

Kickstart Your Cover Letter

Before sitting down to write your cover letter, spend 20–30 minutes on the following steps so you can really hit the ground running in an intentional way:

- Ask yourself: Why do I really want this particular job? What is specifically drawing me to this organization?
- Review the job description carefully, grouping the responsibilities and qualifications into categories if they aren't already, to better understand the skills required.
- For each responsibility and preferred qualification, quickly brainstorm examples of your relevant skills and experiences, drawing on the work you've done in this book, especially around your unique value and ideal work.
- Brainstorm ideas for what you want to do in the position. *Automatic writing* can be a helpful tool for this. Doing additional research on industry/sector trends can also help you formulate your ideas and get your creative juices flowing.

In these cover letter examples, we've included an abbreviated version of a cover letter Lauren submitted during her job search as well as a modified client example.

EXAMPLE COVER LETTER #1

Dear Dundee HR/HR team:

I'm passionate about empowering managers and helping teams work better so they can thrive in their work and in the world. Seven years of management consulting and another seven in organizational development and coaching provided me with a strong foundation for the leadership and coaching role. Bringing a broad range of experience supporting leadership development, career development, and team management, Lauren Dundee HR/HR is a great combination for this role.

I've created and delivered dozens of adult learning programs and workshops for organizations, ranging from a major Jewish nonprofit to a cutting-edge neuroscience advertising firm. Active Coaching (Dundee) developed, assessed, and facilitated an on-site leadership development program for mid-career professionals that included both in-person and online, virtual learning, and coaching. One participant shared, "Through Coaching I got a roadmap of practical tools and strategies for working about my job stress and overwork, an inspirational experience, and most important, an amazing 1:1 coach to help me talk through the most difficult aspects of my job transition." I'm eager to replicate this facilitator/coach role at Dundee HR/HR using a variety of learning techniques and modalities.

I believe a coaching mindset is an essential tool for managers, and it's a key to support creative problem solving in today's complex world. I have coached thousands of individuals on becoming a self-starting, self-motivated, and resilient manager. I've also coached individuals, managers, and executives to help them navigate difficult conversations and complicated staffing issues. The coaching experience has been an eye-opening one as I've grown my own confidence in my own conflict and team dynamics in the moment. Recently, for example, I led an intervention for Blue in a hospital setting between two leaders who were going head-to-head on great results, and who were avoiding the underlying dynamics beneath the surface.

My years as a consultant have honed my ability to help organizations quickly identify areas of need and partner solutions. For the Human Association of Girl Scouts and Girl Scouts, I conducted a six-month review of the global leadership needs, assessing the landscape, needs, and programs. At Hirsch, I oversee project teams to ensure that our staff is working towards high-quality relationships with a tight timeline, while also ensuring that our clients are informed and up-to-date about our process.

I'm highly collaborative and enjoy creating space for employees to share their ideas so they feel heard in our partner programs and each other as a shared goal.

I look forward to further discussing this role and how I might be able to contribute to Dundee HR/HR. Thank you for considering me.

Best,
Lauren Winston

Dear Dunder Mifflin team:

I'm passionate about empowering managers and helping teams work better so they can thrive in their work and in the world. Seven years of management consulting and another seven in organizational development and coaching provide me with a strong foundation for the leadership and learning role. I bring a broad range of experience supporting leadership development, career development, and talent management. I admire Dunder Mifflin's commitment to developing its talent and building a culture around shaping ideas, a bias for action, and ownership. This ethos meshes well with my penchant for creativity and experimenting with new ideas. I'm excited about the opportunity to contribute to your organizational culture as a member of your staff.

I've created and delivered dozens of adult learning programs and workshops for organizations ranging from a major Jewish nonprofit to a cutting-edge neuroanalytic advertising firm. At the Schusterman Foundation, I envisioned, secured funding for, and co-facilitated *CareerLeap*, a leadership program for mid-career professionals that included a two-day in-person workshop, virtual learning, and coaching. One participant shared: "Through *CareerLeap*, I got a roadmap of practical tools and methodologies for thinking about my job search and career path, an inspirational experience... and most important, an amazing 1:1 coach to help me talk through the most difficult aspects of my job transition."

I'm eager to envision and facilitate trainings and workshops at Dunder Mifflin using a variety of learning techniques and modalities.

