

HOW TO WRITE A COVER LETTER

(THAT EMPLOYERS WILL ACTUALLY READ)

BRIEF *BUT* COMPELLING

- HOW?
- CONCISE WRITING
- GOOD STORYTELLING



MOST COVERLETTERS TEND TO BE FORMULAIC: X + Y = Z

Dear [EMPLOYER],

I would like to express my interest in [SOME POSITION] at [COMPANY]. Although I've explored many options in my job search, I've come to respect the quality and integrity of the work that you do. For example, I was very impressed by the latest television campaign for Kellogs. I love creating great advertisements for television, radio, and print, and believe I would be a good asset to your company. I'm a hard worker who thinks outside of the box while producing creative work in an efficient manner. I believe you'll find that my four years of experience at [SOME OTHER COMPANY I CLEARLY WANT TO LEAVE OR WAS FIRED FROM], and my resulting portfolio, mirror these qualities. I look forward to hearing from you and exchanging ideas about what I can offer [COMPANY].

Thank you for your consideration.

[APPLICANT]

That was just okay...generic and ineffective.

1. It doesn't tell you anything about **who** the author is
2. It doesn't tell **why** they're interested in their work or the company
3. It does nothing at all to **stand out** from the crowd.



Interesting, *unique* cover letter how to's

- 1. Know your audience
 - Audience = prospective employer
 - You need to know the company (culture)
 - If you know the company, you know how formal you need to be or how casual you could be.
 - Eg. Ever since I saw the giant airplane wing crashing through the wall of your offices, I knew IDEO was a place to work.



Audience cont.

- Show you know **details**
 - You don't want to apply arbitrarily
- Show you **appreciate** the work the company does
 - E.g. the airplane wing comment.
- Show **who** you are and **what** you care about.
- Do a little **research** even if you're looking for just ANY job.
 - It can help avoid getting stacked in a pile of generic applicants



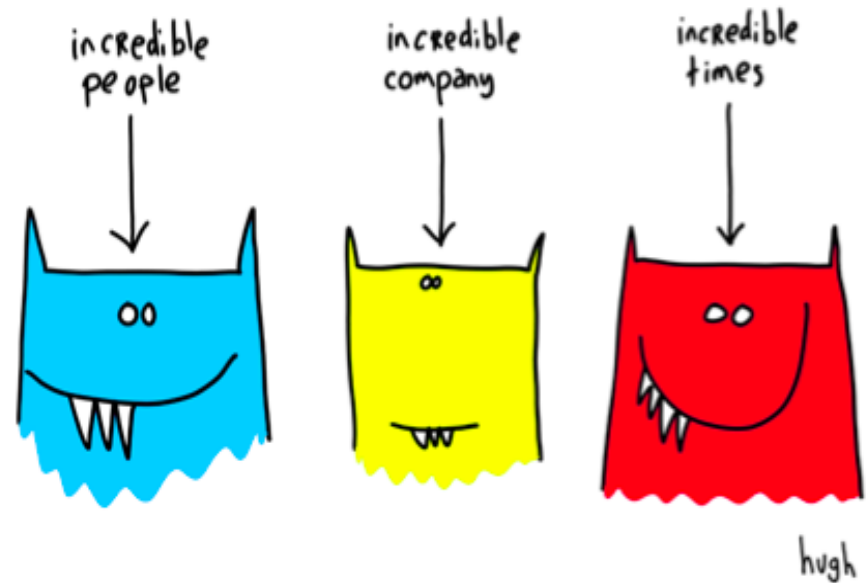
2. Know Yourself!

- You can't be someone else.
DON'T TRY.
- Your resume sells your skills/experience, but your cover letter needs to sell you as a person.
- You need to give the company a reason to want **YOU.**
- Who you are, **MATTERS.**



Know yourself cont.

