Creating & Sending Effective Cover Letters

A. Creating An Effective Cover Letter
   ▸ You should develop a standard, yet flexible letter.
   ▸ Write with a four paragraph maximum in mind, to hit five key points:
     o Introduction/Reason for your contact.
     o The specific interest you have in this particular employer and its practice.
     o Your interest in and/or ties to the geographic area.
     o Your strengths, attributes and skills that will contribute to the employer’s continued success.
     o Conclusion/resume reference/availability for an interview.

B. Your “Baseline” Cover Letter Broken Down
   ▸ Paragraph 1
     o Brief personal introduction.
     o Lead with a strength/attention-getter (e.g., “As a…with...”).
     o Personal connections and/or referrals go here.
     o Apply for the position/opportunity.
   ▸ Paragraph 2
     o Ties to/interest in the specific legal market.
     o Reasons why you are particularly drawn to this employer.
   ▸ Paragraph 3
     o Focus on yourself, and what you would bring to the position.
     o Tie experiences to tangible, transferrable skills.
   ▸ Paragraph 4
     o Reference enclosed materials.
     o Tell reader when you will be in his/her city, or about your availability to interview.
     o Thank reader for his/her consideration.

C. To Whom Should You Write?
   ▸ If the position has been formally posted:
     o Send your application to the listed individual.
     o You may send a separate letter to other individuals with whom you “connect.”
       ▪ Reference that you have already applied through the proper channels.
       ▪ You may state an interest in speaking with them further.
   ▸ If the position has not been posted:
     o Send your application to the designated recruiting coordinator or member of the hiring committee, if listed.
     o You may send a separate letter to other individuals with whom you “connect.”
       ▪ Reference that you have already applied through the proper channels.
       ▪ You may state an interest in speaking with them further.
   ▸ If the position has not been posted and there is no clear point of contact:
     o Send your application directly to an attorney, with this suggested order of priority:
       ▪ 1st – Fellow Duke Law/undergraduate alumnus or other attorney with whom you have a “connection.”
       ▪ 2nd – Lead attorney in your practice area of interest.
       ▪ 3rd – Name partner or other senior person within the organization.