



## Cover Letter Tips

By *Harrison Barnes*

Too many people approach their job searches from the perspective of their own needs. They need a job, they need to make more money, they need flexible working hours and benefits. This is not the way to get a job. In fact, this “me-too” [method of job seeking](#) is unlikely to get you anywhere.

Several months ago I was in the airport in New Delhi, India, with time on my hands. I started looking around one of the shops, and after a few minutes, the person working the counter posed a surprising question. “Can you give me a job in the United States?” he asked.

“Why would I hire you?” I said.

“Because I would like to work there.”

### Contents

1. [Make Sure You Understand What You Have to Offer](#)
2. [How Much Productivity Are You Capable Of?](#)
3. [How Much Money Can You Earn an Employer?](#)
4. [What Incredible Things Have You Done in Previous Positions?](#)
5. [Do Good Things Happen Wherever You Go?](#)
6. [Produce a Short, Readable Letter Based on Your Strengths](#)
  1. [6.1.The Opening](#)
  2. [6.2.Bullet Points](#)
  3. [6.3.The Closing](#)
7. [Sample Letter](#)
8. [Follow “Best Practices” in Your Letters](#)
9. [Submitting Your Cover Letters and Resumes](#)

We bantered back and forth for some time, and at no point did he give me any justification, potential benefit, or reason whatsoever to hire him. All he told me was that he wanted a job.

As ridiculous as this may sound, this is exactly what most people do when they are looking for a job.

Instead of approaching your [job search](#) from the position that you need something, you will be much better off approaching it from a position of selling something. You are selling yourself at a good price and whoever hires you will get the deal of a lifetime.

This is all a cover letter needs to communicate. If you can communicate this and nothing more, your cover letters will be outstanding.

When your mail arrives each day, you experience the same feeling as many employers. There are offers from home improvement stores, offers from cruise lines, offers from people in the neighborhood selling various home services, catalogues from retailers, and more. One—or perhaps a few—of these offers will get your attention; the others you will throw away, because whatever it is that they are offering does not appeal to you. There is not a strong enough offer. You do not see the benefit to you.

Every year Publishers’ Clearinghouse sends out direct mail pieces by the thousands. The envelope immediately gets your attention: You have a chance to win millions! A good proportion of people who receive these offers fill them out. Why? Because they think they can win. The letter makes a compelling offer. The envelope itself appeals to your self-interest.

A good cover letter should make the same impact. You get jobs by making employers offers that seem almost too good to be true. You need to appeal to people’s self-interest.

What if the person in the New Delhi airport instead had said this to me:

“I am the only manager of this store. I’ve been here since it started. I’ve hired everyone here. If you hire me, I can make your business unbelievably successful.

“This is the best-performing Mont Blanc airport store in the world. Last year, we did \$7 million in business. The closest competitor to our store was in Frankfurt, Germany, and they only did \$4 million.”

“I have made my employers successful everywhere I have ever worked.”

“Before running this store, I ran a huge call center and increased their volume of business by more than 500 percent in three years.”

However, the young man did not tell me this; if he had, he would have immediately piqued my interest. I would have thought:

- This guy is good luck.
- This guy is a leader.
- This guy can make our company money.

- This guy does something that gets results wherever he goes.
- Maybe I should give this guy a job.

The point is, it is what you make employers think of you that matters. Employers need to think that you can make them lots of money. Applicants are approaching them for jobs all the time, just as you get offers in the mail all the time. Some offers appeal to the employers and others do not. You need to be able to [craft offers that appeal to employers](#) and make them want to hire and buy you.

Several years ago I walked out of a movie theater in New York City with a friend of mine. A man on the street was selling a few watches out of a Macy's bag. He claimed that they were purchased with a stolen credit card. It took the man less than a minute to sell them to my friend. He was selling watches for \$100 that he claimed someone had paid \$2,500 for. They turned out to be fake, but he knew how to catch our attention.

When you sell something for drastically less than the competition, it is easy to sell it.

You will get attention in your cover letters and in your [job search](#) when you portray yourself as an incredible discount. Thus, you will get attention if you approach people with something along the lines of the following:

Would you like to invest \$100,000 and get back over \$1 million in return? These are the returns I have generated for everyone who has invested in me in the past:

- I have increased my current employer's revenue by 500 percent and earned the company record profits.
- With a previous employer, I increased the company's return on investment by 600 percent.

