTRIBUTE, reiterate your interest
- Your follow-up next steps and/or specific ask
- Thank you and call to action

Step 3: Develop key sentences of your cover letter (Worksheet 3). (See samples cover letters in Appendix.)

Using your outline information, write key sentences for each section of your cover letter.

Hook examples:

- *"I am a junior at Colby College with extensive experience in government, and am writing to apply for the Policy Internship."*
- *"With my deep analytics experience, passion for healthcare, and Colby Economics B. A., I am delighted to apply for the Consultant position."*

Sell examples:

- *"As an Analyst at ABC Company, I applied rigorous quantitative methods to assess the economic value of dozens of products. Handling multiple cases simultaneously, I successfully supported several cross-functional teams, never missing a deadline."*
- *"As a freelancer, producing high quality writing on a deadline was essential for securing future jobs, so I learned to hone my research skills, drawing information from different sources, while fact-checking my work for accuracy."*

Close examples:

- *"I am very interested in learning more about this opportunity and discussing the leadership expertise and results I can bring as your Strategy intern. Please contact me at myemail@colby.edu or (555) 123-4567."*
- *"The enclosed resume demonstrates my track record of consistently high achievement, strategic abilities, analytical skills, team leadership, and ability to deliver results. I would eagerly welcome an opportunity to discuss how my skills and experience would benefit your organization."*

Step 4: Finalize cover letter (Worksheet 4).

Complete writing your entire cover letter, and review against Cover Letter Checklist on page 6.

Formatting Guidelines

- Length: 1 page maximum, be as succinct as possible
- Header: consistent with your resume, professional stationery look, can create your own
- Subject line: optional, but should cite position you're applying for (ALWAYS have a subject line in an e-mail)
- Salutation: formal if have contact info, otherwise omit or use "Dear Hiring Manager"

Resources:

- "[Fantastic Cover Letters Made Easy](#)" video from DavisConnects
- Cover Letter Builder & Checklist: See Worksheet 1 on the following page, use with the job description to illustrate key skills & experiences
- Beyond B-School video on [Powerful Cover Letters](#) (Written for MBAs but applicable to all)
- [How to Write a Cover Letter](#) video from Forbes (from 2015, but still applicable)
- Review *DavisConnects Guide to Your Career Story* to create consistency between your Cover Letter and Career Story

WORKSHEET: Job Description vs. Experience Comparison

<u>Job Description</u> List the key requirements: skills, experiences, attributes	<u>My Skills</u> Do you have a match for this requirement from your own skill set? (Y/N). If not, try identifying comparable skills or experiences.	<u>Details</u> Provide an illustrative example from your professional experience or education (STAR format: Situation-Task-Action-Result)

Sample Cover Letters

FINANCE ROLE

January 18, 2021

Ingrid Bergman
Human Resources Manager
AirFarms Express 2
52 Valencia Street
Princeton, N. J. 07100

Addressed specific person.

Dear Ms. Bergman:

Strong intro includes relevant qualifications and enthusiasm.

I am currently a student at Colby College with deep financial skills and experience, writing to enthusiastically apply for the Corporate Development Analyst position posted on your company website.

I've been inspired by AirFarms' original thinking and disruptive approach to scaling the production and availability of healthy food in a way that also benefits local economies and the environment. I would love an opportunity to be part of a team that blends entrepreneurship, business fundamentals, technology and altruism to change the way we eat. With my substantial financial analysis background, communication skills, and commitment to mission-driven work, I think I would be a good fit for this role and for AirFarms:

Demonstrated that did homework on company, role, its impact.

- **Financial analysis background.** As an investment analyst at Small Hedge Fund, I have generated investment ideas by analyzing financial statements, conducting market research and building financial models. I also have direct experience covering agricultural companies and am familiar with the main business drivers of the industry.
- **Communication skills.** While at Small Hedge Fund, I cultivated relationships with senior management at current investment and target companies to understand their key business drivers and contributed to a monthly investor performance update for current and prospective investors, in order to fully understand the market, the state of the business and its future potential.
- **Commitment to mission.** I share AirFarms' mission of making money while doing good. In fact, in 2019, I founded a nonprofit which pays low income students to tutor other low-income students. Inspired by my experience as a fourth-grade tutor in Waterville, I launched the Tutor Zone to address the poor quality of tutor training and high overhead of similar youth tutoring programs.

Provided 3 relevant strengths, supported with evidence.

Using bullets makes it easy for recruiters to scan and identify 3 key strengths.

I believe my experience in finance, coupled with my strong communication skills and desire to improve my surrounding community will make me an asset to AirFarms.

Simple recap.

I have enclosed my resume and welcome the opportunity to present my credentials to you in person. Thank you kindly in advance for your consideration.

Restatement of interest and "Thank-You".

Sincerely,

Matt Yellowstone

SPORTS INDUSTRY

January 1, 2021

Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA)
123 5th Avenue
New York, NY, 54321

Didn't have actual recruiter or hiring manager name, so addressed to Hiring Manager.

