



# Yale SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

## **CAREER DEVELOPMENT GUIDE**

for Working Professionals

## Welcome to the Career Development Office at Yale SOM!

Our team in the Career Development Office (CDO) is excited to work with you throughout your time at Yale SOM and beyond. We are here to support you throughout your career and will work closely with you to reflect on previous experiences while focusing on what's to come. This Career Development Guide acts as a baseline to the coaching appointments, strategy sessions, and other programming you'll participate in throughout the year.

The CDO is here for as you begin to develop your career goals, strategize job searches, explore career development opportunities, and contemplate career transitions. The CDO provides support through both individual and group sessions on topics including resume and story development, networking and outreach, creating company target lists, interview preparation, and offer management and negotiation.

We look forward to working with you!

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## **YOUR CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

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The recommended Yale SOM Career Development program is ongoing, iterative and tailored to each job seeker. Your personal strategy development is supported by [interactive webinars](#), personalized coaching, and mock interviews that will equip you with job search skills to achieve both your short and long-term career goals.

### **CAREER STRATEGY TOPICS**

A robust search or transition strategy includes the topics listed below. The CDO offers [resources](#) and guidance on all these topics through this guide, webinars, online resources, and individual coaching.

Career Strategy topics include:

- Your Story
- Personal Values & Corporate Alignment
- Personal Branding and LinkedIn
- Your Cover Letters
- Your Outreach & Relationship Building
- Your Target List – Creating and Managing
- Your Offer Evaluation and Negotiation

### **COACHING**

The Career Education and Coaching Team is available to support Alumni and MBA for Executives Students through a variety of programming, as noted above, and individual coaching in person, by telephone or by video conference.

**Individual Coaching Appointments:** MBA for Executives Students and Alumni can schedule individual coaching appointments using the Career Management System (CMS). Coaching appointments are typically 30 minutes in length and cover a variety of topics from reflection and career path to search strategy, resume and cover letter review, and offer negotiation. The team is open to all career-related conversations.



# YOUR RESUME

(Pages 4-6)

## YOUR RESUME

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Your resume is an important marketing document designed to sell your background to a targeted reader. It should be tailored strategically to present your accomplishments, skills and experiences as they relate to the position you are seeking. For full time MBAs, Yale SOM has a standard resume format which makes it easy for recruiters to find the information they are looking for quickly. This format is required when applying to opportunities through Yale SOM, though you are likely to tailor your content as you pursue different career paths. Many alumni and EMBA's benefit from following this same format. As you progress through your career post-graduation, you may choose to adapt the format as appropriate.

### Yale SOM Resume – Watch out for the following:

- Keep it to ONE page if 10 years or less experience, two pages beyond that
- Type font: Times New Roman with bullet content no less than 10-point typesize (keep the ratio of the template)
- Margins should be no less than 0.5" on each side
- Keep each bullet to 2 lines long (no more and use the space as it's an opportunity to develop your story)
- Leave periods off at the end of bullets
- Personal information should NOT be included (i.e., photo, age, marital status, dependents)
- If you had multiple jobs for a company, list them all as it shows career development
- Include a non-work email, preferably your Yale email address

### Your Content:

Focus on what's important to your target employer. Start with the job description. Your audience is telling you what they are seeking. Show them how you fit their needs; think transferrable skills and aligning with their company culture. Include what's important to your audience. Demonstrate through results what you bring to the table, not a list of responsibilities. Additionally, only focus on experience to enhance your future goals, don't just show everything you have done.

### Your Education Section:

- Present your graduate & undergraduate institutions in reverse chronological order; most recent first
- List any Latin honors (i.e., *cum laude*) or scholarships from previous degrees
- Include Yale SOM academic distinctions, leadership roles, related activities and coursework (recent graduate)
- If your GMAT score is 95% percentile or better and/or your GPA is 3.5 or better, list it! (recent graduate)

### Your Professional Experience Section:

- Your goal is to highlight the skills/achievements most relevant and directly transferable to the position
- Use strong action verbs to begin each bullet
- Include the city and state/country/region of work experience
- Draw the connections between past experiences and the occupational skills required in the role
- Use the "SAR" (Situation – Action – Result) framework to write the accomplishment statements - order can start with Result or Action
  - Layer in number - show size and scope (e.g., managed X number of people; presented to 5 stake holders)
  - Quantify your contributions to show impact as often as possible (e.g., % sales growth)

**Your Additional Information:**

- Use this space to highlight additional information: membership in professional organizations, licenses/certifications, language skills, volunteer activities, special projects and independent studies when those exceed the scope of basic coursework, non-traditional computer skills that may be job relevant, and any additional personal interests/achievements (e.g., marathons)
- Include relevant work authorization (if appropriate)
- Use specifics to make more interesting & conversation provoking; use humor, just keep your audience in mind

**YOUR RESUME RESOURCES:**

- Yale SOM Resume Template
- Action Verb List
- Accomplishment Statement Examples



# YOUR STORY

(Pages 7-9)

## YOUR STORY

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Your story is how you communicate your past experiences, goals, and aspirations in a cohesive narrative that explains what decisions you've made, why you've made them and what you aim for next. It tells the listener who you are professionally and where you're going.

### Types of Stories

As you develop your story, keep in mind you'll want different versions of it for various situations:

- A 30-second version for high volume networking events like conferences
- A one-minute version for small group settings like receptions or alumni events
- A 90-second or two-minute version for formal and informal settings when you're one-on-one with somebody (interviewing, informational interviewing, etc.)

It's often easiest to start by creating your two-minute story and then pulling out the most relevant pieces for the shorter versions.

### 4 Steps to Developing Your Story:

1. **RESEARCH** – identify key skills for the industry/function you're targeting
2. **REFLECTION** – reflect on past experiences for opportunities where you developed these skills; target three skills to highlight at the start
3. **CRAFTING** – craft your longer narrative and then adjust for shorter versions; articulate your background and align with organization values
4. **PRACTICE** – Share your story often, the more comfortable you are, the more confidently you will come across with alumni and employers

Consider the questions below as you reflect on your life, your education, and your past experiences. Doing so will help you craft your unique story in a way that is compelling and relatable.

