

The importance of a Cover Letter in the German Speaking Area

One of my best clients, a Recruiter of an automotive company in the Stuttgart Area told me once: “When I do my first candidate screening process I am focusing on the CV, I only check the motivation letter / cover letter of those who are shortlisted and might be invited for a personal interview“.

Another client of mine, the Managing Director of a renewable energy giant in Switzerland explained me: “Especially for candidates with average or bad grades during their studies, a cover letter might be the right tool to win me and make me invite them instead of a top graduate”.

To cut a long story short, there is no one way and no 100% right paths to follow. But there are some basic facts which are important to know:

A motivation letter is a standard document when applying for jobs in the German speaking countries. Companies might reject you, although you are the best match, because you have sent an incomplete application.

Among shortlisted candidates, who more or less have the same quality education and the same years of experience, a motivation letter might be the final tool, the final 10 meters of the marathon for the decision maker!

Regarding the length of a motivation letter: I think the perfect length is one DIN A4 page. Not more, but also not less than that.

A killer when we talk about motivation letters in the German Speaking countries: Please do never just summarize your CV and drop a few lines. A motivation letter has nothing to do with what you will write in your CV.

Another killer is to think that once having written a cover letter you can send it out to each company. You can for sure use 70% of a cover letter for all applications, but the salt in the soup lies in the remaining 30%.

By the way, why are you bored or afraid to write a motivation letter, is there a better way to prepare for the job interview?

Last but not least, please sign the cover letter. There are many views to do that and scan your signature.

Best of luck with your individual application strategy!

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