

Getting the Interview: Be Proactive Before and After You Send Your Resume

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You find a promising job listing online. Excited, you send a well-crafted cover letter and resume and wait for a response. Six weeks later, you're still waiting, your enthusiasm has waned, and you've concluded your resume has fallen into a black hole.

A proactive approach to your job search can improve your chances of landing interviews. Listed below are six tips to maximize your success.

Make Contact Before Sending Your Resume

Unless you're responding to an ad that requests "no phone calls," try to contact the hiring manager before you send your resume. Even if you don't know the name of the person handling the search, you can do a bit of investigation to locate the correct person, if you know the employer.

Once you get the person on the phone, be brief. The purpose of your call is to express enthusiasm about the opportunity, and that you can positively contribute to the team. Be prepared with a short pitch about your qualifications and the ways you could benefit the employer. Keep the focus on the employer, not you.

If you don't get to speak with the hiring manager, find out who the recruiter is in charge of hiring for the position as well as the correct spelling of his name.

End Your Cover Letter with a Promise of Action

Conclude your letter with something like, "I will follow up with you in a few days to discuss the possibility of an interview. In the meantime, please feel free to contact me at _____. " If you say you will follow up, make sure you do.

Follow Up Quickly on All Resumes You Send

Follow up within three to five business days. You can follow up by phone, or by email if replying to a blind ad or the ad specifies no calls.

When following up by phone, try saying something like, "Hi, my name is _____ and I submitted my resume for your _____ opening. I'm extremely interested in this opportunity, and I just wanted to touch base with you on how I can benefit your operation..."

If you are following up by email, your message should be brief. Here's an example:

Dear Name (or "Hiring Manager" if name is unknown):

I recently applied for your _____ opening, and I just wanted to follow up to make sure my resume was received. My strong background in _____, _____ and _____ appears to be an excellent match to the qualifications you are seeking, and I am very interested in your opportunity. I realize you may not yet be at the interview stage, but I am more than happy to answer any preliminary questions you may have, and I can be reached at _____. Thank you for your time and kind consideration.

Sincerely,

Be Purposeful in Your Subsequent Follow-Up Contacts

If several weeks pass after your initial follow-up without word from the employer, you can initiate another call or email. Your purpose for following up could be to find out if a timeline has been established for interviews or to leave an alternate contact number if you will be traveling. As always, be polite, professional and respectful.

Keep a Contact Log

Your follow-up attempts will be much easier if you keep a contact log of all positions to which you apply. Your log should include a copy of the ad for the position (don't rely on a job posting URL, as jobs can be removed from the Web), the file name of the resume and cover letter you sent, contact dates, names of hiring managers and a summary of information you gleaned during your contact with them.

Don't Be a Pest

Repeated follow-ups are tricky, and unless you are confident you can walk the fine line between being persistent and becoming a pest, exercise restraint after your third or fourth follow-up contact. Don't give up hope if your follow-up efforts don't yield immediate results. Depending on the employer, industry, specific job and number of responses, the time between the application closing date and the day interview invitations are issued can be as long as several months.

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