



Cathy Alfandre's E-Letter

Create greater joy and fulfillment in your working life.

July 2009

Greetings!

"Conversation is food for the soul."

-- Mexican proverb

Cover Letters Start Conversations

Remember when you were in high school or college, and there was someone across the room you really wanted to meet? Remember how you would do anything just to start a conversation so you could get to know each other?

When the "someone" you really want to meet is a potential employer, keep that crowded party in mind as you write your cover letter! Use the letter as a way to initiate an interesting conversation -- one the other person will want to continue. Here are some guidelines:

Before you say (write) anything, what information can you find out first? Who is this person? What's his/her name? What do they care about? What's going on in their world? Remember how you'd ask your friends to give you "the scoop" on the person you wanted to get to know? Do your research on the employer -- and the position, industry, and hiring manager -- too.

Get introduced if at all possible. It's always easier to meet someone for the first time and start a conversation if you have a friend in common. In that crowded room, you're no longer a stranger when someone introduces you. So, explore your network to see if you can find a connection. If your cover letter starts with something like "Joe Smith suggested I contact you to explore...", your reader is already paying attention.

Kick the conversation off well. If you want to get to know someone at a party, you don't want to bore them. Avoid it in a letter too! Try to start the letter off with something to capture their attention. *Not:* "I read with interest your posting on www.monster.com." *But instead something like:* "I am a senior executive with deep industry expertise and a record of driving business change and delivering exceptional financial results." It doesn't have to be clever and catchy, but let it communicate something interesting and relevant to this particular person.

Convey your genuine interest in them. You need to share information about yourself in the letter, but the reader needs to know you really care about him/her too. This is where your research pays off -- to help you customize the letter and talk about how you can meet their needs. So the language is not a constant stream of: "I did this, I know that, I, I, I, me, me, me...." It's also things like: "I have long admired your organization's [share some insight into their mission, products, services, etc.]" And/or "My research into your company suggests...." And/or "I understand that your company is facing [specific issue]; I addressed exactly this kind of issue when I worked at...."

Distinguish yourself. You wanted the person at the party to remember you, right? Same goal for the cover letter. So, be sure to share information that's memorable: your special skills, your specific experience, and especially the results you've achieved. Let them see your unique brand -- the value you bring.

Every letter and every situation are different, but the principle is always the same: Your cover letter is not a boring formality or a flat one-way communication. Take care in writing it, as you would in initiating conversation with someone you really want to know. You just might make a real (and lasting) connection.

All the best --

Cathy

Recession-Proof Industries

Trends of industries at least 80% recession-proof in the 1990s and 2000s, and still growing today. (Data up to date through May/June 2009)

Key: Industry.....1990s...2000s...Trend (Trend=12-month employment growth rate)

Medical equipment.....100%...90%...1%
Warehouse clubs and supercenters.....81%...98% ...1%
Pet and pet supplies stores.....89%...98%...3%
Motor vehicle towing.....97%... 91%...1%
Credit unions and other depository credit intermediation.....98%...100%...0%
Direct health and medical insurance carriers....100%...84%...2%
All other insurance-related activities....84%...84%...3%
Mini-warehouse and self-storage unit operators.....100%...98%...3%
Management and technical consulting services.....100%...91%...0%
Other technical consulting services.....100%...100%...10%
Collection agencies....97%...83%...1%
Waste management and remediation services.....100%... 90%...0%
Education and health services.....100%..100%...2%
Educational services.....86%...100%...2%
Elementary and secondary schools.....90%....87%...4%
Colleges and universities.....83%...89%..19%
Fine arts schools.....90%...97%...10%
Educational support services.....100%...96%...7%
Health care and social assistance.....100%...100%...2%
Hospitals.....84%...99%...2%
Ambulatory health care services.....100%...100%...3%
Offices of healthcare practitioners.....100%...100%... 2% -10%
Outpatient care centers.....100%...100%...3%
Nursing and residential care facilities...100%...100%...2%
Social assistance...100%...100%...2%
Community housing, emergency, and relief services.....100%... 89%... 0%
Arts and sports promoters and agents and managers for public figures.....87%...
89%...2%

Limited-service eating places.....89%... 89%...0%
Limited-service restaurants.....89%...88%...0%
Personal care services.....82%... 100%...2%
Government.....98%...91%...0%
State government education.....84%...87%...2%
Local government transportation.....84%...93%...1%

Courtesy of Mark Hovind, JobBait.com (click <http://jobbait.com/a/rpi.htm> for more data)

Summer Food for Thought

"Rest is not idleness, and to lie sometimes on the grass under the trees on a summer's day, listening to the murmur of water, or watching the clouds float across the sky, is by no means a waste of time."

--John Lubbock

This bi-monthly e-letter is intended to offer ideas, tips, resources, and questions to ponder on careers, fulfilling work, and career-life decisions. I welcome your reactions and your suggestions for future topics.

To my new subscribers: Welcome! Please let me know if you would like to receive a copy of my previous e-letters.

To all readers: Please feel free to share this e-letter with anyone you think may find it helpful! (Rest assured, though, that I will not share YOUR email address with anyone!)

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