



Cover letters, CVs and interviews: Did you know?

Research

Before applying for any role do your homework – find out about the organisation, its history, people, values and culture. An organisation's website is a great tool to use when researching.

Cover letters

First impressions: Cover letters are intended to encourage the employer to find out more about you, either by reading your CV or more importantly arranging a formal interview. Highlight why you are applying for this particular position, what attracts you to the organisation and why you are an appropriate candidate. When preparing your cover letter it is important to be specific, subjective and that you tailor the letter to the role you are applying for. Although it is important to cover all aspects of the above, be mindful of the need to keep your cover letter to one page.

Professionalism: Address the letter to the appropriate contact. Don't try to guess the spelling of their name or title – contact the organisation and confirm their details.

An eye for detail: Proofread your cover letter, put it down for an hour or so, and then read it again. Even try reading it out loud to make sure it sounds clear. Ask someone else to read it and provide you with advice, e.g. is the information in the right order, is the content clear or does it need something more?

CVs

Relevance: Consider each item and its particular relevance to the job for which you are applying. Just like your cover letter, your CV should be targeted and subjective. Some work experience may be outdated or irrelevant. Try to highlight the work experience and achievements that show you are the right person for the job.

Format and style: Ideally your CV should be no more than three pages and include your personal details, education, work experience (both legal and non-legal), awards and achievements, activities and interests and two to three referees. It is also acceptable to leave referee details out until the organisation asks for them.

Skills: Along with the particulars of relevant employment experience it is important to note the skills you acquired and what you took away from each role. For example, when filing court documents while working as a paralegal I learnt the importance of deadlines, court procedure, serving documents on the other side and liaising with the client for their

instructions. Listing the skills you acquired also shows a potential employer your understanding of the profession and the tasks you may be given.

Interviews

Prepare: Do you know who is interviewing you? If not, find out. You have already completed research on the firm, now research its people, their achievements, matters they have worked on and their professional highlights. Knowing your audience will enable you to easily engage the panel and stand out from other candidates.

Listen: Although you are unable to predict what type of questions you may be asked, you can take time to answer any questions that are put to you. If you don't understand a question don't try to guess the answer, ask for it to be repeated or elaborated on. Take your time to answer and focus on the question being asked, and as far as practicable avoid waffling on. Watch for cues from the interviewers and elaborate on any responses if necessary.

Show interest: Prepare some open questions to engage the panel and demonstrate your personality, interest in the organisation and communication skills. Thank the panel for their time and invite them to contact you should they have any other questions. ●

ANNA ALEXANDER

Young Lawyers' Section Manager

Law graduates applying for a graduate traineeship are encouraged to attend the **YLS Targeting Traineeships Seminar** at the LIV on 29 April 2010. This seminar aims to arm graduates with information and ideas to help find that lucrative position.

To register visit
www.liv.asn.au/whatsOncalendar