I believe a coaching mindset is an essential tool for managers, and it's a way to support creative problem-solving to build strong teams. I have coached hundreds of individuals since becoming a certified coach, and I tap into this knowledge when meeting with individual contributors, managers, and executives to help them navigate difficult conversations and complicated staffing issues. The coaching approaches I have learned have also given me the confidence to deal with conflict and team dynamics in the moment. Recently, for example, I did an

Use your opening paragraph to describe what specifically is drawing you to the position and the organization, along with a sneak preview of your unique value and mission.

If relevant, include links to your articles and/or portfolio. Lauren hyperlinked to some of the projects she's completed, not shown in this example.

Make the link to the full range of the organization's needs. That not only includes the position's responsibilities but also specific skills and qualifications. Lauren shares her approach to coaching, which directly relates to the responsibilities in the job description.

March 1, 2021

Dear Executive Leadership Team,

I am excited to apply for the Chief Program Officer position to manage a diverse team, drive innovation, and forge new partnerships at Humanitarian International. Your work is profoundly important, and I have been moved by the organization's commitment to welcoming refugees. I am eager to bring my skills and insights to Humanitarian International to help address what I see as one of the biggest challenges of our time. I have been involved in community-based organizations

for the last 15 years and seek to work on a more national and global scale. Note that I'm based in Austin but would absolutely consider moving to New York for the position.

Convening People and Facilitating Meaningful Experiences

In my current role, I build deep trust with a range of stakeholders across the public and private sectors. When the pandemic began, I organized a community-wide leadership call right before shelter-in-place took effect. In doing so, I created a space for nonprofit leaders to share concerns and contingency plans for their organizations. Because I received so much positive feedback about the openness and wisdom shared on that call, I have continued to host and curate ongoing gatherings. This has allowed local leaders to continuously learn from each other and dialogue with government officials to make strategic decisions as the pandemic unfolded.

Most recently, I facilitated a process for board members to rethink my organization's three-year funding priorities. Over six committee meetings, I managed multiple viewpoints, helping to clarify ideas until there was consensus that reflected our shared thinking. In addition to my facilitation skills, I bring a sense of calm to a room that is useful during tense moments. At Humanitarian International, I'd love to bring my skills as a facilitator to bridge the gaps between different stakeholders to make sure that we create vibrant programs addressing refugees' needs.

Date your letter and address it to the hiring manager or person listed on the job description. You can also address it to a specific team or the organization, like Sasha does.

Indicate your willingness to relocate if the job is located in a specified place, only if you're really open to moving.

You'll want to write approximately 3–5 paragraphs highlighting your unique value, your impact, and your ideas. You may consider organizing the sections by key headers you identified when you reviewed the job description.

Managing a Team and Building Team Dynamics

As a manager, I operate on a “no surprises” model—I share what I can about what’s happening at various levels of the organization and invite my team’s input whenever possible. One of my catch phrases is “I am brainstorming here, jump in!” I use it to signal that I am sharing my own process and that there is room for my team to both influence my decision-making and to safely try out their own ideas.

In supervision sessions, I expect those on my team to discern which details I need to know and when to seek my input. I also remove obstacles when I can and help my team build their own capacity in finding workarounds. It is my practice to offer a lot of feedback immediately and without any drama. As a result, I build trust across the team and foster an environment of self-reflection and personal development—which I think would help Humanitarian International staff feel valued and supported in their day-to-day work.

Creating Partnerships and Increasing Innovation

I very much enjoy the creative process of dreaming up new ideas. I was trained in social entrepreneurship and previously ran a small matchmaking company. In my current role, I often develop pilot programs quickly and inexpensively. Then, using the data I glean from the pilots, I am able to present the board and funders the information that we need to evaluate whether to invest. One such program I ran focused on engaging Baby Boomers in political giving that eventually involved hundreds of local community members each month. This is just one example of how I have launched

projects, gathered feedback, refined strategy, and grown a program. I would like to use this approach at Humanitarian International to strengthen the power of your network while developing fruitful new partnerships.

I deeply believe in your programming, as you build structured support for refugees and relationships with local community members. I would love to discuss ideas to build a plan for an alumni network and also see opportunities to bring more awareness about the current state of immigration.

I look forward to the possibility of speaking with you about the role of Chief Program Officer and learning more about your needs and goals.

Thank you for your consideration!
Sasha

Use action verbs and do your best to paint a picture of how you’ve effected change or describe what you’ve created in your past or current roles.

Throughout your letter, show that you’ve done your research on the position and organization, using language that is common in the industry or from the job description if it’s authentic to you.