

Before your CV is read, your letter or email of application sets the tone for the reader.

In a HRM survey of over 1,000 HR and Hiring Line Managers in 2009, over 90% said the covering letter was an important part of the picture they build when evaluating an application.

COVER LETTERS & APPLICATION EMAILS

Step one, check your email address. What might seem amusing to your friends can seem ridiculous and immature to a prospective employer. Use separate email addresses for formal communication if needs be.

We receive applications from candidates with “Here is my CV” or “See CV attached”. And that’s it. Our policy is to respond to 100% of all applications so the CV does get read, but the initial impression created is very poor. In some companies where this is the sole cover for a direct application, it hits the trash box in seconds without being reviewed.

A great cover letter or email can help differentiate your CV from the countless others that pass across an employer’s desk. It provides a great opportunity to summarise your skills and experience and get across any key points that do not fit within the format of your CV. In the above mentioned recent survey, 70% of HR and Hiring Line Managers indicated, that in the cover letter they wanted specific and accurate detail as to the job being applied for, while 69% said the covering letter should summarise the applicant’s suitability for the role. 41% of respondents wanted salary details of the applicant, 37% suggested they would like to see information on availability for interview while 34% said they wished to see details of notice period.

So, when writing your cover letter, consider the above and remember the following:

Make sure you send your application to the person who is actually recruiting. Get the name from the company’s reception if it is not listed.

Make it clear as to which role you are applying for and why you are suited.

Be concise in your communication and indicate why you are interested in the position or the organisation to whom you are applying.

You don’t need to repeat your CV in the covering letter, but make sure you put information in that makes it clear the letter is tailored to the role being advertised.

As with the CV, make sure there are absolutely no spelling mistakes or grammatical errors.

You are in a highly competitive labour market. If you are applying for a role for which there are likely to be a high number of other applicants, the person reviewing applications is more likely to be looking for a reason to exclude you, rather than include you in their process. Don’t give it to them early in your cover letter, email or email address.