

Think Before You Make That Follow-Up Call

***By: Christopher Watts, MBA
Community & Career Builder***

As a community and career building professional, I provide advice and guidance to job seekers on strategies to achieve job search success. "Follow-up" is an important execution of an effective job search strategy. I always ask mentees how they follow-up on jobs. The most common response is, "calling to check on the status of my application" and "calling to see if I am still being considered for the job."

First, "calling to check the status of my application" is not the best way to follow-up on an application submission. Companies may see this as being overaggressive, a turn-off. Companies receive many applications for open positions. Assuming business is fair and the number of applicants are high, some companies may not have the staff to contact every applicant and will probably only contact applicants who are being moved forward in the hiring process. Job seekers should be mindful that the hiring process is a private internal process and may not move as fast as the applicant may want.

An alternative to "calling to check the status of my application" is executing an effective job search strategy. Executing an effective job search strategy includes applying to jobs at companies who are hiring and not just accepting applications as well as to positions you are qualified for and are interested in. In addition, an effective job search strategy should include networking, applying online, and applying in person.

Next, "calling to check the status of my candidacy" for a job interviewed for is nice but can also be seen as aggressive, a turn-off. This method can send the message that the job seeker does not respect the time of or the established process of the employer when handling employment related issues.

An alternative to "calling to check the status of my candidacy" is to ask the interviewer(s) the following questions at the end of the interview: What is the next step in the hiring process? What is the anticipated start date for this position? How do you notify candidates if they have been selected or not? In addition, mail a hand written thank you card to the interviewer(s) within 24-hours after the interview. A hand written thank you card is a good gesture and can leave a good impression on the interviewer(s), showing a candidate's tactfulness and thoughtfulness.

I was speaking with Gregory Tall, MBA, PHR, who is the President/Founder of Successions Inc and Director of Human Resources at Robert Morris University of Illinois about this subject, and he stated:

I would address this one thing. I personally consider there to be a HUGE difference between someone who has simply applied for a position versus someone who I've actually had come here for an in-person interview. I agree with your position that no employer could personally call or respond to every applicant. It would take all day and we still wouldn't get close to reaching everyone.

However, we interview a much smaller pool of people and I think it's fair for the candidate to expect an employer to keep him/her apprised of developments. To that end, there is still a difference between a fair expectation and a sense of entitlement. I again agree with you that candidates have to let the process take its course as there are so many factors at play that the candidate couldn't begin to be aware of.

So here's my advice...job seekers should inquire during the interview if and when it is appropriate to follow-up and then follow the employer's direction. If the job seeker fails to ask during the interview, then it is best to stick with non-invasive contacts (email, letter). As for applicants, I personally would not encourage them to call for follow-up on an application because the calls generally don't go well for the applicant. I'll take some unsolicited calls from applicants as my schedule allows; however, I expect them to be VERY WELL PREPARED for the conversation since they initiated contact. They need to have thoroughly researched us, be able to articulate our mission statement, know the correct job title for the position of interest and be prepared to explain how their skills will be of benefit to the company. In other words, they'd better know forward and backward everything that's publicly available about that job.

Companies do not forget to contact candidates who they are interested in. If contact is not initiated by the company, more than likely the company has no interest and a phone call will not change their lack of interest. To avoid a lack of interest by companies, job seekers should apply to jobs they are qualified for, submit all requested materials at the time of application submission, and follow the application instructions.