If you hire me, you can expect similar results as well.

You absolutely should not think of yourself as a job seeker. Instead, you need to consider yourself to be an investment—and a commodity. People invest in you with the hope of receiving a return on their investment. If you have shown that someone who has invested in you in the past has gotten an outstanding return on that investment, you will do profoundly better in your job search. People need to believe that investing in you will give them a massive reward.

Give your prospective employers a compelling reason to hire you and pay you what you want. Just as you wouldn't pay \$4,000 for a treadmill when someone else is selling it for \$2,000, an employer is not going to meet your salary demands unless you can prove why you are worth the investment.

With this in mind, this chapter presents a good formula for you to use for cover letters that get noticed.

#### **[A] Make Sure You Understand What You Have to Offer**

Before you do anything with your cover letter, it is important that you understand exactly what you have to offer. This means that you need to understand how you can make employers money, save them time, and benefit them in a variety of ways.

A cover letter's main purpose is to show employers that they will make a lot of money and have less aggravation if they hire you. You want to demonstrate to employers that if they do not hire you, they are going to lose a lot of money.

If your cover letter refers to

- the productivity of which you are capable,
- the money you can earn an employer,
- the incredible things you have done in the past, and
- the fact that "good things happen wherever you go,"

you are on the right track.

#### **[B] How Much Productivity Are You Capable Of?**

Time is money for most employers. If you can get more done in less time, then you are someone who can offer an employer a massive advantage. You need to tell employers how much time you can save them, and make this as clear as possible.

In the working world, a lot of people come into the office and do not produce much. They look at the computer, they daydream, and they talk on the phone. These are the sorts of employees that people do not want to hire.

In contrast, many employees come into work and they are "on" the entire time. They work very hard and are focused and in tune with their work. Someone like this is worth *a ton* more money than someone who does not work hard.

In addition, many people are able to do the work of several people. I have seen one employee do the work that six employees in a department formerly did—and do so better and more efficiently. Are you this sort of person? I hope you are. This is ideal for including in a cover letter.

Example: "When our CFO was forced to reduce our accounting department from six people to one, I was the person chosen to stay. I did the job of six people successfully and received four raises within two years."

Example: "In my past two law firms (both over 100 attorneys), I have consistently billed more than 3,000 hours a year and have been among the top 2 or 3 billers in the firm."

You need to make sure that you are communicating how productive you can be to your potential employer. This is a massive "key attribute" you need to communicate at all times.

#### **[C] How Much Money Can You Earn an Employer?**

People earn employers money in different ways. A good CEO earns his or her company money through decisions and strategy. A good salesperson earns his or her company money by selling a lot. A good attorney earns his or her law firm money by working a lot of hours. A good in-house attorney earns a company through effective negotiations and good decisions.

Several months ago I was speaking with a very successful executive about the compensation of CEOs. It seems insane that many of these CEOs are earning \$20 million to \$30 million a year. However, at the same time many of these executives are making decisions and taking initiatives that lead to their companies' making billions of dollars a year.

A very bad CEO can cost a company hundreds of millions; a good one can make a company hundreds of millions.

If a CEO is looking for a job, which line in a cover letter would look better to you:

“Led company during massive downturn in industry and successfully took company through bankruptcy. Shed ‘nonessential businesses’ and helped employees remain productive during transition.”

or

“Led a company from \$20 million in revenue to more than \$500 million in revenue in six years. Increased profit by 800 percent, resulting in shareholders’ increasing the value of their stock by more than 11,000 percent.”

The reason the second description is so effective is that the concrete examples get potential employers “licking their chops.” Based on what they are reading, employers believe they have the opportunity to hire someone who is going to make them an absolute ton of money. **Employers** are businesses. They want to make money; this is how they survive.

Most people in the job market receive far less compensation than they are worth. Companies function by selling whatever it is they do (whether it is manufacturing a product or a service) at the lowest possible cost. You need to make sure an employer understands and believes that you are worth far more than they are hiring you for because of the money that you can make them.

Example: “I sold an average of \$2,000,000 a year in widgets over the past three years, earning my company a profit of over \$1,000,000 each year.”

