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Writing an Effective Cold Cover Letter

Writing good cover letters can be difficult even when you're able to tailor the letter to a specific job advertisement. Writing a cold cover letter is an entirely different story—in this case you're not replying to an advertised position, so it's often difficult to focus effectively on showcasing your professional talents.

The main point of “cold calling”—sending unsolicited cover letters—is to tap into the hidden job market, which some experts estimate covers up to 80% of positions. Cold calling also helps you create contacts in the industry, so even though you may send many cover letters without generating specific job leads, it's still worthwhile as a networking tool.

The biggest obstacle to generating job leads by cold calling is simply that no position may exist in a company that you send a letter to. Another significant barrier is that your skill set may not match the needs of the employer you contact. However, by sending a cover letter and resume to a company within which no open positions exist, you've at least got your information there in the company's database should a position open up. And by doing some simple research on the company before sending a cold-contact cover letter, you can effectively show an employer that you have the skills they need.

An effective cold cover letter should strongly convey the impression that you've taken time to research the company you're contacting. Mailing out scores of generic letters to different employers is pointless—it's much more effective to narrow your focus to fewer companies and spend some time researching them. The hiring manager who reads your letter should feel that you're serious about wanting to work for their company, not just that you want “a job”.

The other crucial point is knowing a little about the specific position you're interested in. When you're writing a cold cover letter, it's more important than ever that you emphasize your relevant

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professional skills and talents, simply because a hiring manager will not bother to read your letter if it is full of irrelevant information. That means you must find out what the employer will consider relevant, and in this case, there is no job advertisement to provide that information. Again, researching the company will help here—find out what is important to the company, and emphasize the fact that you can provide it.

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