### Reflection Questions to Consider

- What is your next career goal / step and why?
- What skills, expertise and / or knowledge are you looking to leverage?
- What is your vision as you move forward?
- What big questions fascinate you?
- What are you most proud of? How does that define your career arc and connect to your goals?
- What differences have you made? What have those taught you?
- What skills and abilities have made you stand out?
- What are you passionate about? What makes you "tick"?
- What have your career "a-ha" moments felt like?
- What would you describe as some of your career shining moments?
- What themes can you draw on from work and experiences?
- Why are you / did you attend Yale SOM?

## WORKSHEET: Developing Your Story

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Your Target Industry and Function:	
Top Five Skills for Target:	
Undergraduate school/major/relevant activities:	
First job (company and title):	Relevant Skills/ Projects:  Transition/ Why you left and what next?
Next job (company and title):  <i>(Repeat to include all prior work experience)</i>	Relevant Skills/ Projects:  Transition/ Why you left and what next?
Why you chose Yale SOM?	
What's next?	



# YOUR LINKEDIN

(Pages 10-14)

## YOUR LINKEDIN PROFILE

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### LinkedIn Benefits:

Your LinkedIn profile is how future employers get a glimpse of your personality, skills and strengths.

- 95%+ of HR uses LinkedIn to **source** candidates and increasingly as the first stop for hiring managers
- 75% of hiring managers report looking at LinkedIn profiles to **learn about** a candidate's background
- 50% of hiring managers **decide to move forward** with a candidate's application based on their LinkedIn profile
- Tech and D&I employers **increasingly ONLY use** LinkedIn to recruit

### LinkedIn can be used to:

- Create visibility to recruiters, potential employers, professionals looking to network
- Best showcase your work experience and professional interests to potential employers
- Connect with contacts at your schools, employers, industries, groups, those without any direct connection
- View job postings
- Research companies
- Improve or acquire skills through LinkedIn Learning

### Creating a Powerful LinkedIn Profile:

Your profile should highlight your best accomplishments. Your resume is where you can expand on them, not LinkedIn. Remember, your LinkedIn profile is NOT a resume or CV. If you start with a rock-solid resume, your LinkedIn profile won't take too much work. Add your school, degree and major(s) in your profile. It's common for companies to recruit from specific schools, so this piece is key.

### Step 1: Write a Clear and Informative Profile Headline

Write a concise but descriptive headline. Check out profiles of other working professionals you admire for ideas. Examples could be, and not limited to:

- "MBA for Executives Candidate at Yale School of Management"
- Mission focused financier focused on leading diverse teams to build sustainable global businesses.
- PMP-certified project manager known for delivering results for multi-million-dollar projects in developing countries.
- Harnessing the power of people to create prosperous organizations through program, process, and system design
- Driving sustainable growth through purpose and values. Authentically fulfilling brand promises.
- Digital Storyteller Helping Brands Break Through the Internet's Noise to Create Engaging, Digestible Content

### Step 2: Pick an Appropriate Photo

First impressions count. Profiles with photos get up to 21x more profile views, 36x more messages and 9x more connection requests.

- Choose a clear, friendly and appropriately professional image of you alone
- Try featuring a wide, open smile as it increases likeability
- Present yourself as you would for your best client, board of directors and/or CEO
- Closely crop the photo to showcase your face for ease of viewing on mobile devices

Reminder: LinkedIn isn't Facebook; keep it professional. If you're not sure what "appropriately professional" means, look at what people in your target company or industry sector are wearing. White is the best possible background because it allows people to focus on your face.

### **Step 3: Show Off Your Education**

Include all schools (leverage school brand equity wherever possible), major(s) and minor and/or concentrations. Those with a school tagged in their profile get 10x more views on average. That also facilitates use of the LinkedIn Alumni Tool for networking. If you have industry relevant coursework, clubs (include leadership roles), case competitions, certifications or awards, add it.

### **Step 4: Develop a Professional Summary**

This is one of the most important areas of your entire profile:

- Truly sets you apart – it is like the first few paragraphs of your best-written cover letter — concise and confident about your qualifications and goals, around 3–5 short paragraphs long.
- Engages employers, tells your professional story and spurs action. It should walk the reader through your work passions, key skills, unique qualifications, and a list of the various industries you’ve had exposure to over the years.
- Uses relevant industry keywords. Note: Keep in mind that MBAs are often still exploring various paths, and it is okay to not have an overly narrow summary.
- Gives viewers a clear idea of what they should do next—whether that’s accepting your connection request, recruiting you for a job opening, or reaching out for networking purposes.

### **Step 5: Share Your Accomplishments in the Experience Section**

Focus on workplaces and experiences that paint your professional credentials in a positive light and are relevant to your target industry or role. Aim to quantify your accomplishments in a meaningful way that demonstrates you drive results. Include internships, summer jobs, part-time, and even unpaid work. Each section should be fleshed out with bullet points that describe what you did, how well you did it, and who it impacted. Focus on skills learned, as opposed to tasks. However, avoid a “resume dump”.

### **Step 6: Fill the “Skills & Endorsements” Section with Keywords**

- Include at least 5 skills, whether learned in class or through work experience. Having 5 skills on your profile gets you 17x more profile views and 31x more messages from potential employers
- Ensure your top 3 skills are core to what you want to do professionally
- Find examples from job descriptions you’re going after or profiles of people who have the jobs you want
- List skills judiciously (and gain endorsements on those) and avoid listing a wide array of unendorsed skills

### **Step 7: Update your status regularly**

Posting updates keeps you on your network’s radar and build your professional image. Mention your projects, professional books or articles, or events you’re attending. Many recruiters read your feed!

### **Step 8: Show your connectedness**

Groups you join appear at the bottom of your profile. Joining some groups shows that you want to engage in professional communities and learn the lingo.

- Start with your university and industry groups
- Add regional groups if you’re targeting a specific geography
- Follow organizations of interest that are relevant to your target industry

### **Step 9: Collect diverse recommendations**

The best profiles have at least one recommendation, ideally 2 to 3, for each position you have held. Seek recommendations from highly placed and respected individuals, former colleagues, direct reports and/or others who know you well in a professional context. Recruiters are most impressed by recommendations from people who have directly managed you. A great way to get recommendations is to give them to others as well.

