

## COVER LETTERS? IT'S ALL ABOUT MANNERS

By Gayle Howard, CCM, CPRW, CERW, CWPP  
Top Margin Résumés Online

Not receiving an interview despite a killer resume and a unique and powerful career background is always a cause for concern, prompting a need to reassess every aspect of a job search campaign. I participated in just such a process today, partnering with "John" in brainstorming reasons why he was simply receiving a perfunctory thank-you email after distributing dozens of applications for executive positions.

Half way through our checklist "John" confessed; he'd breached job-search etiquette (although without understanding the impact of such an oversight) by failing to include a cover letter with his resume. Whether it was a lack of courtesy, or whether he simply didn't have the experience these jobs needed, I guess neither of us will ever really know, but one thing is for sure—not sending a cover letter is akin to shooting yourself in the foot in job seeking terms.

### What does a cover letter do?

- A cover letter begins a relationship; a hand-shake leading to a possibly beneficial encounter
- A cover letter reinforces your interest in a particular position and notes the position reference number so that all information for that job is kept together.
- A cover letter refers to the key elements that the employer is requesting and then aligns that wish list with a real-world set of skills that shows the employer you are the right person for the job.
- A cover letter summarizes a few key points in the resume that reinforces something the reader may miss when scanning.

And finally...

- A cover letter asks for a call to action. I want an interview. I will call you. You can contact me here. **A critical point:** you have the potential to do something for them, **but they must do something for you first.**

By neglecting to send a cover letter, you are ignoring a critical aspect of the job hunt. You are failing to personalize your application; failing to start a relationship with the recruiter or HR person in charge of the search. You are forwarding an email or clicking on a submit button and not even acknowledging that a human exists behind it negating their value in the process.

Who would want to be treated as a conduit of information and nothing more? I know I wouldn't!  
As Aretha Franklin said, it's all about "R.E.S.P.E.C.T."

Thank **you** for reviewing my experience. Thank **you** for taking the time to get to know me better, and most of all, thank **you** for considering me as a viable candidate to interview.

Have you been guilty of this breach of job-search etiquette? Think again. While the speed of distribution and transmission may be quicker these days, basic rules of courtesy still apply.

Employing people is a human business, relying on relationship building, trust, and respect. Don't neglect this crucial part of human interaction in moving your career forward.

---

*Gayle Howard was the first Australian to be awarded three resume writing certifications as a Certified Professional Resume Writer (CPRW), Certified Resume Writer (CRW), and Certified Expert Resume Writer. She is also a Credentialed Career Master (CCM) and a Certified Web Portfolio Practitioner. Her work has been featured in more than 20 career books internationally and she is the author of the e-Book "PS You Need a Resume!". You can contact her via email at [getinterviews@topmargin.com](mailto:getinterviews@topmargin.com) or by phone at 61 3 9726 6694.*