

# **MBA Cover Letter Guidelines 2006-2007**

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# I. Introduction

## The Olin Cover Letter

A cover letter is the story that brings your résumé to life and connects your competencies to a specific employer and ideally, to a specific position. Consider the importance of making a strong first impression which is the opportunity presented by a cover letter. Many times, the cover letter is the first representation of yourself made to a prospective employer. It gives the reader a small glimpse of who you are, what makes you tick and why.

The cover letter is different from a résumé, which provides an executive summary, high level overview of your competencies and accomplishments. Your cover letter should not simply repeat the same wording as your résumé (Source: Prof. Veech). Every résumé you send out should be accompanied by a unique cover letter.

The value of including a unique and targeted cover letter with your résumé include the following benefits.

- This is your chance to really customize your approach and credentials to the employer and the job.
- It contains the explicit connection between their requirements and your skills and abilities.
- It can showcase information not on your résumé.
- The cover letter can demonstrate that you are business savvy.
- A strong cover letter can enhance your chances for further consideration.
- The cover letter demonstrates your writing skills and ability to communicate.

## II. Format: Component Parts

**Your Return Address** (one line for street address; one line for city, state and zip)  
(Blank line)

**Date**  
(4 blank lines)

**Inside address** (one line for Mr./Ms. First Name Last Name; one line for title; one line for company name; one line for street address; one line for city, state zip code)

**Salutation:** (Dear Mr. or Ms. Last Name:)

**Opening Paragraph:** Introduction of yourself and the purpose of your letter: who you are and why you are writing. Explain why you are interested in this particular company; if you have a lot to say about the company, you can do so in a separate paragraph.

**Middle Paragraph:** An overview of your competencies (talents, knowledge, skills) and unique strengths, stated in terms of the unique value you bring to the table. Support by noting the positive results you achieved in previous work or educational contexts. Map your competencies to the requirements of the specific job of interest of organization. If you have a lot to say, this section can be expanded into two paragraphs.

**Closing Paragraph:** Thank the reader of your letter, state how you may be contacted, and whenever possible note a follow up action item for yourself.

**Closing,** (Sincerely,)  
(4 blank lines)

**Your signature** (if hard copy)  
**Your typed name**

**Enclosure: Résumé** (if hard copy)  
**Attachment: Résumé** (if e-mail)

### III. Templates for Acceptable Business Styles

#### Full Block Style (most preferred style)

(use a 12-point font)

**My return address (2 lines, 1 for street address, one for city, state and zip)**

(blank line between address and date)

**Date**

(Four blank lines)

**Inside address**

(Double space)

**Dear Mr. or Ms. \_\_\_\_\_:**

(Double space)

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XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

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(Double space)

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XXXXXXXXXXXX

(Double space)

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

XXXXXXXXXXXX

(Double space)

**Sincerely,**

(Four blank lines for signature)

**My Name**

(Double space)

**Enclosure: Résumé**

(Source: Prof. Veech)

### III. Templates for Acceptable Business Styles

#### Modified Block

**My return address** (2 lines: 1 for street address; one for city, state and zip code)

(Blank line)

**Date**

(Four blank lines)

**Inside address**

(Double space)

**Dear Mr./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_ :**

(Double space)

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(Double space)

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XXXXXXXXXXXX

(Double space)

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XXXXXXXXXXXX

(Double space)

**Sincerely,**

(Four blank lines for signature)

**My Name**

(Double space)

**Enclosure: Résumé**

(Source: Prof. Veech)

## IV. Content: Component Parts

### Return Address:

123 University Lane  
St. Louis, MO 63xxx  
(314) 935-xxxx  
[student@olin.wustl.edu](mailto:student@olin.wustl.edu)

- Notice that your name is not included.
- Start with your mailing address.
- Inclusion of your telephone number and email address are optional; if you do, there is no need to mention them again in the closing paragraph.