**Step 10: Claim your unique LinkedIn URL**

To increase the professional results that appear when people search for you online, set your LinkedIn profile to “public” and create a unique URL (e.g., [www.linkedin.com/in/JohnSmith](http://www.linkedin.com/in/JohnSmith)), so it is easier to publicize your profile on your email signature, for example. On the Edit Profile screen, at the bottom of the gray window that shows your basic information, you’ll see a Public Profile URL. Click “Edit” next to the URL and specify what you’d like your address to be. When you’re finished, click Set Custom URL.

**Step 11: Share your work**

You can also add actual examples of your writing, design work, or other accomplishments on your profile, where you can share rich media or documents. [SlideShare](#) is a powerful tool for this. Sell your skills by showing employers exactly what you can produce!

**YOUR LINKEDIN RESOURCES:****[LinkedIn Learning](#)**

- LinkedIn Learning (formerly Lynda.com) helps you discover and develop business, technology-related, and creative skills through expert-led course videos. You can also choose to add these courses and related skills to your LinkedIn profile once you've completed them.

**[The LinkedIn Guys](#)**

- LinkedIn Guys provide insider strategies to use LinkedIn to take your next professional step. Take advantage of these short informative videos. Click “Enroll Free”.

**[Yale School of Management \(SOM\) Alumni and Student Community \(official\)](#)****[Yale School of Management \(official\)](#)**

**WORKSHEET: LinkedIn Profile Checklist**

1. HEADLINE	Y/N?
Clear and descriptive and includes keywords for your target industry and/or function	
2. PHOTO	
High-quality photo (~400px x 400px)	
Professional Dress	
Neutral, uncluttered background, preferably white	
Face in the center of frame; eye contact with camera	
Face/frame ratio of around 60%	
3. EDUCATION	
Includes all your schools, major(s), minor(s), relevant coursework, clubs, certifications, awards	
4. SUMMARY	
Tells an interesting, memorable story	
Summarizes your professional history, qualifications, and personality	
Highlight your passion, experience, and accomplishments	
3–5 short paragraphs long	
Gives viewers a clear idea of what to do next – e.g. accept your request, recruit, network, etc.	
5. EXPERIENCE	
Focus on experiences relevant to your target industry or function	
Include bullet points describing what you did, how well you did it, and who it impacted	
Avoid a resume dump	
6. SKILLS & ENDORSEMENTS	
Includes a minimum of 5 relevant skills	
Lists skills judiciously and gain endorsements on those	
Avoids listing a wide array of unendorsed skills	
7. STATUS	
Regular updates to stay on your network’s radar – recruiters read your feed!	
8. CONNECTEDNESS	
In groups to show you are engaged in professional communities	
In university, industry, regional groups	
Following relevant organizations of interest	
9. RECOMMENDATIONS	
Diverse recommendations – at least 1, ideally 2-3	
Recommendations from people who have directly managed you	
10. LINKEDIN URL	
LinkedIn profile to “Public”	
Create your unique URL	

# **YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENT STORY**

(Pages 15-17)

## YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENT STORY

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An accomplishment story is used in informational and actual interviews to highlight your achievements with a focus on unique skills and attributes. The Situation – Action – Result (S – A – R) framework provides structure to your story.

### S – A – R Framework and Accomplishment Story Example

*Interview Question:* Tell me about a time you were part of a team and were able to create significant value for the company?

*Answer: (Situation)* While at Company X, I was chosen by the CFO to serve on a 4-member task force to improve the administrative process around supply orders. The team discovered that orders were not being coordinated and that by instituting some basic guidelines, orders could be streamlined and create significant cost savings. **(Action)** My role in the project was to develop a training tool. Then, I met with each department lead to gain their buy-in for the new guidelines and prepared them to train their team using the new tool. **(Result)** One year after the guidelines were in place, the company experienced a \$1MM savings and my training tool is still being used today.

*Preparation:* Referring to the job description for which you’re interviewing, make a list of role requirements. Common themes are leadership, teamwork, problem solving, communication skills, conflict management, and drive for results. For each requirement, develop at least two Accomplishment Stories using the S – A – R framework. Use the list of sample behavioral questions in this guide to practice answering questions with Accomplishment Stories.

**Develop your accomplishment story using the S-A-R.** You have to “sell yourself” to the employer and differentiate yourself from other candidates. The best way to do this is to tell compelling stories that highlight tangible, measurable results. And the best “tool” to use for this purpose is the Accomplishment Story. The S-A-R exercise below will give you a clear idea of how to develop and use your own Accomplishment Stories for interview success.

### **A checklist to help jog your memory about your accomplishments:**

*Was there ever a time when you...*

- Managed teams, departments or projects?
- Saved money for your department or company?
- Achieved greater results with limited/fewer resources?
- Received special recognition, awards, or letters of commendation?
- Solved an unusually challenging business problem?
- Were promoted or given more responsibility?
- Wrote papers or reports, or conducted presentations?
- Brought-in projects under budget and before deadline?
- Exceeded expectations of the boss?
- Organized and carried-out new initiatives?
- Trained or mentored employees?
- Increased your company’s productivity or profitability?

## WORKSHEET: Developing Accomplishment Stories using S-A-R

Develop 2 – 3 Accomplishment Stories for each of the job themes that relate to the role. Common themes are leadership, teamwork, problem solving, communication skills, conflict management, and drive for results.

