

# The purpose of cover letters, photos in your CV

 By [Juliette Attwell](#)

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When applying for a job, the jobseeker may be asked to attach various documents along with their CV. This week we discuss the purpose of a motivational letter as well as why some employers ask for a photo.

**Hi Juliette,**

***How important is a motivational letter in your CV? Should I include one? If so, what should it say? - Natalie***

Hi Natalie,

Motivational letters are not of utmost importance, but do add a nice personal touch to your CV. If you do decide to add one, make sure that you give a brief overview starting with an attractive opening in order to stand out and catch the attention of the reader.

I want to stress that you should keep the letter short as you do not want to bore the reader. Highlight key positive points about yourself, informing the company that it would be beneficial for them to interview and possibly hire you.

***I have seen a number of job adverts where the employer asks for a photo - why do they want one? Is this a tacit way of weeding out "not suitables"? Is this a form of covert racism? Can one report employers for this practice?***

***Surely, the EE Act is clear: each requirement must be an inherent one to the job? - Vicki***

Hi Vicki,

This question is one that can be debated based on an individual's opinion. It is not illegal for an employer to request a photograph, according to Labour Law in South Africa however; it is frowned upon unless it is completely inherent to the job.

I have spoken to some of the consultants here at the RecruitGroup and asked for their professional opinions on the subject and this is what they have come back with:

*"AAVEE set aside, I think it is about more than that.*

*Given the opportunity to see a candidate, I think you are able to better assess who they are to a certain extent.*

- *How they dress: What is the candidate wearing on the photo, casual or formal?*
- *What type of photo they submitted: Is it a Facebook picture, or a more professional work photograph*
- *Body language in the picture: Body language and confidence go hand in hand...*
- *Physical appearance: Is the candidate well groomed? Does he/she look approachable?*

*In terms of the above you can paint a better picture if your candidate would be a match for the vacancy"*

- Tinus Human - Specialist Recruitment Consultant for Africa

"As far as I know, it is not illegal to request a photograph from a candidate, but it does question the criteria in which the client is looking for filling the role.

It shouldn't be the deciding factor for you getting the job or not however, I think for certain positions, your appearance can be important and one of the main key outputs for the person to be successful in their job for which they are being hired.

In most cases, recruiters or clients/employers need to get copies of your ID for their employment records nonetheless, so there is not too much of a difference."

- Samantha Nel - Head of Special Projects

At the end of the day, it all boils down to the fact that being presentable and professional is extremely important to many organisations, and they do not want to spend too much time interviewing candidates that would not be suitable based on their self-presentation, although we can argue this by saying that appearance is not everything. It would be best to take this up with the employer, should you interview with them and address their reasons for requesting a photograph.

I hope this answers your question, Vicki.

**Remember to always love what you do!**

**Juliette**

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## **ABOUT JULIETTE ATTWELL**

Juliette Attwell is Head of Marketing & Operations at Recruitgroup. Recruitgroup has won Careerjunction Recruiter of the Year in 2010, 2012, 2013 and 2014 as well as Fast Growth Business of the Year at the National Business Awards 2014. Juliette holds a Bcom Honours in Marketing Management and is the resident "agony aunt" on the BizCareers Column, she was also a finalist in the Top Young Executive at the National Business Awards 2014.

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