### Date:

January 11, 2004

### Inside Address:

Mr. James Jones  
Vice President, Financial Services  
ABC Corporation  
123 Industry Lane  
St. Louis, MO 63xxx

- Note that you do not need the telephone number or the email address of the addressee.
- You must have a full address which may require research on your part; but, a full address makes a positive impact.

### Salutation:

Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name:

- No first names or nicknames.
- Use colon after. Comma too informal.
- Make certain that you have the correct spelling and gender of the addressee; if in doubt, call the company.
- Always make an effort to write to a person rather than to a department or generically.
- If the contact is not available, make an effort to find one: use WCRC staff, databases, your contacts, call the company.
- In case you are unable to find a name, you will have to use a generic salutation such as:
  - **Dear Sir or Madam:** Formal and old-fashioned, but it works;
  - **Omitting the salutation altogether:** Effective, but may look too informal; Use **subject line** bolded, instead of the Salutation, example: **Re: Financial Analyst Internship**

### **Opening Paragraph:**

- A first line that tells the reader who you are, why you are contacting them, and how you came to know about the company, department, or position. This statement should be quick, simple and catchy. If you are applying for a specific position, mention it. If you are referred by somebody always mention the name (after having received permission to do so from referrer)
- A line that gives a very brief synopsis of who you are and why you want the position. Demonstrate your research here by being specific. The best way to do this, if you don't already have a more personal connection with the person you're contacting, is to lay it out like this:
  - I am a (your identifying characteristic and profession)
  - I have (your years of experience and/or education)
  - I am interested in (the position)

### **Middle Paragraph:**

- Overview of your competencies (talents, knowledge, skills) and unique strengths, stated in terms of the unique value you can contribute to the organization and targeted position. Support your claims with facts and examples of results you have achieved. Do not repeat information from your résumé. Customize the letter to the specific company and position.
- If you have a job description, you can structure this paragraph with this format:
  - Stated requirement;
  - Your relevant skills;
  - Proof, supporting information of how you demonstrated these skills.

### **Closing Paragraph:**

- Thank the reader. Refer to the attached résumé and, if appropriate, note when and how you will follow-up. This should be the shortest paragraph of the cover letter.
- Follow-up statement will vary with the situation which may include:
  - Upcoming on-campus interviews – state that you look forward to meeting them;
  - Résumé referral – state that you look forward to hearing from them or specify a time when you will contact them to follow-up;
  - Independent outreach – specify a time when you will contact to follow-up.



# V. Style & Standards

## Style

- Spell check and double spell check.
- Have someone else read and review the cover letter before sending.
- Customize the letter to the specific situation and company/position.
- Be succinct and direct; use the active voice.
- Use powerful, dynamic language including action verbs.
- Avoid one-sentence paragraphs.
- Do not start all sentences with 'I'.
- Avoid being overly creative or funny.
- Include appropriate follow-up noted in the last paragraph.
- Avoid clichés and pompous phrasing.
- Be yourself. Allow the cover letter to show your personality.

## Standards

### Presentation:

- Visually pleasing without distractions caused by the look or format.
- At least 1" margin all-around.
- Inside address, date and salutation reflect individualized personal letter.
- Spacing follows acceptable business format.
- Salutation reflects respect for the addressee.

### Value Proposition:

- Letter should answer the following for the reader:
  - Who are you?
  - What do you want?
  - Why are you interested in the company and specific position?
  - What value do you offer the organization; how can you contribute?

### Impact:

- Name past employers if impactful.
- Articulate functional and/or industry experience as part of introduction.
- Write for the reader by articulating what benefit they'll get from your employment.
- Provide clarity of goals, rationale for interest.

## VI. Samples

14 East Spring Street  
Moneybury, CT 06903

October 1, 2002

Mr. Thom Flanton  
Hiring Manager  
Mock and Biddle  
40 Wall Street  
New York, NY 10001

Dear Mr. Flanton:

I recently graduated with a Bachelors degree in Economics and am looking for a full-time position in the Investment Banking field. I am extremely interested in beginning my career at Mock and Biddle. The investing history of Mock and Biddle, especially its stability during the 1980s junk bond and LBO craze, was the subject of my undergraduate thesis.