Context	
<p><i>Situation</i> Summarize the nature of the problem you faced or the goal you sought to accomplish.</p>	

Your Role	
<p><i>Action</i> Describe the action taken. What did you do? What skills, knowledge and expertise did you demonstrate? Include analysis of the opportunity, the planning and preparation, and the resources involved. Use action words and avoid passive constructions such as “participated in”.</p>	

Impact	
<p><i>Result</i> What resulted from your effort? What impact did your actions lead to?</p>	

**Draft one accomplishment story using the SAR framework**



# **YOUR NETWORKING AND INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS**

(Pages 18-22)

## YOUR NETWORKING AND INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

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Networking is a critical part of the job search and increases the likelihood of being considered for opportunities:

- Highlight your background and interests to someone who could guide you and potentially serve as an advocate throughout the job search process
- Ask questions about what the employer is looking for and how you may fit the culture
- Organizations may evaluate a candidate's genuine interest by considering whether or not they have had informational discussions with current employees
- In some cases, applications may not be reviewed without a referral (or if you are not following the company on LinkedIn)
- At times, roles are not posted and are filled exclusively through the networking process

### Step 1: Identify Contacts

Once you've created a Target List of organizations, identify contacts by utilizing the following resources:

- CMS – lists company contacts including alumni and recruiters; alumni are often the best starting point for informational discussions; read employer notes prior to outreach
- Who's Going Where – a spreadsheet of where the class of 2020 interned and where the class of 2019 went full-time after graduation, located in CMS resource library
- University alumni directories – SOM, Yale Career Network, your undergraduate alumni directory
- LinkedIn – alumni groups, club curated groups, targeted keyword searches
- Prior work colleagues, second-level network
- Conference attendees

### Step 2: Outreach

- Message should be professional, concise, tailored and thoughtful, expressing interest in their knowledge and experience
- Focus on building relationships, this should be more than a transaction
- Do not ask about jobs when reaching out
- Request up to 20-30 minutes of the person's time
- Proof thoroughly, if using SOM alumni directory, use the contact method listed as "preferred"
- If you do not hear back, assume the contact is busy or has not read your note; wait at least a week before following up; you may also consider reaching out to a different contact

### Sample Outreach Message

*Dear Ms. Barker,*

*I am an experienced professional / second year MBA for Executives student at the Yale School of Management with a background in xxxx, interested in transitioning to a brand management role within CPG. I found your profile in the Yale SOM Alumni Directory, and see that you have had great success in marketing. I would be grateful for the opportunity to speak with you to discuss your experience at SOM and your career path since graduating. Do you have 15-20 minutes to speak over the next couple of weeks? If so, please let me know what works best for your schedule.*

*Thank you very much in advance and I look forward to connecting at your convenience.*

*Best,*

*Todd*

*Personalize where possible: The goal is to demonstrate that you took the time to research and have not copied and pasted a message; examples include: “I noticed that you navigated a similar transition from x to y”, or “that you were heavily involved in x club”, or “that you work in x which is of great interest to me”*

### **Step 3: The Informational Interview**

Informational interviews are conversations initiated by a candidate to learn more about an industry, function, company, role and/or career path.

Preparation is key:

- Research the company and your contact
- Prepare questions, sample topics include career path, daily responsibilities, industry trends, and office culture
- Practice Your Story
- Confirm your meeting by e-mail 24 hours before
- Arrive at least 10 minutes early for in-person; find a quiet space if by phone or zoom
- Dress professionally whether in-person or via videoconference

Guidelines for a successful discussion:

- Set the tone by introducing yourself, explain what you intend to get out of the meeting and walk through your story
- Show that you value their time, have done your research, and are genuinely interested in learning
- Ask good questions – follow up on those generated during conversation or those you prepared prior
- Manage the time effectively to not go over, or if necessary, politely check if they have more time
- Treat any informational interview as seriously as you would a formal interview for a specific position

### **Step 4: The Close**

At the close, use your best judgement to determine how inclined the person is to help you; potential closing asks include:

- If there is a current opening that you plan to apply to, notify them of this and leave the door open for potential referral (allow them to offer, don't ask for it, don't be discouraged if they don't offer)
- Ask if there are other contacts that they recommend you reach out to
- Ask if they are comfortable with you continuing to update them on your search progress and confirm the best contact information to use
- Thank them for something specific that you found particularly useful during your discussion (information/insight)

### **Step 5: Post Conversation Follow-Up**

- Send a thank you email within 24 hours of every discussion
- Personalize the note by referencing details from the conversation; keep brief and professional
- Proactively stay connected and send occasional updates to individuals who are especially helpful to you
- Proofread carefully

### **Sample Thank You**

Dear Ms. Smith,

*Thank you for taking the time to speak with me this morning and for sharing your experience working in the Supply Chain department at Whole Foods. I enjoyed learning about the highly innovative ways in which your team is overcoming the challenge of increasing transportation costs. I am confident that my experience as an Operations Analyst at UPS, as well as my proven success increasing profits through better inventory management at our campus eatery “Food for Thought,” has prepared me well to transition into this field. I have taken your advice and applied both online and reached out to your department lead, Ms. Jones. I will follow up with you over the next two weeks to update you on the process.*

*Thank you very much again for your time and I look forward to keeping in touch in the weeks ahead.*

Best,

John Doe

### **YOUR NETWORKING AND INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING RESOURCES:**

[CMS](#) - lists employer contacts including alumni and recruiters; alumni are often the best starting point for informational discussions; read employer notes prior to outreach

**LinkedIn** - Alumni groups, club curated groups, targeted searches utilizing keywords

[Yale SOM Alumni Directory](#) - Inclusive database of over 9,000 Yale SOM alumni searchable by a variety of parameters

[Yale Cross Campus](#) - is Yale’s networking, community-building, and mentoring platform. It facilitates relationships among Yalies – whether alumni to student or alumni to recent alumni – is open to all Yale students and alums, and features a number of ways to engage: Through advice, mentorship, online discussion boards available to Cross Campus users, and by joining Cross Campus groups.

[Yale Alumni Shared Interest Groups](#) - A list of Yale University alumni groups (find help about Interest Groups, [here](#))



## WORKSHEET: Outreach Exercise

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1. Choose a target organization and identify a potential contact to reach out to.
2. Draft a tailored message to set up an informational discussion.
3. Assuming the contact agrees to have the discussion, list 3-5 questions that you would like to ask.
4. Write a thank you note that leaves the door open to future communication throughout the search process.
5. Reflection: Were there parts of this exercise that were more challenging than others? Why do you think that is and what steps can you take to make the networking process more effective?



