How to contact potential employers

Every contact with a potential employer is an opportunity to impress, so even a one-minute telephone conversation or a brief email can play an integral part in getting a job. Follow these tips to make the most of such contacts.

Reasons for contacting employers

- The job advertisement says to phone for an interview.
- You need more information about the position.
- You wish to receive a job description.
- You wish to find out the format of the interview.
- You are canvassing for jobs.
- You are following up a referral.
- You wish to thank an employer after an interview.

Reasons for employers to contact you

- To ask questions about your application.
- To invite you to attend an interview.
- To follow up something arising from an earlier interview.
- To conduct an initial screening interview.

Be professional!

To sound professional on the phone you should:

- have a professionally worded voicemail
- introduce yourself if making the contact yourself
- be clear about the purpose of your call.

To look professional in email contact you should:

- have a professional email address (or use your student address)
- use formal business language
- check for errors in spelling or grammar and do not use SMS text language
- address the employer by name and title e.g. Dear Mr Singh
- sign off appropriately e.g. ‘Kind regards’ or ‘Thank you’, NOT ‘cheers’ or ‘Bye now’.

Be prepared!

- Before contacting an employer by phone or email, be clear about what you want to achieve.

When phoning:

- plan the best time to call – not too late in the day
- know the name of the person you wish to speak with
- plan what you want to say and prepare questions to ask
- practise what you are going to say so that you sound natural, friendly, confident and professional
choose a quiet location with minimal distractions
be seated, with pen an paper at hand.

Responding to advertised positions

It may be necessary to gain more information by phone before formally applying for the position.
In this situation:
- Ask for the person named in the advertisement, or if unknown, the name of the person responsible for the position.
- State your name, the job you are interested in and where you saw it advertised.
- Request a copy of the position description (PD). If there is no PD, ask your prepared questions and take notes.
- If phoning for an interview, give a brief outline of your qualifications and experience relevant to the job and be prepared to answer questions (you may be screened over the phone before they decide to offer you an interview).
- If invited to attend an interview, make sure you record the date, time, exact address and directions for getting there. Ask about the format of the interview and the name and position of the interviewer(s).
- Thank them for their time.

Canvassing for jobs (cold calling) by phone

Employers receive many emails and phone calls from job seekers so you need to be clear about your intentions and not waste their time. This phone call not only demonstrates your initiative, but is also a chance for you to show how you might communicate with colleagues and clients of the employer’s organisation.

Your preparation should include some research on the organisation, the skills valued and how you think you might contribute.
- Introduce yourself and the reason for your call.
- Ask who you should speak to, their name and title and ask to be put through. If unavailable, ask when would be convenient to call back.
- When speaking to the correct person, give your name and some brief details about yourself. Try to avoid asking directly for a job – you should get them interested in what you have to offer first.
- Request a meeting to discuss opportunities (if appropriate).
- Offer to send your resume.
- Ask permission to call again later and thank them for their time.

Canvassing for jobs by email

You will need to phone first to ensure you know who to send the email to.
- Think carefully about what to put in the subject line to attract the reader’s attention so they will read it through.
- Introduce yourself, mentioning qualifications, skills and experience relevant to the needs of the organisation. Explain that you are seeking employment and why you have targeted this organisation.
- Attach a resume and ask if you can arrange for a brief interview.
- If the employer has nothing to offer, ask if they will keep you in mind for future positions and whether they can suggest other organisations or contacts.
- Thank them for their time.

Finally….Imagine that you are an employer – how would you like to be approached? What would impress you?

Further information

See the Resumes section on our Jobs and Career advice web pages

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Updated January 2018