Mock and Biddle is my first choice for my entry into the professional arena, and I believe that my employment would be highly beneficial to Mock and Biddle as well. As co-founder Charles Anderson said in his 1962 commencement speech at Brown University, "There is no more sound investment than youth."

I feel I have much to offer in Mock's drive to involve a younger generation of investors. As the founder of the Oberlin Students Investment Group, I managed the capital of 31 of my peers, making 9 percent annual return over a three-year period, and raising the amount of capital from an initial \$8,000 to \$54,000 my senior year, all while maintaining a 3.8 average in my field. I want to apply that vision and multitasking ability at Mock and Biddle.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration, I look forward to discussing with you the ways I can contribute to Mock and Biddle's future.

Sincerely,

Mark Uberski

Enclosure

(Source: Vault.com)

678 Clayton Road  
St. Louis, MO 63130

June 17, 2003

Mr. Gary P. Lazor  
Director, International Recruiting  
International, Inc.  
2101 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 1200  
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Mr. Lazor:

I am writing to you to express my interest in a full-time consulting position with International Inc. I am a second-year MBA student at the Olin School of Business, Washington University. Upon graduation in May 2004, I would like to embark upon a fast-paced, intellectually challenging career in consulting, in the area of public and corporate finance, trade and economic policy. Over the seven years I worked at McKinsey, I have heard the name of International Inc. on many occasions. Your company has a portfolio of projects whose scope and global geography fits extremely well with my professional interests.

My extensive knowledge was gained through more than seven years of related consulting experience, as well as six years of formal coursework. As a lead consultant with McKinsey, I worked on a variety of projects in more than 12 countries advising foreign governments on budgeting, spending efficiencies, revenue forecasting, sub-national governance, and debt financing. In addition to giving advice and providing analyses, I also rolled up my sleeves and participated in project implementation - in revamping the entire budget process of General Motors, in producing the budget classification and the chart of accounts for Deutsche Bank, in creating a Statistics of Income Analysis for GE. Prior to McKinsey, I worked as a commodities trader, comptroller, currency analyst, and economist with companies in The European Union. I believe that my professional and entrepreneurial experiences, global background, and business education will be a valuable asset to International Inc. Attached is my resume for your consideration.

I would welcome the opportunity to talk to you further about my experience, qualifications and interests as well as to hear about the employment opportunities within your company. I can be reached at (314) 935-xxxx or at student@olin.wustl.edu. Thank you very much for your time and consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Jim Jones

Attachment: Résumé

123 University Lane  
St. Louis, MO 63105

January 25, 2004

Ms. Jane Doe  
Coordinator - MBA Program  
Delta Air Lines  
1030 Delta Blvd.  
Atlanta, GA 30354

Dear Ms. Doe:

As a May 2004 MBA candidate with concentrations in Finance and Strategy, I am positioned to make immediate contributions to Delta Air Line's Associate MBA Program. Recently Delta's CEO, Gerald Grinstein, said "2003 was a year full of significant financial challenges for Delta." I strongly feel my expertise in capital budgeting, resource allocation, and financial analysis will help Delta make the improvements necessary to meet its stated goals of improved cost reduction, customer relations, and operational efficiency. I have already seen Delta take significant steps in reaching out to customers through socially responsible acts such as shipping school supplies free of cost to Iraq as part of the rebuilding effort.

The following represent some attributes that qualify me as the ideal candidate for this position:

- Problem Solving Skills – I recently completed a summer internship in telecommunications which involved managing a complicated project. As a result, I've developed proficiencies for recognizing problems, breaking them apart, and then providing appropriate courses of actions and deliverables which will resolve them.
- Detailed Analysis – I have learned some of the latest and most recent quantitative analysis and modeling techniques which will facilitate precise, timely, and thorough results.
- Communication Skills – While with my former employer I routinely gave presentations to my division's upper management, including senior managers, directors, and the VP regarding my group's quarterly sales numbers. In addition I conducted technical training seminars to new members of the group as well as "refresher" courses to existing group members.

