



A Division of Community Futures Wild Rose

## Cover Letters, Resumes, and Dining Out (Really!)

I've often heard people say that they want a good Resume so that it can get them the job they want. This is a widely-held idea, but unfortunately, it's not reality.

*Your Resume won't get you a job.* But that's OK, because that's not its purpose. A piece of paper can't "get a job" – but **you** can...

Now, unless you've already tossed this page in the recycling bin, let me explain what I mean, and what the purpose of a Cover Letter and a Resume *really* are. We'll start with the first thing the potential employer sees – your Cover Letter. If you've ever gone out for dinner at a fancy restaurant, the first thing they do is bring you an appetizer. Its intent is to get your appetite fired up by the promise of even better things to come. It's a taste – *just a little taste*: you don't want to fill up on it.

Your Cover Letter has the same purpose: it's to give the potential employer a taste of who you are, and why you're the right person for the job. Its intent is to make them "hungry for more" – to "whet their appetite", "pique their interest"... However you want to put it, your Cover Letter is intended to inspire them to look at your Resume.



So, since that's the case, pick and choose what you want to highlight in your Cover Letter: don't simply quote the Resume. And remember: like the appetizer, **a little is enough**. If your Cover Letter is too long, it likely won't get read. (Or if it *is* read, they'll probably be so "full" that they won't bother looking at your Resume). Remember: the purpose of a Cover Letter is simply to entice the employer to read your Resume.

Then what's the purpose of your Resume? It's **not** to "get you the job": (we've already talked about that). *Its purpose is to create enough interest within the employer that she/he will want to interview you.* Why? Because once you get to sit down face-to-face with the employer, now you're able to give life to what was only print on paper – and now **you** have the chance to get the job.

So, thinking about Resumes, the comparison to the restaurant still works. Let's say that you ordered the Shrimp Scampi (or whatever your favourite is). You want them to bring you the Shrimp Scampi, right? You don't want them bring out the liver and onions (even if your mother told you that they're good for you!) You don't even want them bringing out the Chicken Kiev or the Prime Rib – you ordered Shrimp Scampi because that's what you want right now – nothing else will do.



The employer knows what they want, and they have “placed their order” in their Ad. **So give them what they want!** No matter how excellent your other skills or experience may be, if it's not what they ordered, they're probably not interested in it (at least not right now). Instead, you want to bring them exactly what they ordered, and present it to them with style; with flair.

Present yourself (on paper) in a classy way, while at the same time, bringing them what they've asked for: highlight those things that you can do that will show you as the right person for the job. And don't “cover these up” with all kinds of things that aren't relevant – don't make them go searching.

Let me give you another image: if you wanted a bag of gold, which would you rather choose: someone handing you a bag of gold, or someone handing you a pan and sending you out to the creek to search... Given the two options, *I'd choose the bag of gold.* You want to spell it out for them – plain and simple.

If you do this, and what you're highlighting “fits” with what they're looking for, you will hopefully get called for an interview. And if you are, then the Resume has done its job.

*Now it's in your hands.* Now you get to talk face-to-face with the employer: they get to interview you, and you get to interview them. They need to decide if they feel you're the right person for the job, and you need to decide if this is, in fact, the right job for you.

***Bon Appétit!***



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