



Firstly, a Happy New Year to you all!

Secondly, we hope you've been travelling safely and keeping warm in the prevailing wintry conditions. As you can see from the picture ([Sandy Gate above Holmfirth – February 2009](#)), the frozen north has lived up to its name! Snow can be viewed as highly inconvenient, dangerous in some circumstances and simply uncomfortable but it's also capable of delivering great beauty, enormous fun and, in my case, some much needed exercise!

As we wrap up and take precautions against the freezing weather, I cannot help but think about the parallels we find within our economy. The winter storms came in quickly and in many cases we have been found wanting e.g. lack of salt which has hampered the safe movement of traffic and pedestrians, just as with the financial crisis and lack of liquidity which has caused the wheels of business and commerce to seize up.

So in a small attempt to help you, either as a client or a candidate, to provide your own supply of salt or oil, as you prefer, we've written about the part a well-constructed and persuasive covering letter can play in an individual's application or cold approach. For me, when selecting, it's a differentiating tool and really sorts out whose CV to read first.

Finally I'd like to share with you a good news story received in January which illustrates how thoughtful persistence, determination, expediency and a cold approach earned one of our candidates a new role, against what must have seemed almost impossible odds! Enjoy and have a good month!!

It took a huge effort to find work - just under 700 applications! Theeconomy is in free-fall, I am knocking on 50 years old and the manufacturing base is centred on the pharma and medical devices sector (both of whom want a life sciences degree + 5 years pharma experience just to be a supervisor). Undeterred, I plugged away and never gave up. On 2 occasions I was told I had a job only for the position to be withdrawn due to cutbacks.

Just before Christmas 2008 I received a call from the head of a business development unit attached to the local technical college. I had previously sent them my CV and suggested that I could be of great value to any new business who needed an experienced manager. I was told my CV had been passed to a man who was developing a new product and that 'he would probably be in touch'. Instead of waiting I went over there and knocked on his door to introduce myself.....We talked for an hour and went into the concept and market potential. I was impressed with him/the product and he was impressed with me.

Over the Christmas break I carried out a lot of research into the whole subject ofand I decided I REALLY wanted to work for..... So while you were tucking into turkey and pulling crackers I was writing a 50 page sales and marketing plan for..... It was waiting when he came back to work after the holiday. To cut a long story short we methe offered me the position of General Manager!

Our website www.cardinaltalent.com is designed to be a resource for both candidates and clients, so..

Candidates: do keep an eye on our website for new job opportunities and..

Clients: if you are looking to strengthen your organisation and are interested in any of February's profiles or any on our website from previous months, please note the reference and call me on +44(0)1484 687 587 or +44(0)7831 476818, or drop me a line to mel@cardinaltalent.com

Best wishes



Cardinal Talent Ltd

Suite 3 Victoria Court, 91 Huddersfield Road, Holmfirth HD9 3JA

admin@cardinaltalent.com www.cardinaltalent.com

Talent roundup

A dynamic and adaptable project director, capable of

Stand Out from the Crowd

In our first newsletter we wrote about **preparation for interview**. Back then, September 2008,

driving performance improvements in various industrial contexts. Educated to post graduate level in Engineering and Manufacturing Management with extensive experience in the automotive and energy sectors, both in this country and abroad. Excellent leadership and communication skills and the ability to manage multi-disciplinary projects from conception to production with on time and under budget delivery. Focus on lean manufacturing techniques and continuous business improvements through cultural and operational changes. Willing to travel and to take short-term contracts.

Ref: DAPD0209

An **experienced Senior Chartered Surveyor** focusing on troubleshooting for property companies. A dynamic entrepreneur with a successful interim management business providing support on financial, contractual, strategic and personnel matters. An expert negotiator in property acquisitions and disposals in UK and abroad, including land procurement and site assembly. A proven track record in all aspects of general practice surveying gained in both commercial and residential sectors. Educated to graduate level in Estate Management with Professional Membership status of the RICS and excellent interpersonal skills.

Ref: ESCS0209

With over 20 years experience in engineering and maintenance management gained primarily in the automotive industry, this **highly motivated and resourceful interim manager** has a proven track record in continuous improvement, change implementation and performance optimisation through a wide range of **lean**

keener competition for jobs was just beginning to extend itself beyond the housing and construction sectors. Now officially in recession, the effects of job cuts, business closures and recruitment freezes are biting deeply, and competition for jobs is more intense than ever.

For candidates it's more vital than ever before to polish the **tools and techniques** associated with the application process to ensure a **successful** outcome. For those recruiting, it's just as vital to be able to recognise those candidates **worthy** of further investigation.

Because it's a topic close to our hearts, I've decided to talk about the importance of **covering letters**, both those which accompany responses to job advertisements and cold approaches.

Having waded knee deep, recently, through applications for two manufacturing roles based in West Yorkshire (a rarity indeed!) the applications which stood out for our dedicated team were those who not only produced a **high quality CV**, but also a **thoughtful and well-structured covering letter**.