For your consideration, I have enclosed my résumé which contains my current contact information. I would very much like to set up an interview so I could express my desire to join your company and also learn more about the rotational program itself. I can be reached by phone at (314) 727-3111 or by e mail at talcherkars@olin.wustl.edu. Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Enclosure: Résumé

123 University Lane  
St. Louis, MO 63105  
October 4, 2003

Ms. Jane Doe  
Recruiting Coordinator  
Guidant Corporation  
4100 Hamline Avenue North  
St. Paul, MN 55112

Dear Ms. Doe:

As a second-year MBA student with Marketing and Strategy concentrations and a background in Biomedical Engineering, I am very interested in a full-time position at Guidant, particularly the Field Clinical Representative and Product Manager positions.

This semester I am the team leader on the Guidant-sponsored Practicum project, where my team is developing methodologies to profile four specified job positions. We will also be creating a target marketing strategy for Guidant to use in recruiting prospective employees in these positions. In addition, I was fortunate to be on the winning team for the Guidant case during Integrated Case Experience (ICE) Week and have been working with my team on writing the case for next year's ICE Week. These projects confirmed for me that the medical device industry, and Guidant Corporation in particular, would be an excellent match for my interests and background.

In addition to my enthusiasm and desire to become a Guidant employee, you will find that my qualifications include:

- Strong leadership skills – As a leader in several campus organizations including the Society of Women Engineers (SWE), I have learned how to successfully motivate and direct a team toward the common goal of educating and empowering women in engineering. My largest leadership role has been serving as the chair of the 2003 SWE Regional Conference, a two-day event attended by over 150 women. Using organizational and time-management skills, along with my enthusiasm for the project, I led our organization to plan a successful conference. In addition, my role as team leader for our Guidant Practicum project has given me valuable educational experience in the medical device industry, while allowing me to utilize the problem-solving skills I have developed in the MBA program.
- Proven quantitative and analytical skills – My bachelor's degree in biomedical engineering has provided me with the necessary proficiencies to analyze business situations quantitatively and provide comprehensive, analytic solutions. My engineering degree has also given me a solid technical background and the capability to quickly learn new technologies.

Through my work on the Guidant Practicum project and the ICE Week case, I have had the opportunity to meet several Guidant employees. It was clear that they not only enjoy their jobs but also appreciate working for Guidant. The prospect of working at a company where the work would be both rewarding and challenging is the primary reason I chose to pursue a career at Guidant.

I look forward to the opportunity to apply my abilities and background to your company. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Your Name

**Cover Letter Standards**

Revised August 23, 2004

**The most *traditional* letter style is the *block* style (all lines begin at left margin).**

Letter Elements	Required	Option
<b>Return Address (your address)</b>		
Street Address City, State Zip Code Country (applicable only if sending letter internationally)	Required Required	If needed
<b>Date -- placed below the return address and 1 blank line (or immediately on the line after return address)</b>		
Month Date, Year (e.g., June 10, 2007)	Required	
<b>Inside Address (company's address) – placed below the date and 3 blank lines</b>		
Formal and full name; e.g., Mr. Adam Jones -or- Ms. Agatha Jones Job Title (on same line as name; or on line below name, depending on length) Company Name Street Address City, State Zip Code Country (applicable only if sending letter internationally)	Required Required Required Required Required	If needed
<b>Salutation – placed below the inside address and 1 blank line</b>		
Formal and last name with colon; e.g., Dear Mr. Jones: -or- Dear Ms. Jones:	Required	
<b>Three to Four Paragraphs (body of the letter) – placed below salutation and 1 blank line</b>		
<i>Please see samples on following pages.</i>	Required	
<b>Complimentary Close – placed below last paragraph and 1 blank line</b>		
Sincerely,	Required	
<b>Signature Block – placed below complimentary close and 3 blank lines</b>		
Handwrite your signature in the 3 blank lines	Required	
Your typewritten name	Required	
<b>Enclosure – placed below typewritten name and 1 blank line</b>		
Enclosure: Résumé	Required	