



Do I really need a cover letter?

While searching for your next job, you may be wondering whether sending a cover letter with your resume is absolutely necessary. Learn why in most cases you should not include a cover letter with your resume and ways in which you can more effectively engage with potential employers.

Outdated Function

Employers began requesting cover letters in the late 1950s to help assess candidates' interpersonal skills. However, with all the books, online articles, and other methods of enhancing cover letters that are available today, many job seekers simply cut and paste information, rather than customizing their cover letters for each position. Therefore, hiring managers are more interested in your skills, work experience, and results that are detailed on your resume. In addition, if you're applying for a job through email, your message and your attached resume let the manager know which opening you're interested in.

Applicant Tracking Systems

With the increasing number of companies utilizing an applicant tracking system (ATS), the need for a cover letter is being eliminated. As long as your resume contains keywords pertaining to the opening you're applying for, your resume will pass through the software filters and be read by a hiring manager. If your resume details the skills and experience being sought, the manager may call you for an interview.

Alternatives

Rather than stressing over perfecting a cover letter, connect with potential employers through social media. LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter allow you to interact directly with hiring managers and provide the most compelling reasons for bringing you aboard their companies. Having updated social media profiles, especially on LinkedIn, along with project samples, recommendations, membership in professional groups, and engagement in your industry help employers establish a clearer picture of your skill sets, work experience, professional network, references, and involvement in your industry.

You may also want to work with a professional recruiter on customizing your resume for each job opening. A recruiter will help showcase how your work benefitted other companies and how you may benefit another employer as well. In addition, because a recruiter has connections in your industry, they have the inside track on job openings that most people don't know about. You'll be competing against a smaller number of candidates and have a greater chance of securing the position.

Exceptions

If a job posting asks you to submit a cover letter with your resume, or if you're handing your resume directly to a hiring manager, you need to include a cover letter. By not including a cover letter when one is requested, you're not following directions and typically won't be called for an interview. Similarly, if a hiring manager is looking to fill multiple positions, your cover letter specifies which opening you're interested in. Without clarification, the manager will most likely put your resume aside and not consider you for the position.

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