Dear WNBA Hiring Manager:

Strong opener, with relevant skill, interests, experience, and current employees spoken

With deep sports industry experience, a passion for basketball, and as a student at Colby College, I am delighted to apply for the WNBA Intern Program. After speaking to current WNBA employees Mary Smith and John Jones, I was thrilled to learn more about the WNBA and how effectively innovative ideas are being pursued and implemented, and I believe my skills and experience would enable me to make a valuable contribution as an Intern.

Specified experience and skills desired in job description.

As a Summer Analyst at NESN I collaborated with multiple departments to address the challenges of working in a media landscape increasingly dominated by "cord-cutting" and digital alternatives. Conducting extensive financial analyses, I helped complete distribution deals with new digital providers such as Facebook Live. In addition, I took the initiative to become the knowledge expert on new digital entrants in media, summarizing industry developments for executives and building a database of information. Furthermore, I was the primary financial analyst in NESN's renewal negotiations with a top cable operator, helping complete a multi-hundred-million-dollar deal by recommending the most effective financial moves for the strategy team to employ.

The WNBA is in a position of strength as a growing global sport and as a rising media giant. Basketball has played a pivotal role in my life ever since my family immigrated to America. The basketball court was where I learned English, social skills, and the value of teamwork. In fact, it is no coincidence that people call me "KD". My passion for basketball extends outside of work, serving as a youth basketball coach and board member of our Community YMCA, where I helped plan, market, and run successful fundraisers, which resulted in building the first regulation size basketball court this summer for our Y members.

Making personal experience and interests relevant.

Although I would gladly work on any assigned teams as a WNBA Intern, the Media Distribution and Global Partnerships areas align best with my career expertise and interests.

The enclosed resume demonstrates my track record of consistently high achievement, passion for basketball, NESN sports media experience, cross-functional team leadership/collaboration, strategic expertise, and ability to drive results. I would eagerly welcome the opportunity to discuss how my skills and experience can contribute to the WNBA's continued success.

Strong close, summarizing applicable experience and skills, plus desired next steps.

Sincerely,

Katrina Dietrich

DATA ANALYTICS ROLE

November 27, 2020

Ms. Elena Employer
123 Main Street
New York, NY 12345

Dear Ms. Employer

Identifying herself, her relevant experience, company conversations, company knowledge, and enthusiasm.

As a student at Colby College with in-depth data analytics and consumer industry experience, I'm delighted to apply for the Mayflower Analyst position. Over the past three months, I've had the opportunity to learn about Mayflower in great depth through interactions with John Smith and Mary Jones from the New Jersey office, and Bill Smith and Caroline Jones from Mayflower New York. Whether it's the firm's transformational client work, inspiring team, extraordinary mentorship, collaborative culture, or innovative industry leadership, I am excited about the opportunity to apply my extensive skills and experience to help drive success for Mayflower and its clients.

Specifying strengths and expertise.

Coming from a mathematical science background, I've always been passionate about driving towards solutions by turning problems into numbers, and data into insights. In addition to my strong academic work in Data Science, I interned in the consumer goods industry for Lakeshore Company, where I developed an analytical, problem-solving, and strategic leadership skill set, which I believe will enable me to add value and thrive as an Analyst at Mayflower.

My initial role at Lakeshore was project-based, with their executive management team as my client, exposing me to multiple functions and business units, requiring me to quickly understand the project challenges and solve the specific business problems. One project entailed improving understanding of the company's distribution costs across thirteen countries and analyzing how to reformulate the distribution strategy to achieve higher efficiency. This led to identifying an opportunity to realize millions of dollars in savings, and demonstrated my value as an analytical thinker and results achiever. What excited me the most about my role was the broad exposure to diverse problems, continuous learning opportunities, and positive impact I had.

Experience in STAR format (Situation-Task-Action-Response).

With this proven ability to help deliver results, I subsequently assumed more responsibility by joining another brand team, where I supported a cross-functional group of eighteen on new product innovations. Applying my analytical and team collaboration skills, we added value to the business by developing the innovation strategy for multiple markets, with projected market share gains of 200 basis points in just 3-6 months.

Quantifiable results-oriented.

I believe my background and passion for driving results will equip me to be a valuable and immediate contributor at Mayflower. Thank you considering me for the Analyst position. I look forward to discussing my candidacy further.

Sincerely,

Summary of potential contribution and "Thank-You".

Mona Mule

CONSULTING INDUSTRY (w/o Consulting Experience)

November 28, 2020

Ms. Rita Recruiter
1 Hudson Street
New York, NY 12345

Dear Ms. Recruiter,

Attention-grabbing, enticing opening, with key qualifications relevant to job.

Could MBB benefit from a Colby student who has demonstrated strong leadership skills working closely with senior board members, driving innovation, and designing solutions that deliver impact?

Recaps employee conversations and conveys company knowledge.