- Put a little bit of you into the letter
- DO NOT OVERSHARE
- Present your personality in a way that's **relevant** to the job

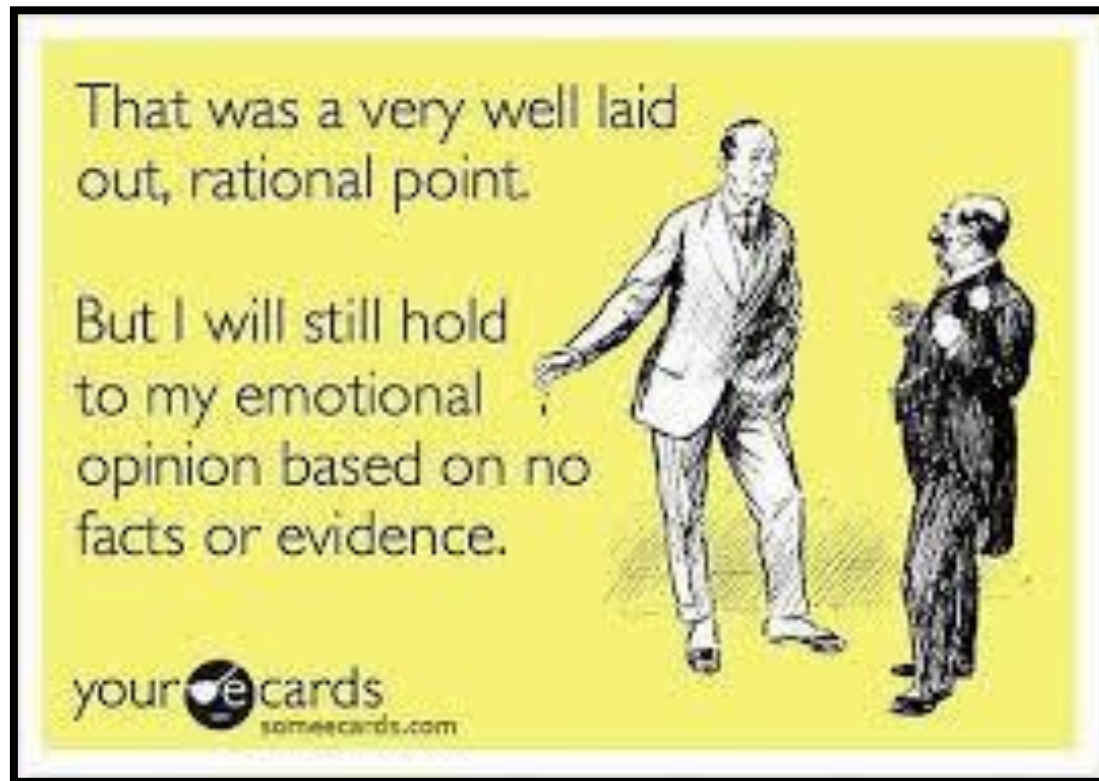


Show, don't tell.

- Use *examples* instead of *explanations*.
- Tell a story in a few **short** sentences.
- *“For her 9th birthday, my daughter wanted brownies just like the ones they make at her favorite restaurant. I accidentally spilled a little pudding mix into the batter, only to discover a trick that made one of the best desserts I've ever had. I can replicate a recipe like the best of them, but it's the mistakes I've made while baking that remind me of how much I love it.”*
- THINK! What kinds of things does this story tell us about the applicant?

Remember,

- You can tell anyone anything, *BUT* you have to be able to back it up.
- *SHOW* why they should believe your claims.



Demonstrate what EVERY employer wants to know

- Most care about these three more than anything else:
 - 1. You're **smart**
 - 2. You'll get things done
 - 3. You'll **fit in** well with the culture
- These are **implied**. Don't say them explicitly, but make them THINK it.

NEVER (ever) write the same letter twice!

- EVERY time You apply for a job:
 - The audience changes
 - The job changes
 - YOU may have changed.

Cont.

- Reuse elements when they are applicable.
- But remember, as simple as it sounds, different jobs are different jobs.
- Treat the application process as such 😊