Candidate Advice – Job Applications

Everyone wants to highlight their best qualities and skill set when they apply for a job.
Sometimes, however, candidates rush through the process, trying to get out as many applications as possible.
Discover what you can do differently to improve the chances of your application being successful.

Have you ever wondered about what really irritates recruiters and hiring managers?

Have you actually considered how setting off one of these little irks could affect your application?

Great candidates will benefit from becoming aware of such factors and adjusting their strategy accordingly.

Whilst there are many pitfalls to avoid and some that are specific to the particular industry/sector you are approaching, avoiding some of the most common causes of irritation will certainly improve your chances of success:

1. Using *italic* font - The people looking at your resume may have to read many of them during a single sitting.
Italic/Script/Forte are hard on the eyes and this may result in a reviewer not having the patience to read your whole CV.

2. Not putting your name and contact details on the first page header - There are times when a CV is such a good "fit" for the job description, that a recruiter/hiring manger may want to immediately pick up the phone to schedule a phone interview or a face-to-face meeting. If your phone number and e-mail address aren't there, the recruiter needs to look up your application in their application software to find this information.

This may seem a little petty, but consider if the reader has a similarly good CV from someone else, with all of the contact information clearly located on the first page, and the recruiter only has time to see one person this week.
Do you want to risk the chance that you may miss out?

3. Using generic cover letters - This is the one thing that will indicate that you are applying for multiple roles. It is quite easy to spot someone who is using the same generic cover letter for multiple applications.

If a person cannot put in the effort to tailor a letter to my specific job, why would the recruiter want to risk hiring them? (As an aside, cover letters are a bit of a contentious issue – we really like them, as it will often crystalise the key skills and experience that will highlight a candidate's suitability, which will subsequently be included into the candidate brief we provide our clients.).

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Page 1

However, many will not ever be read, especially if the recruiting company are using an Application Tracking System – ATS for short – detailed information of which is covered in our Job Application Tips – ATS document, located on the Download Centre section of our website - https://www.consideredrecruitment.co.uk/download-centre)

4. Applying for anything and everything - People who apply for multiple jobs in a short period of weeks, very quickly earn a reputation as someone who does not take the time to really consider if they are a good fit for the job.

Almost all Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) have the ability to show how many jobs a candidate has applied for at the recruiter's or hiring manager's company.

There is nothing wrong with applying multiple times, if you really are a good fit for the company or have key, specific experience.

Conversely, it will be more problematic if you apply for several positions with a company and/or recruitment company and the application information differ!

5. Using capital letters for your entire name - Whilst this isn't a massive problem per se, with some kinds of software, the capitalised words sometimes don't parse correctly, so could be missed or ignored. Also, when it comes time to hire you, the HR and Payroll departments will need to manually change your name so that it doesn't stay capitalised.

6. Saving your CV as "my_latest_ CV"- If you want to make life easier for the recruiter and for yourself, save your file as "your name" + "company name".
This way, you know what version of your CV was sent to a job posting. The recruiter or hiring manager can then easily find your file on their computer.

7. Spelling and grammatical errors - Some hiring managers will refuse to consider candidates who have errors on their resume.
Before sending it, make sure you slowly proofread your resume. It is also a great idea to get someone else to read through your CV and job description to make sure you have covered all the key position requirements.

8. Listing places you have worked, without providing start/finish dates - Recruiters and hiring managers like to get a feel for how long you have been at each company. How often do you change jobs? If you do not include the dates, you risk not being considered for roles.

9. Having a resume that is not in sync with your LinkedIn profile - When a company receives your CV, they may check it against LinkedIn or perhaps another CV of yours that the recruiter found online.
If something doesn't match up, your application may be rejected. Dates are a good example of where consistency is expected and be prepared to explain any lengthy gaps in your career history.

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Page 2

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10. Sending a negative letter in response to receiving a rejection letter - It's a very competitive job market. For some job postings, a recruiter may receive 200+ CV's a day. So, even if you were a good match for the job that you applied for, the recruiter may have received many more that were perceived to be a closer fit, (and assuming that your CV got through any ATS system they may be using to provide initial screening).

Whilst negative e-mail in response to application rejecting are fairly rare, if that does happen, it may flag you as a poor fit for the recruiter company's values and behaviours. (And will almost certainly negate you from any further opportunities!)

11. Don't underestimate the importance of Feedback - Whatever the end result for your application, always ask for feedback – this will ensure you know what you are doing well and which areas need work.

Although some companies will be more reluctant about offering feedback, (especially if they have rejected you!) - It doesn't hurt to ask.
Ultimately, it comes down to how much the interviewer wants to help you. This is much more likely when you have shown yourself to be fully prepared and truly interested in the job and you have followed proper interview etiquette.

To increase the chances of getting valuable feedback from the souce, consider the following:

- **Timing is everything** - The best time to ask for feedback is when you initially receive the dreaded "I'm afraid it's a no" response. If you are fortunate enough to get a phone call, use this opportunity to ask for feedback. If you receive an email, follow up within 24 hours. Experience shows that it is more likely to give a candidate feedback if they have interviewed more than twice.
- **Ask the right questions -** Don't put the interviewer on the spot by questioning why you weren't offered the job. Accept you weren't successful and ask a constructive question, such as: " What were the weak area's?", "Which area's did you think I was strong?", "What was the key differentiators between the successful candidate and I?", "Do you have any specific advice regarding my overall interview performance?" This should enable you to really drill down into the areas of weakness and where you are strong.
- **Get the right tone –** It is much more likely to get constructive feedback if the question is asked with the right intent. Try to convey how you are really interested to understand how you can improve and wish to gain insight to help with future interviews. Clearly, there should be no indication of you wanting to argue the decision about your suitability or expressing that you feel angry or injured.

As with pretty much everything else in life – treat people how you would expect to be treated and you won't burn any bridges!