

How to Use the S.I.S.

Note: Each organization has its own unique culture. Using this guide, you should understand more about the organization you're targeting. These cultural characteristics should generally guide the way you develop your cover letter and approach to their people. Complement this information with targeted research about the organization.

Step 1: What Size is this Organization?

Small Organizations

These organizations have less than 15 employees, and there are literally millions of these businesses in the world. At these organizations, you'll need to be responsive to a variety of needs by the organization because there aren't many employees and these firms are often working with fewer resources than larger organizations. So, you'll want to communicate that you're a team player and that if a situation arises where you need to support an area of the business that's not in your job description, you'll do what it takes to keep the organization running. Your audience will likely be an assistant responsible for screening resumes and cover letters or it might be the founder of the organization themselves, so personal appeals and mission-oriented language will be especially effective. [[Click Here for Further Reading](#)]

Medium-Sized Organizations

These organizations have between 15 and 250 employees. In these organizations, you'll likely have a job that's fairly well defined and will tend to work within a specific department or team. These organizations tend to have fairly strong organizational cultures. You'll likely meet and work with the founder, CEO, or director of the organization regularly. So, highlight your commitment to the organization's mission and your interest in being part of the team. Your audience is likely to be an HR representative who does more than recruit, so personal appeals might resonate with them. [[Click Here for Further Reading](#)]

Large Organizations

These organizations have 250+ employees and can be very large. Generally, they have extensive resources: people, money, and partnerships. In these organizations, your role will be well-defined and very often, you'll be working with more people than you're capable of personally knowing. These organizations need people who are capable of working within a structured system and who are comfortable being managed by metrics. So if you're approaching a large organization, you'll want to highlight your ability to work well on teams and to respond to the organization's strategic initiatives. Your audience is likely to be a dedicated recruiter who works exclusively on hiring people, so use professional, formal language rather than personal appeals and mission-oriented language. [[Click Here for Further Reading](#)]

Step 2: What are the Cultural Tendencies of this Industry?

Professional Services (e.g. Law, Accounting, Recruiting, Outsourcing, Public Relations)

These organizations rely heavily on recruiting talented, ambitious people, providing excellent customer service, so focus on interpersonal skills and a client-centered attitude. [[Click Here for Further Reading](#)]

Travel, Leisure, and Tourism



These firms are in the experience business and their job is to make their customers have an amazing time. They rely on recruiting people who are extremely service-oriented and who can do that in a structured setting (e.g. a very large hotel or resort). So, focus your approach on doing everything it takes to create amazing experiences for clients. [[Click Here for Further Reading](#)]

[Entertainment and Media](#)

In today's interconnected world, entertainment and media organizations are increasingly going global. So focus your approach to these organizations on your awareness of the global nature of the industry and interconnectedness between consumers and content producers. [[Click Here for Further Reading](#)]

[Consumer Retail \(Not Luxury Goods\)](#)

Key issues in retail are: managing large groups of floor employees and mid-level staff and monitoring inventory and sales trends. So, focus on your ability to work with a diverse group of people and also your ability to understand metrics like inventory levels and sales trends to help the company optimize productivity. [[Click Here for Further Reading](#)]

[Aviation and Aerospace](#)

In this industry, mistakes can cost peoples' lives. So a culture of safety, research, regulation, and monitoring has evolved over the years. Focus on your ability to be detail-oriented, to make decisions based on data, and to work within a structured but innovative environment. [[Click Here for Further Reading](#)]

[Banking, Investing, and Financial Services](#)

Financial service organizations are in the business of managing risks, making profits, and dealing with government regulation. For employees, balancing these motivators can be extremely stressful, and hiring managers know that. The industry is constantly trying to support risk-taking while maintaining centralized control of the organization. Focus on your ability to handle stress, to make calculated risks (you might highlight your mathematical aptitude), and work in a structured environment. [[Click Here for Further Reading](#)]

[Pharmaceuticals, Hospitals, Medical Devices, and Biotechnology](#)

Companies in the health business constantly dealing with high research costs, government regulation, and the need to creatively market their products and services. To join these firms, the candidate will generally need to have specific knowledge related to medicine, health economics, and/or regulatory processes. So highlight your specific experiences in the industry, your interest in research and health, and your ability to work efficiently inside a highly regulated organization. [[Click Here for Further Reading](#)]

[Manufacturing, Wholesale, and Trade](#)

This industry is about supply chain management, vendor management, and client communications. So, highlight your interest in system efficiencies (e.g. IT for supply chain & manufacturing) and your ability to work with people who might be located in other countries. You might also indicate that you like to travel, because visits to trade fairs, production sites, and shipping sites is common. [[Click Here for Further Reading](#)]

[Government and Non-Profits](#)