# **YOUR COVER LETTER**

**(Pages 23-29)**

## YOUR COVER LETTER

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A cover letter is a business letter that accompanies each resume you send to a prospective employer. The cover letter serves as an introduction; it tells an employer who you are and why you are sending them your resume. The cover letter should complement, not duplicate, your resume. Its purpose is to create context and bring your data-oriented, factual resume to life and add a personal touch. It may not circulate with your resume to all interviewers so the resume must be able to stand on its own.

### Cover Letter Benefits:

Your cover letter provides a storyline and valuable context about your experience and interests. Although some employers do not request cover letters, you should embrace the opportunity to submit one whenever possible because it can persuade an employer in ways a resume alone cannot.

- Tells the story a resume can't: *Articulates why this company, job, career path*
- Convinces reader you can excel in the job: *Connects skills & experience to job needs*
- Distinguishes you from other candidates: *Can express passion for company, how you'll add value, fit with the culture*
- Persuades reader to champion you: *Demonstrates communications skills, amplifies accomplishments, and puts resume in context*

### Creating a Cover Letter:

#### Step 1: Match your skills to the job description

Read through the job description, pulling out:

- Key responsibilities
- Skills (required/preferred)
- Experiences
- Attributes
- Specific, unique language or buzzwords

#### Step 2: Connect 3-4 job requirements with your skills and experience

Identify where your experiences, skills, and interests match key elements of the job description. For the strongest matches, note specific examples, and where there are no direct matches, identify experiences that demonstrate comparable skills. Select the job's 3-4 most important elements and your strongest stories to include in your letter.

#### Step 3: Create an outline for your cover letter

A cover letter consists of 3 parts – the Hook, the Sell, and the Ask – so create an outline answering the following questions for each section.

##### 1. Opening: The Hook (Keep Them Reading)

- Who are you, why are you writing, which job?
- Attention-grabbing, hard-hitting, entice readers to learn more - what do you know about them from your research?
- Leverage company enthusiasm, research, people you spoke with
- Share qualifications, results, anecdote, connections

## 2. Body: The Sell (Connect Job Needs with Your Qualifications)

- Layout: Succinct with either 1 longer or 3 shorter bulleted paragraphs (see Cover Letter Guide samples)
- Select 3 job requirements & tie them to your skills, experience, attributes - show them how you did it
- Illustrate accomplishments and lessons learned by quantifying your contributions and value
- Make the case for switching industries or functions - show your transferrable skills

## 3. Close: The Ask (Request Action)

- Add what you are doing at Yale to position yourself to this employer/industry
- Recap what you can CONTRIBUTE, reiterate your interest
- Your follow-up next steps and/or specific ask (e.g., call interview)
- Thank you and call to action

## Step 4: Develop key sentences of your cover letter

Using your outline information, write key sentences for each section of your cover letter.

### Hook examples:

- *“With my deep management consulting experience, passion for healthcare and Yale MBA, I am delighted to apply for the Consultant position.”*
- *“My experience across professional services, marketing, and sales operations differentiates me from traditional candidates, as I bring a unique perspective and ability to see patterns in data that support actionable growth strategies.”*

### Sell examples:

- *“As a Senior Analyst at ABC Company, I applied rigorous quantitative methods to assess the economic value of dozens of products. Handling multiple cases simultaneously, I successfully managed teams of analysts, never missing a deadline.”*
- *“Prior to Yale, I worked in a range of roles at the XYZ Bank, where I initiated and managed loans for small, medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and start-ups that some commercial banks avoided, but our sophisticated models identified companies with solid value propositions, and which later became successful.”*

### Close examples:

- *“I am very interested in learning more about this opportunity and discussing the leadership expertise and results I can bring as your strategy consultant.”*
- *“The enclosed resume demonstrates my track record of consistent high achievement, strategic abilities, analytical skills, team leadership, and ability to deliver results. I look forward to discussing how my skills and experience would benefit your organization.”*

## Step 5: Finalize cover letter.

Complete writing your entire cover letter, and review against Cover Letter Checklist.

### Formatting Guidelines

- Length: 1-page maximum, be as succinct as possible
- Header: consistent with your resume, professional stationery look, can create your own
- Salutation: formal if have contact info, otherwise omit or Dear Hiring Manager / Hiring Team

## YOUR COVER LETTER RESOURCES:

- Cover Letter Worksheets

**WORKSHEET: Job Description vs. Experience Comparison**

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<u>Job Description</u> List the key requirements: skills, experiences, attributes	<u>My Skills</u> Do you have a match for this requirement from your own skill set? (Y/N). If not, try identifying comparable skills or experiences.	<u>Details</u> Provide an illustrative example from your education or professional experience

**WORKSHEET: Cover Letter Outline**

<b>Introduction (The Hook)</b>	
How will you introduce yourself?	
What is the position?	
What contacts have you spoken with? Note if someone has specifically referred you to this position	
What relevant/intriguing information have you learned from your company research?	
Why the company/industry/function?	
What is your unique “hook” that will compel the reader to want to learn more about you?	
<b>Body (The Sell)</b>	
Integrate examples from the skill match grid that tie your qualities/experiences to the requirements of the job.	
Example #1 that ties your skills to the job requirements	
Example #2 that ties your skills to the job requirements	
Example #3 that ties your skills to the job requirements	
Example #4 that ties your skills to the job requirements	
<b>Closing (The Ask)</b>	
Summarize why you are a good fit for the role	
What is your “ask”?	
What next steps do you propose?	
Thank the reader	

**WORKSHEET: Cover Letter Draft**

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Opening (The Hook)	Feedback/ Notes
Body (The Sell)	Feedback/ Notes
Closing (The Ask)	Feedback/ Notes

