



FOLLOWING UP

Following up is one of the easiest, least time-consuming things you can do in your job search, and it probably has one of the biggest effects. All too frequently, job seekers spend months perfecting everything—the resume, cover letter, interview suit, hairstyle, etc.—only to land an interview, do well in the interview, and completely drop the ball afterwards.

You should follow up after you apply and after you interview. Remember, an interview is not a one-way street. While you are hoping to impress the interviewer, the interviewer is also hoping that you will find the job appealing and want to take it (if offered). An absence of follow-up usually conveys to the interviewer that you aren't very interested. And if it comes down to you and someone who sent a thank you note expressing his/her continued interest in the job, why wouldn't the interviewer go with the sure thing?

Your follow-up or lack thereof also conveys something to employers about your work ethic. Someone who follows up on a job he/she is interested in is more likely to follow up with

prospective clients, cases in progress, and every other aspect of his/her work.

Following up after the application

After you've applied to a position, you should give the employer(s) two to three weeks to respond. If you follow up too soon, you will seem desperate and most likely annoy the employer, who has probably just been swamped and is unable to go through all of the resumes he's received.

If you've applied to an advertised position, chances are a lack of a response means that you ended up in the rejection pile. With the volume of applications received for advertised positions, it's virtually impossible for employers to respond to all applicants. Still, it doesn't hurt to call. Here are a few examples of what you might say.

"Hi, this is Brian Smith. I submitted a resume to your firm a few weeks ago, and I was just calling to make sure it was received and to see where you are in the hiring process."

OR

"Hi, this is Brian Smith. I submitted a resume to your firm a few weeks ago, and I was calling to see if there's anything else I can provide, such as a writing sample, or if there are any questions I can answer."

This will give the employer an opportunity to give a quick answer:

"No, we have everything we need," or

"I'm sorry. We've already filled the position," or

"To tell you the truth, I haven't even begun to weed through applications yet," or

"Brian Smith? Hold on a minute. Why, yes, I have your resume right here. It looks good! When can you come in for an interview?"

Here's what you shouldn't say:

"Hi, this is Brian Smith. I submitted a resume to your firm a few weeks ago, and I was wondering if I could come in and interview for the associate position."

This will just put the employer on the defensive.

Also, don't say:

"Hi, this is Brian Smith. I submitted my resume to your firm a few weeks ago, and I'm calling to follow up."

This might seem like a reasonable thing to say, but the open-ended nature of this statement will just irritate the employer. What exactly does "follow up" mean in this context? When you say this, you are not giving the employer a question to answer. Instead, you're just throwing the ball in his/her court and letting it bounce there.

Don't put the employer on the spot. If you want a positive response, the way to go about eliciting one is not to act like you are entitled to a positive response.

Following up after an interview

After your interview, you should send a thank you note to show courtesy to the people who interviewed you. Even if you don't think they deserve to be thanked for anything, you should indicate that you appreciate the time they took out of their day to speak with you.

Ideally, the thank you note will be handwritten on tasteful stationery and mailed or hand-delivered. In the note, you should mention some of the specifics that you talked about. Name some of the things you learned about the firm/company. Reiterate how your experience ties in to the work they described. This will show interviewers that you were paying attention during the interview. Finally, reiterate your interest in and enthusiasm about the position.

You should write notes to each person that you met with and vary them each a little. Chances are they will be compared; if you wrote exactly the same thing on all of them, it will reflect poorly on you.

Here's an example of a concise, effective thank you note:

Dear Jim,

It was a pleasure meeting you on Thursday. I enjoyed learning more about the real estate associate position, and I am now more confident than ever that it would be a perfect match for my skills. The work I've done in leasing and

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sales would allow me to immediately assist with the ongoing project you described, and I think my background in construction would be an asset as well.

Please let me know if there is anything else I can provide to assist you in your decision-making process. I was extremely impressed by the collegiality, professionalism, and motivation of everyone I met at Smith & Jones, and I would love to be part of such a team.

Sincerely,

Grateful Attorney