Example: “I successfully settled a class action lawsuit against our company that outside legal counsel said could not be settled for less than \$200,000,000. After six months of negotiation, I settled the suit for only \$12,000,000.”

Example: “I cut our outside legal fees from \$34,000,000 to \$7,000,000 the next year by instituting ‘flat fee’ arrangements with outside counsel.”

Your cover letter is a marketing document - it is as pure and simple as that. Your cover letter is a sales letter that offers the employer the opportunity to profit if they hire you. However you have done it, you need to show a potential employer that you are capable of earning them money and have done so for your employers in the past.

#### **[D] What Incredible Things Have You Done in Previous Positions?**

Most people have likely done something noteworthy in their past work. This could be something as simple as winning an award, exceeding expectations, getting the only raise in the department, or being named Employee of the Month. Whatever accomplishments you have achieved, you need to make a list of them.

Generally speaking, employers do not want to hire people who are average. They want to hire the best people they possibly can—and they prefer to hire superstars. Most employers believe (rightly, in my opinion) that if someone has done something extremely well in the past, that person is likely to do well in the future.

You need to list your various work-related accomplishments and identify your strongest ones.

Example: “I won Salesman of the Year for three years running in my company.”

Example: “My first law firm elevated me to partner within three years; this was a firm record.”

Don’t be shy to brag about your accomplishments. These are essential to setting yourself apart. They reflect your most compelling attributes.

#### **[E] Do Good Things Happen Wherever You Go?**

People who come from strong companies typically do better in the job market than those who come from weak ones. Why? Employers believe that you will bring some of the good company’s “magic” with you. Employers want good luck, just as people do.

Some time ago I hired a law firm to do some work for one of our companies. While the work was going on, I was introduced to a partner from the law firm who would be assisting with the projects. To my astonishment, every single law firm where this partner had worked had been a major American law firm that had gone out of business due to “shady” practices.

Despite the fact that this attorney had worked with hundreds of other attorneys at all of these law firms, I concluded that all of the bad stuff happening to these firms must have involved him in some way. It was guilt by association. This is how people think, and employers are no different. They want to surround themselves with people whose employers thrive and who produce results.

Sure enough, I noticed within days of this attorney starting work that he was doing all sorts of things wrong: cutting corners in the wrong places, doing things he was not authorized to do, and more. Because of these concerns, I had the attorney stop work completely.

If someone is coming out of a bad environment, the odds are he or she will bring that environment’s habits to the new position. Often the person will bring thought processes and ways of approaching work that may affect bad results right along with them.

You want employers to believe that you will bring good luck and fortune with you if hired. How do you convey that in a cover letter? Try to be concrete.

Example: “Each of my previous employers increased revenue by more than 20 percent each year that I was there.”

If you do not come from a history of good things happening wherever you go, be prepared to demonstrate why you were the exception, and not the cause.

#### **[F] Produce a Short, Readable Letter Based on Your Strengths**

Most cover letters are not read. Employers don’t read the cover letters because the applicant has not done anything to interest them in reading it. To get someone interested in reading your letter, you need to use general marketing principles that are intended to get letters read and opened.

If you have the time, I highly recommend reading some books on advertising and marketing. *Ogilvy on Advertising* by David Ogilvy and *Scientific Advertising* by Claude Hopkins are both very good, classic books on the principles of advertising. Advertising, marketing, and copywriting are incredibly important and something that very few people take the time to learn. If you understand and study marketing, you will do much better in your [job search](#).

Let’s now consider the three most important elements of a cover letter.

**1. The Opening.** Start your cover letter with a question that emphasizes one of your strongest strengths.

Review this list from the exercise above:

- The productivity of which you are capable,
- The money you can earn an employer,
- The incredible things you have done in the past, and
- The fact that “good things happen wherever you go”.

Which one of these things is your strongest virtue? Out of this list, you should be able to come up with a question with which to begin your letter.

Productivity Example: “Could you use an extremely motivated attorney who has billed over 8,000 hours in the past three years? That’s the kind of motivation I have and can bring to your company if you hire me as an in-house attorney.”

Money Example: “Could your business use an additional \$11,000,000? That’s what I saved my company in the past year by negotiating ‘flat fee arrangements’ with outside law firms.”