**WORKSHEET: Cover Letter Checklist**

GENERAL	Y/N?
Makes a clear statement of what value you will bring to the organization	
Makes it easy for reader to identify what key skills and attributes you have to offer	
Conveys your passion for the company, role, and industry	
Tailors content throughout the letter, not just the introduction	
Provides information beyond what is found in your resume	
EMPLOYER RESEARCH	
Uses specific information garnered from informational interviews, presentations, industry sources and company news to demonstrate your interest and fit with the company	
Mentions by name individuals with whom you've had meaningful conversations	
Indicates specific divisions or departments that interest you, where applicable	
MATCH TO JOB DESCRIPTION	
Draws distinct connections between the job requirements and your skills, experiences, and attributes	
Uses language consistent with how the company presents its brand and stories	
Uses specific examples and quantified (or qualified) results to demonstrate competencies	
Addresses most/many of the requirements listed in the job description	
Clearly translates prior experiences to demonstrate preparedness for the desired role	
FORMAT	
One page	
Uses an 11- or 12-point font	
Uses margins at least 1" all around	
Uses proper business formatting and spacing	
Includes your phone number and email	
Incorporates sufficient white space	
Includes specific recipient salutation and contact information (avoid generic greeting if possible, but use "Dear Hiring Manager" if no alternative)	
WATCHOUTS	
Uses the same reasons for interest in the company as are used in letters to other companies (or uses an overly generic reasons)	
Same skills/experiences used in every letter (not tailored to specific job requirements)	
Written from the "me" perspective – focuses on what the opportunity will do for you and doesn't tell the employer what value you bring to their organization	
Restates what is written in your resume	
Includes spelling errors, typos, grammatical errors, wrong company name or other mistakes	
Recycles a CDO "Best Practice" sample letter; cover letters must all be your own original work	
Is boring – lacks the relevance or level of interest to make the reader want to learn more	



# YOUR INTERVIEW

(Pages 30-40)

## YOUR INTERVIEW

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The interview is your optimal opportunity to distinguish yourself from other candidates and there is always room to improve. Preparation is the key to minimizing interview anxiety and maximizing performance. We encourage you to leverage coaching support at Yale SOM to participate in mock interviews and to practice with your friends, colleagues and classmates.

### **Industry & Company Research**

You will learn a lot about an organization during the interview like whether the structure and culture are a good fit for you. This is not the time to learn basic information about the company so make sure you are prepared. Researching employers is one of the best ways to become a stand-out candidate during the hiring process. Here are tips for researching companies before the interview:

- **Visit the company website** - Here, you can review the organization's mission statement and history, products and services, and management, as well as information about the company culture and values.
- **Browse Social Media** - Check the company's social media accounts. Visit their Facebook, Google+, Instagram, and Twitter pages. Like or follow the company to get updates.
- **Use LinkedIn** - Company profiles are a good way to find, at a glance, more information on a company you're interested in. You'll be able to see your connections at the company, new hires, promotions, jobs posted, related companies, and company statistics. Also use LinkedIn to research your interviewers.
- **Use Google and Google News** - Search both Google and Google News for the company name. You may find out that the company is expanding into Asia, for instance, or received a round of start-up funding. Or, you may find out that a recent product underperformed or had to be recalled. This knowledge can help shape your responses to interview questions.
- **Tap your Connections** - Do you know someone who works at the organization? Ask for a quick informational call to learn more about the company's career trajectory, culture and more.
- **Get to know the industry** - As well as researching the company, it makes sense to review the overall industry. Check out the [CDO Career Resources](#) and take advantage of the [Business & Management Research Guides](#) at the Yale University Library (for current students) and resources at your own, local public libraries.

**Interest Questions** - Interviewers are trying to gauge your interest in the role, passion for the opportunity, and fit with the organization. These are typically the first questions you'll get in an interview.

*Examples:*

- Walk me through your resume.
- Why are you interested in this organization?
- What excites you about this role?

*Approach:* Interviewers looking for passion, focus and depth of industry knowledge. Emphasize the experience, skills, and education that relate directly to the role for which you are interviewing.

*Preparation:* Company research should include: products/services, basic financials, news, and deals. Industry research should cover competitive landscape and trends. Identify alumni and personal contacts within the organization to facilitate informational conversations to capture additional thoughts and insight on both the industry and organization.

**Behavioral Questions** - Most interviews are behavioral questions, using a style of questioning meant to gauge your behavior in past or hypothetical situations to assess your soft and hard skills, judgment, professional maturity, and fit for a particular role.

*Examples:*

- Describe a time when you were part of a difficult team? What was the situation? What role did you play? How did you handle it? And, what was the outcome?
- Tell me about a situation where you were able to find a new and better way of doing something.
- What was the most difficult decision you've ever had to make?

*Approach:* Use Situation – Action – Result framework to communicate Accomplishment Stories

- **Situation:** Describe the situation giving a brief description of the circumstances you faced
- **Action:** Describe the action you took to address it, including analysis, decision making, resources employed, and steps taken
- **Result:** Describe results obtained. Be as specific and quantitative as possible, though results can also be qualitative

**Technical Questions** - The purpose of the technical interview is to evaluate your level of knowledge or skill in the topic areas relevant to the position for which you're being considered. While the level of difficulty of questions vary from firm to firm, you may be quizzed on technical questions in at least one round.

*Examples:*

- Sell me on your quantitative skills.
- Say you knew a company's net income. How would you figure out its cashflows?
- We are having trouble managing our \_\_\_\_\_ division. What do you think are the key performance metrics and how might you go about improving them?

*Approach and Preparation:* Tap into appropriate CDO resources and members of your network for best practices and approaches to technical questions in your industry. Speak to connections who have worked with or interviewed with the organization before. Don't be afraid to ask the recruiter what to expect.

**Preparing for Case Interviews** – One specific technical interview is a case interview. This type of interview is common when recruiting for consulting and marketing positions but increasingly being incorporated in many other industries. Such interviews put candidates in hypothetical situations, have you solve business problems and test your ability to function under pressure. These interviews assess your thinking and communication more than your answer.

**Case-Interview Styles:**

- **Open-Ended Cases:** The interviewer gives you a sentence or two of information, and then expects you to run with only that information and your own assumptions.
- **More Structured Cases:** The interviewer gives you information, and then proceeds to guide you through the problem-solving process.
- **Paper-Driven Cases:** You're handed a "deck" of information, and the interviewer sometimes leaves the room while you pore over the text and graphs contained in the deck. You then prepare a brief analysis, presenting it when the interviewer returns.