Quite simply the covering letter is a **differentiator**. So, whether you're sceptical, lacking in skills or want to check out your current practise, may I persuade you to read on?

In fact if you're a die-hard sceptic, I'll go further. Because most applicants don't present a covering letter, let alone an effective one, I can guarantee including a well-structured document will make all the difference in **winning** the chance of a meeting or interview.

So here are some **nifty guidelines**. In **lean parlance** we might almost claim to be applying "5S" to ensure your letter is:

1. Simple
2. Short
3. Structured
4. Signposting your CV
5. Spelled correctly

Simple means decluttering or "**spring cleaning**" your letter. Just like spring cleaning, getting rid of things that aren't earning their keep helps because often they harbour negative information, just as rubbish traps and hides dust.

activities. Educated to degree level in Mechanical Engineering with Fellow status of the Institute of Plant Engineers, this forward thinking professional has had direct involvement in a number of general manufacturing world-class initiatives.

Ref: HMRIM0209

A **highly successful Managing Director** with a record of achieving sustained sales growth. A strategic leader with expertise in sales management and industrial marketing gained within international manufacturing and trading environments. Educated to degree level in Engineering, this talented people-manager is experienced in team development and coaching and has a strong intellect, integrity and sound judgement.

Ref: HSMD0209

In next month's issue:

March's **Talent roundup**
Ageism and Current Legislation

Keeping your letter **short** will encourage scrutiny of every word on the page to ensure all earn their right to be there and **add value** to your offering. Your letter needs to be one A4 side and no more!

Structure is the engine of this successful formula. Your letter has to do two important things i.e.:

1. **Capture** the attention of the recipient by writing from their viewpoint
2. **Answer** specific points of requirement with your skills and capabilities.

The letter can be written in 3 paragraphs. Each has a specific purpose as follows:

The **first paragraph** is to engage the reader's interest. In sales speak, you, the writer, needs to insert a "**hook**" within the first few words to entice the recipient to read on. One way of ensuring you do this is to begin with the word "your" e.g.

- Your advertisement is of great interest...
- Your article in last week's journal sparked a thought...
- Your business has a high reputation in the area...

Alternatively you might wish to **weave in** a hook about a current news theme i.e.,

- Bonus cuts proposed for the banking sector herald widespread changes in staff contracts. Expertise and assistance will be called for...
- The recent seventies-style walkouts mean that it's even more important to engage the workforce. Encouraging a collaborative working culture...

The **second paragraph** signposts your CV, pointing to specific **skills, expertise, and experience** *relevant* to the needs of the recipient. For example:

- You will see from my enclosed CV that I have experience and expertise of successfully changing cultures in unionised and multi-site businesses.

The **third paragraph** asks for the opportunity to **meet with the decision-maker**, e.g.



- I trust you find this information of interest and I hope we shall be able to arrange an exploratory meeting
- The opportunity to meet and explore how my skills and experience may be used to your benefit would be most welcome.

Finally, in conclusion of the third paragraph you need to **guide the recipient, gently, into action**, for example:

- I look forward to hearing from you
- Perhaps I may contact your office next week to see how you may wish to progress my application
- May I call your office to establish if a meeting might be of value?

Right, that ticks off 4 of the 5 Ss, so it's now time to **check the spelling and grammar** in your letter. The recommended steps are:

1. run your letter through the spelling and grammar check, usually resident on word processing software
2. print the letter off, checking the layout as you do so
3. read your letter
4. ask a trusted and literate buddy to read your letter
5. make corrections as needed

run through steps 1 – 5 until completely satisfied.

You may think this last section is pedantic but why, when you've put time and effort into carefully constructing, spoil the results by allowing spelling or grammatical errors to remain in the text and ruin your chances of success?

I don't wish to put words into anyone's head but here's how **short and simple** a covering letter can look:

Dear Dr. Williams

The recent seventies-style walkouts mean that it's even more important to engage the workforce. Encouraging a collaborative working culture through mutual problem solving techniques is one of the first steps to closing the gaps between people. Other possible solutions include.....

You will see from my enclosed CV that I have experience and expertise of successfully changing cultures in unionised and multi-site businesses. My background also

includes experience ofand I am a fluent French and Italian speaker.

I trust this information is of interest. May I call your office to establish if a meeting might be of value?

Yours sincerely

John Foster

So now it's over to you, whether you are selecting and recruiting or applying for opportunities. Wishing you creative fun if you are writing and profitable selection if recruiting.

Mel Armstrong is a coach & recruiter of business leaders. A degree qualified metallurgist and Chartered Engineer, with a post graduate Fellowship in Manufacturing Management, her main areas of interest are developing self awareness in business leaders and manufacturing and business improvement. She works closely with a number of private clients providing business support through recruitment, transition coaching, outplacement , psychometric assessment and career development.

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