Incredible Example: “Could your business use someone who earned “salesman of the year” for the past three years in a 200-plus person sales department? That’s what I achieved over the past three years for my company.”

Good Things Example: “Could your business use someone whose last three employers have been among the fastest growing companies in America? That’s the sort of leadership I can bring to your company.”

Whatever your core strength is, you just simply lead with that. These examples above are your entire first paragraph.

**2. Bullet Points.** Emphasize three or four more strong virtues you can bring to an employer with a bulleted list.

Your second paragraph might look like this:

Please consider the following:

- You will benefit from my extremely high level of motivation. I billed over 8,000 hours over the past three years in my job as an associate at Jones Day.
- You will also gain from my ability to find new opportunities and capitalize on them. I recently was able to bring in three large clients for my firm, which have resulted in over \$700,000 in fees over the past six months.
- In my current role as an associate, I have never lost a case. I am a talented litigator who gets results.

This is all you need to do. The second paragraph of the cover letter can be short and to the point. You are leading with your strengths and making yourself look as good as possible on paper.

**3. The Closing.** All that’s left now is your contact information. Your final paragraph can be as simple as the following:

I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you. I can be reached at 555-555-5555 or harrison@myemailaddress.com. Thank you for your time.

Putting it all together, your letter may look a lot like this sample.

### [G] Sample Letter

[LETTER]Your Name and Address

Employer’s Name and Address

Date

Dear Mr. Smith,

Could your business use an additional \$11 million? That’s what I saved my company in the past year by negotiating “flat fee arrangements” with outside law firms.

Please consider the following:

- You will benefit from my extremely high level of motivation: I billed over 8,000 hours over the past three years in my job as an associate at Jones Day.
- You will also gain from my ability to find new opportunities and capitalize on them. I recently was able to bring in three large clients for my firm which have resulted in over \$700,000 in fees over the past six months.
- In my current role as an associate, I have never lost a case. I am a talented litigator who gets results.

I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you. I can be reached at 555-555-5555 or harrison@myemailaddress.com. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

LETTER SIGNED IN BLUE INK

Your Name [end LETTER]

Keep it simple and easy to read. And most important, highlight what you can do *for them*.

### [H] Follow “Best Practices” in Your Letters

That’s the format, but what about the content? Many great books have been published that cover the nitty-gritty of cover letter writing. The following resources are excellent in terms of outlining best practices for writing captivating letters. Read them carefully and apply them to the formula I have provided you here.

*The Robert Collier Letter Book*, by Robert Collier (Robert Collier Publications, 1989).

*Breakthrough Advertising*, by Eugene Schwartz

*The BCG Attorney Search Cover Letter Guidelines*, by Harrison Barnes, available at [https://www.bcgsearch.com/pdf/cover\\_letter\\_guidelines.pdf](https://www.bcgsearch.com/pdf/cover_letter_guidelines.pdf).

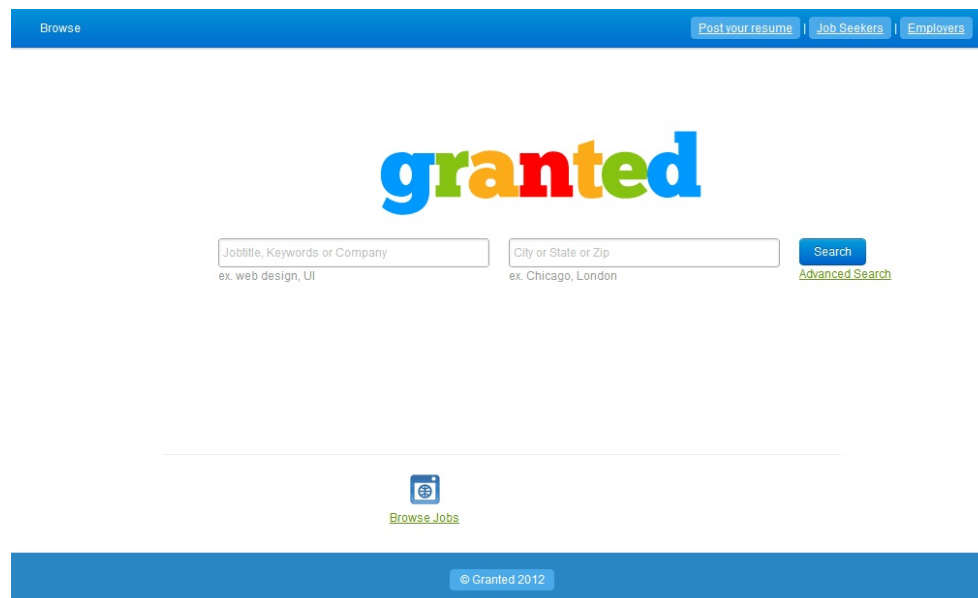
This chapter has covered the basics of cover letter writing, but there is much more you can do. For example, you may wish to personalize your letters, add more information, explain away past moves, and more. Despite the potential depth you can get into with cover letters, I do not think delving so deep into your history is necessary. Your main objective should be to show employers you can earn them money and that they will get a return on their investment in you. If you remember this and nothing more, your cover letters will get you noticed.