Over the past few months, I have spoken with several MBB employees, including Mary Smith and John Jones in the Chicago office, John Smith and Mary Jones in New York, and Mary John in Houston, where I experienced MBB's energizing, stimulating work environment and culture of relentless improvement. These discussions not only inspired me, but also confirmed that I could apply my strong skills as a passionate team player, analytical problem solver, and expert communicator, to make an immediate impact and help drive success for MBB and its clients, as a Summer Consultant.

Last summer at Legalese Group, I demonstrated my ability to synthesize and summarize information quickly, lead and collaborate with senior executives, as well as deliver strong results. As a Paralegal, I supported ten boards and committees, and as interim Corporate Secretary of these entities, I managed board meetings, crafted agendas, gathered and distributed relevant information, and advised senior management on best practices. Throughout my time there, I gained a rich understanding of most corporation functions, from Legal to Human Resources to Finance, delving deeply into each area. My role also included crafting minutes after the meetings, later read by regulators and external auditors, so it was vital they accurately convey the state of the company and document that the board met all regulatory and reporting requirements.

Specifies transferable skills from very different jobs.

Prior to Legalese, I taught in two very different learning environments, where I quickly learned the landscape, identified core issues and developed creative solutions to ensure the most effective student learning outcomes. The first was an elite boarding school, and despite no prior experience and little working knowledge of the subjects I was teaching, I promptly scoped out the academic year, dove into the information, and led students to exceptionally strong overall performance. The second was in a much different classroom environment than I had ever experienced before. Many of my students had severe behavioral problems, academic challenges, and heartbreaking histories. Throughout the year, I worked extensively to obtain advice from experienced teachers, social-emotional support staff and administration, customizing my approach to foster the most positive learning environment, including a mentorship program that paired our students with more mature students from a nearby university.

My enclosed resume demonstrates my consistently high achievement, cross-functional team leadership and ability to deliver superior results. I would eagerly welcome the opportunity to discuss how my skills and experience can make an immediate contribution to MBB's continued success as a Summer Consultant. Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

Confident summary of required skills and experience, with preferred next steps and "Thank-You."

Sincerely,
Mona Lisa

TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY

Ellen Employer
4140 Mayflower Hill
Waterville, Me. 04901

December 31, 2020

Dear Ms. Employer,

Introducing himself, citing his relevant experience, company conversations, company knowledge, and eagerness to contribute.

I'm currently a student at Colby College, with extensive technology experience, writing to apply for the X² Technology Associate program. Over the course of this year, I have had the opportunity to visit the X² San Francisco office, talk to many other amazing folks, including John Jones (Toronto), Mary Smith (Boston)) and learn more about X². I see the program as emblematic of X²'s commitment to build, connect, grow, and I am confident that I can immediately contribute to the innovative and collaborative environment.

Specifying recent internship project and product work, along with accomplishments.

As a technical intern at Orange Technology last summer, I had the opportunity to help shape the features and strategy for some of Orange's flagship B2C software products (Paywall, VoiceCommander) reaching millions of customers. My quality work resulted in me winning an award for exceptional contributions. Here are some key skills and qualities that I believe will help me make an immediate impact at X²:

Bullet points highlight most important skills and experience, making info quick and easy-to-read.

Communication Skills:

→ I possess excellent oral and written communication skills that help me develop strong relationships with internal and external stakeholders. At Orange, I worked with a number of internal teams including Product Management, Business Development and external partners ranging from multinationals like American Express to startups like AI Robotics to integrate our services.

Problem Solving & Critical Thinking:

→ As an engineering student and technology intern, I bring structured problem-solving skills including the ability to identify core issues, break them down into manageable components, evaluate solutions, and create a plan of action to resolve them. Both at work and in my personal life, I have consistently demonstrated the ability to look at the bigger picture and think critically to arrive at the most optimal resolution to a problem.

Data Driven Approach:

→ I believe in using a data driven approach and championed the use of data during my time at Orange. I worked with the Product Management team to come up with a data acquisition & analysis platform for Paywall and the data was used to drive a redesign of its app features that reduced user dropout by 20%.

Leadership & Teamwork:

→ I believe in and value a collaborative environment and that has helped me be an effective leader and a team player. I have extensive experience and success on challenging projects including a business strategy consulting project at Colby and the Paywall e-commerce platform project at Orange.

Recap of why this company in easy-to-read bullet points.

After learning and working in the booming tech sector, I believe that X² is my ideal career next step because it provides me the opportunity to:

- Address the most challenging problems of consumer-facing technologies and create meaningful impact
- Apply my skills and experience to a diverse array of intellectually stimulating projects, while learning and growing daily
- Collaborate with extremely smart people who respect individual perspectives

I believe that my desire for continuous learning and growth, deep passion to deliver high impact by creating value for clients, and the unique combination of my skills and experience will make me thrive as an X² Technology Associate. I thank you for taking the time to read my application and I look forward to having the opportunity to interview and become a part of the X² family.

Sincerely,
Matt Mule

Summary of potential contribution and "Thank-You".