There are many different kinds of government agencies, but you can be sure that almost any government agency will value candidates who strive to fulfill their mission and serve the public interest and who can



work well with people from many different ethnic and social backgrounds. So, focus on your commitment to their mission, to the public interest, and your ability to work within the existing system to make a positive impact for society. [[Click Here for Further Reading](#)]

[Computer Gaming](#)

Gaming companies develop a serious culture around the games they produce. These companies tend to hire people who love gaming, love the community, and are interested in developing great gaming experiences with the world. Focus on showing the firm that you're aware of their line of games, the communities around those games, and your interest in joining the community. [[Click Here for Further Reading](#)]

[Software](#)

In order to create great software, you need great developers. Also, the industry tends to be very competitive, so these firms often require employees to go through cycles of devoting very long hours while rolling out a new product very quickly. Highlight your interest in software technology (e.g. coding, hacker culture, and user experience), your interest in being part of a tight-knit team, and your ultimate commitment to the organization when you need to work long hours. [[Click Here for Further Reading](#)]

[Defense](#)

Two themes in the defense industry are intellectual property (IP) and government partnerships. In an IP business, research and security concerns are important. Also, when working with militaries and governments, high levels of regulation often mean strict processes. These industries often feature ex-service people, so they tend to be fairly regimented. Focus on your qualifications, your commitment to excellence, and your ability to work in a structured environment. [[Click Here for Further Reading](#)]

[Food and Beverage \(Sales and Distribution, not Restaurants\)](#)

These organizations tend to be about branding, marketing, and sales (food processing is more like manufacturing). Typically, product knowledge, the ability to develop relationships, and the ability to work on teams determine success in these organizations. Also, note that ethics is becoming increasingly important in food and beverage organizations (health, fair trade, and global ethics). In your approach, let them know that you're passionate about the organization's products, that you're a team player, and that you want to advance the organization's ethical missions whenever possible. [[Click Here for Further Reading](#)]

[Universities and Education](#)

Academic organizations value people who want to serve their mission of enlightening students. These organizations also tend to value ethnic and social equality. So, highlight your commitment to education, research, and student service. [[Click Here for Further Reading](#)]

[Luxury Goods](#)

The luxury market is extremely competitive and responsive to consumer trends. Also, these brands aim to be something that people around the world aspire to own. Highlight your interest in cultural trends (e.g. art, fashion, and music), your ability to understand the world of wealthy individuals, and your interest in excellence. [[Click Here for Further Reading](#)]

[Management Consulting](#)



These organizations are in the business of selling advice and rely on their ability to leverage intellectual. They tend to value high academic achievers and people who present themselves well in a professional context. Highlight your ability to solve complex problems, to perform cutting-edge research, to work under pressure, and to work with very demanding clients. [[Click Here for Further Reading](#)]

[Marketing and Advertising](#)

These organizations are in the business of responding to the marketplace. To do this, they're constantly interviewing customers, identifying trends, and creatively packaging products and ideas. Highlight your interest in social media, cultural trends, innovative technologies, your ability to think creatively, and your interest in creating communities around products and services. [[Click Here for Further Reading](#)]

[Oil, Energy, and Utilities](#)

Safety, engineering excellence, and government regulation are all major themes with these organizations. Also, people in these sectors realize how important their work is to society. Highlight your interest in industrial innovation, your commitment to workplace safety and environmental stewardship, and your ability to work within a structured environment. [[Click Here for Further Reading](#)]

[Real Estate Development and Sales](#)

These organizations are generally started by a single entrepreneur and centered around finding, planning, and executing deals that will genuinely benefit the community around it. Many of these deals involve multiple partners and need people who can plan excellently, perform due diligence on deals, and make sales presentations. Highlight your ability to form relationships with partners, to make sales or deal pitches, and your interest in developing the communities of the future. [[Click Here for Further Reading](#)]

[Telecommunications and Large-scale IT Solutions](#)

These organizations are in the infrastructure business. They are often dealing with large-scale projects that involve many suppliers, government oversight, and many people. Highlight your ability to manage the moving parts of long-term projects, your interest in technological innovation, and your interest in the communication infrastructures of the future. [[Click Here for Further Reading](#)]

Step 3: Who Owns the Organization?

[Family, Founder, Co-op, or Partnership](#)

When an organization is privately owned, the managers of the organization can choose to run it in whatever style they choose. They tend to be receptive to mission-oriented candidates who understand the history of the organization.

[The General Public or Donors](#)

The managers of organizations that are funded with public money (e.g. tax dollars or grants) or charitable donations tend to be responsive to candidates who are in it for the public good.

[Publicly Traded Organizations](#)

Publicly traded organizations (e.g. organizations on NASDAQ or the London Stock Exchange) try to grow consistently, so they tend to be responsive to candidates who are ambitious, who present themselves formally and with professionalism, and who understand the organization's strategic challenges.