### [I] Submitting Your Cover Letters and Resumes

After you ensure that your cover letter will get you noticed, you need to find a good job site to actually find the jobs that are worth submitting your cover letter and resume to.

A great resource that I'd recommend highly is [Granted.com](#). It was recently launched by our company and contains thousands of job opportunities from all over the internet, newspapers, employer websites, and many more sources.

Another thing that makes [Gig](#) great is that you can upload your existing resume/cover letter to the site and directly apply for many of the jobs on the site. Below are some screenshots of [Gig](#) so you can see a little bit of what it offers:



[Gig](#) categorizes jobs by industry and by location.



Jobtitle, Keywords or Company

ex. web design, UI

City or State or Zip

ex. Chicago, London

Search

[Advanced Search](#)

## Browse Jobs

**Job Title:** [A](#)[B](#)[C](#)[D](#)[E](#)[F](#)[G](#)[H](#)[I](#)[J](#)[K](#)[L](#)[M](#)[N](#)[O](#)[P](#)[Q](#)[R](#)[S](#)[T](#)[U](#)[V](#)[W](#)[X](#)[Y](#)[Z](#)**By Company:** [A](#)[B](#)[C](#)[D](#)[E](#)[F](#)[G](#)[H](#)[I](#)[J](#)[K](#)[L](#)[M](#)[N](#)[O](#)[P](#)[Q](#)[R](#)[S](#)[T](#)[U](#)[V](#)[W](#)[X](#)[Y](#)[Z](#)