### Case Interviews are often used to assess the following skills:

- Listening skills
- Analytical and problem-solving skills
- Ability to manage ambiguity
- Ability to organize information and create recommendations
- Ability to maintain professional poise under pressure
- Business judgement
- Intellectual curiosity
- Enthusiasm

### 5 Step Approach to Guide your Response:

1. Understand the issue; ask clarifying questions as needed
2. Identify the underlying assumptions
3. Summarize key issues and findings
4. State your recommendations
5. Outline next steps and expected results/impacts

### YOUR INTERVIEW RESOURCES:

- [Firsthand](#) (formerly Vault) –company and industry overviews, employee insights, salary/ negotiation information. (Yale users who had an account in Vault can use their existing credentials to log in to Firsthand)

**Questions for the Interviewer** – Questions for your interviewer demonstrate interest in the role, knowledge of the industry and organization, and can provide information to further determine cultural fit. They fall into 5 categories:

1. About the job or role
2. About the organization and culture
3. About industry trends and impact of current events
4. About the manager and team
5. About feedback and timeline (next steps)

*Approach and Preparation:* Plan 3 – 4 questions for each interviewer you meet, though you may not get to ask them all. The best questions are customized and specific based on your knowledge of the industry, company, and interviewer. The samples provided below, while generic, can be tailored effectively for most interview situations. Also, be sure to ask questions about next steps in the process at the end of your interview.

### Post-Interview Communication: Thank You Notes

- Thank you notes are an essential part of the interview process. They reinforce a strong first impression, strengthen your relationship with the recruiter, and summarize your key strengths. The thank you note also gives you an opportunity to speak to any points not covered in the interview.

### *Important Tips:*

- Send note in a timely manner after the interview, preferably within 24 hours of your meeting

- Thank individual for their time and consideration
- Reiterate your interest in the organization, the key components of your candidacy, and briefly restate how you can contribute
- Email is the best form of communication—it's quickest and can easily be attached to any electronic files on your candidacy
- If you were interviewed by more than one person, send a personalized note to each interviewer referencing the particular conversation you shared

*Post- Interview Thank You Note Example:*

*Dear Ms. Smith,*

*Thank you for taking the time to speak with me this morning about the Associate position in the Supply Chain department at Whole Foods. My interest in the position has grown after our conversation about the highly innovative ways in which your team is overcoming the challenges of increasing transportation costs. I am confident that my experience as an Operations Analyst at UPS, as well as my success in increasing profits through better inventory management at our campus eatery "Food for Thought," has prepared me well to contribute to your team this summer. I look forward to the next steps in the interview process and hope to hear from you soon.*

*Sincerely,*

*Jane Doe*

## Post-Interview Communication: Outreach

- If you have not heard back from the organization about next steps or a hiring decision within the timeframe established, you may want to reach out to your main contact within the guidelines below.

**One week after decision timeframe:** Outreach to main contact is appropriate

**Ten days after decision timeframe:** Leverage your network within the organization (including LinkedIn contacts), to capture intelligence on process

**Two weeks after decision timeframe:** Outreach to main contact is appropriate

### *Important Tips:*

- Don't exceed more than two outreach attempts to main contact
- Keep inquiries about process as opposed to decision
- Feel free to forward articles or other material relevant to previous interactions as part of outreach

### *Post-Interview Outreach Example:*

Dear Joe,

I hope this message finds you well after the holiday and that your Board Meeting after our last conversation was productive! I wanted to touch base to see if there might be anything else I can send you; I remain tremendously interested in your organization's Executive Program Director position, and I would be happy to share references or provide you with anything else that may be helpful.

Thank you again for your consideration. I truly hope to hear from you with good news about next steps.

Best regards,

Jane Smith

## SAMPLE BEHAVIORAL QUESTIONS

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- Tell me about a challenging situation you faced.
- Describe a time when you were part of a particularly difficult team. What was the situation? What role did you play? How did you handle it? And, what was the outcome?
- Give me an example of a time when you successfully worked within a team. What was your role? What was the outcome?
- Tell me about the last time you had to take the initiative to move a project forward. What happened?
- Tell me how you reacted to feedback on one of your projects/responsibilities that wasn't going as well as others had expected. Who was providing the feedback?
- What have been your major successes and accomplishments? How did you achieve those?
- What is your major weakness (or an area of development)? Another one?
- Tell me about a time when you missed an obvious solution to a problem at work.
- Describe a time when you have had to influence the actions or decisions of more senior people, yet did not have the authority to dictate the behavior. How did you handle it? What was the outcome?
- Give me an example of a leadership role you have played in an event, meeting, presentation, or project, when everything did not go as planned. How did you handle it? What was the outcome? What did you learn from this experience? What might you do differently next time?
- What was the most difficult decision you've ever had to make?
- Discuss a major setback that you have had to overcome.
- Describe a problem/situation where you had to seek out and prioritize relevant information. How did you define key issues, decide which steps to take to achieve the desired results, and gain approval to implement them?
- Tell me about a time when you have successfully resolved a conflict. What was your role in the situation? How did you handle it?
- Give me an example where you sought out a problem to solve because it represented a challenge for you.
- What motivates you?
- Give me an example of a creative or innovative idea you have had recently. What was the context? What made your idea innovative? What did you do with this idea? Where does it stand today?
- How do you stay abreast of industry/functional news?
- Describe a project in which you went beyond what was expected of you.
- Give me an example of how you assessed a situation and achieved good results by focusing on the most important priorities. How did you determine what the priorities were? What was your strategy and plan to achieve the desired outcome?
- Tell me your biggest regret.
- Is there anything else you would like to tell me about yourself?

## **SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR THE INTERVIEWER**

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### **Questions about the Role**

- What types of skills do you NOT already have on board that you're looking to fill with a new hire?
- Thinking back to the person who you've seen perform most effectively in this role, what made their performance so outstanding?
- What are the most immediate challenges of the position that need to be addressed in the first three months?
- What are the opportunities for progression and increased responsibility within the organization?
- Where have successful employees previously in this position progressed to within the company?
- How often can I expect to relocate during the initial years of employment with your organization?

