

No one reads the cover letter (and other HR secrets)

Written by Julie Desmond
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HR Secret #1: People who hire people for a living are practical. They will eventually get around to scrutinizing your application, but at first they will glance over the cover letter, open the resume, and never again will the two documents appear side by side. You will sweat over the details of your vast successes, but these are your words. As your resume is passed around, the people you want to work for will use it and your interviews to form their own impressions.

Secret #2: Late in the hiring process, a good cover letter serves as a writing sample and a demonstration of your thought process and communications ability. If it contains spelling or grammatical errors, those will count against you. If it is missing altogether, that will count against you. If it's perfect, no one will pay much attention to it. Send it anyway.

Secret #3: Phone interviews are meant to be two-way conversations. If the interviewer asks me a question and I ramble beyond about a 30 second answer (think TV commercial), the interviewer will either end the interview or start checking emails. Either way, the job will go to someone else.

Secret #4: No means no. Really. Candidates who gracefully and gratefully accept the no-hire decision will be remembered as professional. When the next, better job comes along, that representative will remember and may call you back in for the new role. Don't argue and don't demand an explanation. Think about the baseball player who argues a bad call. All the noise in the world is not going to change the umpire's decision. It just gets the player ejected. Your objective is to stay in the game. Accept the decision and be ready for the next play.

Secret #5: The front desk is your friend. Candidates do not always realize how powerful the administrative assistant at the front desk can be. If you are rude, loud, or simply ignore the receptionist, he or she will be reporting back and fast. If you are normal, he or she will say nothing. If you are unfriendly, the whole company is going to hear about it.

HR Secret #6: HR people are people, too. They want to be professionally treated and occasionally thanked. And they want to hire you. After someone screens you over the phone and coordinates times for you to come in and meet the team, HR has a vested interest in making the hire happen. If it does not, then we are back to the beginning of the process. Ask us what you need to know. We will tell you. We have seen something valuable in your background or personality. Let us help you through the hiring maze.

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