

Capsule 7 – Application strategy

Goal: Adjusting your approach to the desired job

Introduction

Some strategies are better than others to get the job you want. This capsule will help you choose the strategy that is best fit for your needs.

Sending dozens of resumes per week, without knowing if a position is vacant

In what situation?

This is a good strategy when many companies offer the type of job you are looking for. For example, to get a job as a salesperson, this could be an interesting choice of strategy!

Advantage: This method may help you find jobs that are not announced anywhere.

Inconvenient:

Many enterprises simply ignore spontaneous candidacies. Therefore, your efforts may be in vain while creating the illusion that you are moving forward in your process. Also, remember that you should follow up on your candidacy with the enterprises you contacted. Doing less, but doing it well may be the way to go!

Tips:

It is best to target a few employers and customize your resume as well as your cover letter. Therefore, you should call before sending your candidacy to get contact information for the person responsible of hiring. A quick research will also allow you to learn more about the enterprise and adapt your documents.

Keep a journal of your activities. Make a list of every candidacy you sent and write down the name of the person you talked to and the time you contacted them. Also write down any other relevant information. This way, if the phone rings, you will avoid total confusion!

After you have sent your candidacy, remember to follow up to make sure everything was received successfully.

Answering a classified ad

In what situation?

If an ad is published, that means a position has to be filled! This should make your job search easier. In addition, the information in the ad will allow you to quickly see if your skills correspond to the job profile. You will also learn about the expected hiring date, often mentioned in the ad.

Inconvenients:

Employers can receive tens or hundreds of resumes. Tough to stand out! Reading carefully the information in the ad will help you. Most often, the ad will mention the name of the person to which you should send your candidacy, how you should send it, what qualities are required, etc. Be meticulous! It will be easier to adjust your documents and give the employer exactly what they want.

Tip: You should always follow up with the employer when you answer a classified ad. This way, you will know that your candidacy has made it to destination. Plus, it is a great way to show your interest.

Showing up on site

In what situation?

This approach can be useful for jobs that are only displayed on store windows, like restaurants and shops. For jobs where looks are important, like in a hair salon for example, it is also best to show up directly. Some enterprises which hire new personnel on a regular basis also allow you to fill out an application form on the spot.

It could also be a good idea to show up in person if you live near the place where you would like to work. If such is the case, do not hesitate to mention this fact as the employer could perceive it as an advantage.

Advantages:

- Getting in touch directly with the employer or the person responsible for hiring allows you to make first contact. This is a good way to put your candidacy at the top of the pile.
- Going on site allows you to see what the place looks like.

Inconvenients:

- This approach can take a long time if you go directly to every enterprise where you would like to work to hand down your resumé.
- Sometimes, the person responsible for hiring may not be present when you show up. Handing down your resumé to a third party, the secretary for example, makes it more difficult to ensure that it gets to the right person.

Tips:

- Use common sense! Do not bother the manager of a restaurant during lunch time or the manager of a shop during the busiest hours.
- To avoid bad surprises, call before you go. Ask about opening hours, break times, and ask what moment is best to meet the person responsible for hiring.

The informational interview

In what situation?

For those who wish to enlarge their contact network and access the hidden job market. The informational interview allows you to get a feeling of your field, without directly asking for a job. (See capsule Where to look)

Advantages:

Only 10-15% of all jobs are announced. To access the other jobs, your network is the key. The informational interview could open some doors for you.

Inconvenients:

Picking up the phone to ask for an informational interview is not easy! For most people, this is by far the most intimidating method. Still, calm down: you will find that the people you contact will usually answer your questions with a smile. To break the ice, start with the enterprises that you feel are most accessible. This will help you practice! Another tip to make things easier: write down in advance a few words to present yourself as well as a list of questions you want to ask.

This approach may seem difficult, but do not give up: it often is the most efficient one!

Tips:

Upon completion of an informational interview, ask if you could have the name of 2 key individuals you could contact to learn more about the field of employment in which you want to work. If contact was good, you could even ask the person if they know of enterprises that are currently looking for personnel. Before you hang up, always thank the person for taking the time to talk to you.

Filling out job applications on the Web

In what situation?

For jobs in large enterprises, as it is often this type of enterprise that uses this kind of tool.

Advantages:

Filling out a form often allows you to receive by e-mail job offers corresponding to your profile and be added to a bank of candidates.

Inconvenients:

Since it is easy to fill out an online form, competition is tough. Thus, make sure that the information you enter in the form corresponds to the desired profile. Fill out the form with care and attention.

Tips:

Some companies use index searching software which rank resumés based on the desired profile. Therefore, you should use keywords specific to the job. To do so, carefully read the description of the various positions available at the company. The company's Web site will also allow you to learn more about its values and image. Useful information which will help you adjust your candidacy documents.

Using a placement agency

In what situation?

For those who are looking for temporary or short-term jobs. Even if an increasing number of enterprises go to this type of agency to find full-time workers, more often than not, you will find jobs that last between a day to a few weeks.

Advantages

If you have experience in a certain field, you will probably be called quickly. In addition, working for many enterprises will help you enlarge your contact network. Who knows? Maybe a few days of work in an organization will lead you to a full-time job?

Inconvenients

You need to react quickly when you deal with a placement agency! Often, candidates move from one contract to another and they are called upon at the last minute. Therefore, flexibility is essential.

Putting yourself in the employer's shoes

What he/she is looking for?

No matter the enterprise, employers are always looking for reliable candidates who can do a good job. Therefore, being serious and punctual, and selling your good points the right way will be great assets for you.

In addition, proactive research will show that you have much initiative, resources and motivation! Those qualities will certainly help you win a few points with an eventual employer.

WHAT A BOSS LIKES

- Sensing that your interest is real. To prove it, always remember to make prior research on the enterprise. Customize your resumé and cover letter based on the company where you would like to work.
- Target enterprises that are close to your home and mention it when in contact with the decision makers! Employers always like it when their employees live nearby.
- Politeness and courtesy will always please a potential boss.

WHAT A BOSS DISLIKES

- Receiving a non-customized resumé, with no cover letter.
- Receiving a resumé by e-mail which is also addressed to several other companies. Avoid multiple recipient e-mails.
- Losing his/her time: when you approach a boss or a person responsible for hiring, be brief! Prepare a few words in advance: this will help you be clear and precise.
- Someone who arrives at a bad time! Before you go somewhere, inform yourself of the best time to show up!
- A candidate who shows up even if the ad said that resumé should be sent by e-mail or fax only.
- Rudeness. No matter the situation, never be arrogant, rough or rude. Also, always be courteous with everyone you meet in the enterprise: you just never know.
- Familiarity. Leaving 8 messages in someone's voice mail, entering an office without knocking first, being too casual with someone you do not know, sitting down without asking: these are a few things you should avoid doing at all cost.
- Someone who cannot stop talking and does not listen. Take your time and be attentive.
- Talking to a potential candidate and sensing that he/she has forgotten having contacted the enterprise. To avoid this situation, keep a journal of your activities.

The key to success? Information!

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Evaluation

Have you offered your services to employers?

Yes = Have you made a follow up call?

Yes = Keep it up, you are on the right track!

No = The advantage of the phone follow-up is that it first allows you to know that your candidacy is in the hands of the right person. Also, with this simple action, you show the employer your interest for the position. And it is a good occasion to talk to the person responsible for hiring and make first contact with that person.

No =

If no,

Have you determined what strategy is best suited for the job you want?