### **Questions about the Organization**

- What do you consider to be your firm's most important assets?
- What are a few things that really drive results for the company?
- What is the background of most middle and senior level personnel?
- Could you describe your company's management style and the type of employee who fits well with it?
- What would you say is the most important aspect of your company culture?
- Are there any company-sponsored social events such as a company softball or golf league in place?
- What kind of partnerships does your organization have with others in the community?
- I'm anxious to get active in the local community. Is this something that you encourage?

### **Questions about/for Manager**

- Can you please tell me how your career has developed at this organization? Would someone entering the firm today have similar opportunities?
- What tangible and intangible qualities attracted you to the company?
- What excites you about coming into work?
- What do you appreciate the most about your company/organization?
- If you could change one thing about this organization or department, what would you change?
- How would you describe your management style?
- Can you explain how you let someone take a project and run with it?
- What are the various ways employees communicate with one another to carry out their work?
- How and by whom will my performance be reviewed? Are there specific criteria upon which I would be evaluated?
- How frequently is formal and informal review given to new employees?

### **Questions about Team**

- What are the long- and short-term goals of the department?
- What have been the department's successes in the last couple of years?
- How are teams assembled? How are team members selected? What are the selection criteria?
- How are your teams structured?
- What kinds of processes are in place to help teams work collaboratively?
- How much freedom and support is provided to mentor and consult with colleagues?

### **Questions about Feedback and Next Steps**

- Is there anything you'd like me to clarify or explain in more detail?
- Do you have any specific concerns about my candidacy I can address?
- Are there any other questions I can answer for you?

- What are the next steps in the interview process?
- Who I should follow up with about next steps?
- When can I expect to hear from you?
- May I contact you if any further questions arise?
- Would you like a list of references?

**Navigating Meals** – Some final interviews and networking events may include lunch or dinner, particularly roles that interact with clients. Although meals feel less formal than in-office interviews, they are still interviews and you are being evaluated. Avoid topics that are too personal, inappropriate, or may be controversial. Below are a few additional tips before your meal:

- If you know in advance where you'll be eating, review the menu beforehand allowing more time to engage with the interviewer.
- Ask the interviewer for meal recommendations or let them order first. This will give you an idea on the price point.
- Keep in mind you will be talking while you eat so avoid foods that may be messy or hard to eat.
- Err on the side of being over professional and consider avoiding alcohol, even if your interviewer orders something to drink. Keep your head clear and stay on top of your game.
- Courtesy and professionalism shouldn't be limited to your interviewers; be polite to the wait staff and host, thanking them appropriately.

**Interview Attire** - You only get one chance to make a first impression and how you dress sets the initial tone for the interview. Below are a few tips for choosing your interview attire.

- Dress for the Industry. Do your research in advance to learn about the culture of the organization, and the dress code.
- It is recommended that perfumes or cologne be avoided all together, as many people are sensitive to perfumes and colognes.

**Illegal Interview Questions** - In the United States it is illegal for an employer to discriminate against a job applicant because of race, color, religion, sex (including gender identity, sexual orientation, and pregnancy), age, national origin or disability.

If you feel an interviewer or employer has acted inappropriately, please contact the CDO. More information on federal laws regarding prohibited employment policies/practices can be found on the [U.S. Equal Employment Opportunities Commission website](#).

## VIRTUAL INTERVIEW TIPS

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- **Practice using Zoom, Skype or another designated platform if you're not familiar with it.** Your first virtual experience can be awkward. Set up time with a friend to become comfortable with the experience and ensure your technical components are in order.
- **Look at the camera, not the screen.** The only way to maintain eye contact with your interviewer is by looking at the camera. It can feel a bit counterintuitive, so practice ahead of time!
- **De-clutter your surroundings.** When you decide where you're going to take your virtual call, make sure the area is clear of personal items and clutter. A simple backdrop is ideal.
- **Consider lighting.** Natural lighting or a lamp aimed at your face from *behind* the computer screen are most effective. Light coming from behind you will darken your face and light from above will cast distracting shadows.
- **Dress as you would for a live interview.** Avoid stripes and small patterns, as they can appear "messy" on a computer screen. And if your background is white, avoid light colored clothing.
- **Eliminate potential noise and distractions.** Consider employing a pet sitter if you are home and have a dog prone to barking. If you have roommates, let them know when your call is taking place.
- **Have a copy of your resume, paper, and pen.** You'll want to refer to your resume at some point in the conversation. Also, be prepared to take notes as needed, but stay focused on the call.
- **Have a "pleasantry in your pocket."** Know ahead of time how you'll greet the interviewer when the call begins. For instance, "Hi Ann, I really appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today."
- **Keep your energy up.** Smile through the call. Everyone's energy has a tendency to wane over the course of a virtual interview, so be sure to work at keeping yours consistently high.

## PHONE INTERVIEW TIPS

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- **Use a land line.** This will cut the odds of a dropped call to a minimum.
- **Consider dressing as you would for a live interview.** This will help boost your energy and move the call closer to a face-to-face experience.
- **Eliminate potential noise and distractions.** Find a quiet place to make your call, free of pet and street noise. Be sure to let roommates know about your call to avoid any interruptions.
- **Have a copy of your resume, paper, and pen.** Your interviewer will almost always refer to it during your conversation, and you'll want it handy. Be ready to take notes as needed.
- **Have access to the internet.** Though you want to give your full attention to your interviewer, you may want to begin the call with the organization's website open as well as another window with a browser of your choice. Never let the interviewer hear you typing—you may want to invest in a quiet keyboard.
- **Answer the call with your name.** This will minimize the chances for awkward beginnings. In addition, know how you will greet the interviewer ahead of time. For instance, "Hello, John, thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me today."
- **Smile and maximize your energy.** Your voice loses about half its energy over transmission. Smiling boosts your energy levels. Don't be afraid to convey your enthusiasm by overcompensating.
- **Listen carefully and slow your cadence.** Without being able to see the cues of the interviewer's body language, you need to listen very carefully for tone and inflection. Leave a brief pause before responding to avoid "cutting off" the interviewer. Slowing your pace down will enhance your listening ability while ensuring you're clear to the interviewer, minimizing any miscommunication or awkward exchanges.