### Jobs by category

- ▶ [100K](#)
- ▶ [Actuarial](#)
- ▶ [Aerospace](#)
- ▶ [Audit](#)
- ▶ [Bilingual](#)
- ▶ [Business Analyst](#)
- ▶ [CAD](#)
- ▶ [Chef](#)
- ▶ [CLevel](#)
- ▶ [Construction](#)
- ▶ [Counseling](#)
- ▶ [Dental](#)
- ▶ [Diversity](#)
- ▶ [ECommerce](#)
- ▶ [Emergency](#)
- ▶ [Engineering](#)
- ▶ [Environmental](#)
- ▶ [Executive](#)
- ▶ [Finance](#)
- ▶ [GIS](#)
- ▶ [Help Desk](#)
- ▶ [HR](#)
- ▶ [Intellectual Property](#)
- ▶ [J2ee Java](#)
- ▶ [Legal](#)
- ▶ [Loss Prevention](#)
- ▶ [Marketing](#)
- ▶ [Nonprofit](#)
- ▶ [Oil Gas](#)
- ▶ [Pharmaceutical](#)
- ▶ [Post Doc](#)
- ▶ [Procurement](#)
- ▶ [Public Interest](#)
- ▶ [Quality](#)
- ▶ [Recruiting](#)
- ▶ [Retirement](#)
- ▶ [Sciences](#)
- ▶ [Sports Recreation](#)
- ▶ [Telecom](#)
- ▶ [Transportation](#)
- ▶ [TV](#)
- ▶ [Volunteer](#)
- ▶ [Work At Home](#)
- ▶ [Account Management](#)
- ▶ [Administrative](#)
- ▶ [Agriculture](#)
- ▶ [Automotive](#)
- ▶ [Biotech](#)
- ▶ [Business Development](#)
- ▶ [Call Center](#)
- ▶ [Chemistry](#)
- ▶ [Clinical Research](#)
- ▶ [Consulting](#)
- ▶ [Customer Service](#)
- ▶ [Design](#)
- ▶ [Dot Net](#)
- ▶ [Editing](#)
- ▶ [Employment](#)
- ▶ [Entertainment](#)
- ▶ [ESH](#)
- ▶ [Facilities](#)
- ▶ [Food Services](#)
- ▶ [Government](#)
- ▶ [Hospitality](#)
- ▶ [HVAC](#)
- ▶ [Internship](#)
- ▶ [Journalism](#)
- ▶ [Library](#)
- ▶ [Manager](#)
- ▶ [Media](#)
- ▶ [Nursing](#)
- ▶ [Operations](#)
- ▶ [Physical Therapy](#)
- ▶ [PR](#)
- ▶ [Product Management](#)
- ▶ [Publishing](#)
- ▶ [Radio](#)
- ▶ [Research](#)
- ▶ [Sales](#)
- ▶ [Scientist](#)
- ▶ [SQL](#)
- ▶ [Trading](#)
- ▶ [Traveling](#)
- ▶ [Underwriting](#)
- ▶ [Water Plant](#)
- ▶ [Writing](#)
- ▶ [Accounting](#)
- ▶ [Advertising](#)
- ▶ [Architecture](#)
- ▶ [Aviation](#)
- ▶ [Bluecollar](#)
- ▶ [C++](#)
- ▶ [Case management](#)
- ▶ [Civil Engineering](#)
- ▶ [Compliance](#)
- ▶ [Contract Management](#)
- ▶ [DBA](#)
- ▶ [Disability](#)
- ▶ [Dubai](#)
- ▶ [Education](#)
- ▶ [Energy](#)
- ▶ [Entry Level](#)
- ▶ [Estimator](#)
- ▶ [Fashion](#)
- ▶ [Fundraising](#)
- ▶ [Healthcare](#)
- ▶ [Hourly](#)
- ▶ [Insurance](#)
- ▶ [IT](#)
- ▶ [Law Enforcement](#)
- ▶ [Logistics](#)
- ▶ [Manufacturing](#)
- ▶ [Military](#)
- ▶ [Occupational Therapy](#)
- ▶ [Part Time](#)
- ▶ [Planning](#)
- ▶ [Printing](#)
- ▶ [Project Management](#)
- ▶ [Purchasing](#)
- ▶ [Real Estate](#)
- ▶ [Retail](#)
- ▶ [SAP](#)
- ▶ [Security](#)
- ▶ [Teenager](#)
- ▶ [Training](#)
- ▶ [Trucking](#)
- ▶ [Veterinary](#)
- ▶ [Wine Spirits](#)

### Jobs by State

- ▶ [Alaska](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [Arizona](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [Connecticut](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [Florida](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [Iowa](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [Indiana](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [Louisiana](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [Maine](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [Missouri](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [North Carolina](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [New Hampshire](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [Nevada](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [Oklahoma](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [Rhode Island](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [Tennessee](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [Virginia](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [Wisconsin](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [Alabama](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [California](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [District Of Columbia](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [Georgia](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [Idaho](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [Kansas](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [Massachusetts](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [Michigan](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [Mississippi](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [North Dakota](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [New Jersey](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [New York](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [Oregon](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [South Carolina](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [Texas](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [Vermont](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [West Virginia](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [Arkansas](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [Colorado](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [Delaware](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [Hawaii](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [Illinois](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [Kentucky](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [Maryland](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [Minnesota](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [Montana](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [Nebraska](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [New Mexico](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [Ohio](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [Pennsylvania](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [South Dakota](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [Utah](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [Washington](#)  
(Narrow by city)
- ▶ [Wyoming](#)  
(Narrow by city)



Upload resume for [redacted]

### Granted Resume

No file chosen

... or [LinkedIn users: import your profile](#)

... or [create a blank resume](#)

- Let employers find you
- Upload any resume file - only takes a few seconds
- Get a personalized resume link like [granted.com/me/Your\\_Name](#)

By creating a Granted Resume, you are indicating that you have read and agree to the [Terms of Service](#) and [Privacy Policy](#).