**5 Keys to Maximize Your Online Applications**

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For the best job search results – in terms of quality of job and time to land – it is best to minimize the time you spend applying to jobs online. However, you may not want to eliminate online applications from your search completely, as there are benefits to applying when you are qualified for the position.

When you apply to a position on a company’s website, through LinkedIn, or via a trusted job board, you are showing the company you want to work there. In fact, many companies prefer "active" job seekers (those who apply to positions) ... see the bottom of the article for the link to the data!

The tips below from our Career Thought Leader Associates can help you stand out and improve the effectiveness of your online applications.

 **Be Strategic About Your Online Applications**

Do not apply for positions that you are obviously unqualified for. There is a big difference between “I’ve never done that but I’m sure I can do it” and “I have the required experience and have been successful at that."

While you might use networking to get your foot in the door in a new role, applying online will most likely be a frustrating experience. Make sure you have 75% of the qualifications for jobs when applying online.

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 **Limit Your Time Online & Maximize Each Application**

Limit the amount of time you spend looking for online postings by selecting a short list of sites to focus on, such as LinkedIn, Indeed, and specific sites for your line of work industry/professional organizations). Set up searches on sites so that you're emailed postings daily.

When applying use a cover letter that is specifically targeted to that company. Doing your homework and crafting a well thought out letter may help to get you noticed.

Tailor your resume to the job description. Align your resume language specifically to the job opening.

Don't assume that applying online is enough to catch attention. Work your network to see who might know someone at that company.

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 **Follow the Directions & Write a Cover Letter that Connects**

Make sure you clearly address the application instructions, which means addressing any key selection criteria in full. Many candidates skip this step and diminish their application. Use a Situation, Action Outcome answer framework and highlight how your personal values, knowledge, skills and experience meet the selection criteria. Be factual and positive and add supporting data where possible.

Include a highly customized cover letter and, for nonprofits in particular, lead with your passions and ensure they align with the nonprofit client and their mission. Research well and relate your track record, achievements, and skill set to the target client and the role you are applying to. Nonprofits place great emphasis on values and the demonstrated commitment of the candidate to their organization and mission. Highlight related key experience and skills under headings or in bullet points.

Don't forget to make sure your resume and cover letter highlight experience the job description requires, key word optimizing it will ensure a closer perceived fit. If in doubt use a key word generator, (for example word clouds), to make sure your application is highly relevant.

Adding related extracurricular activities and voluntary work on your LinkedIn profile will support your application and showcase your commitment to the mission and to nonprofit work in particular.

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 **Go Beyond Applying Online**

After you have uploaded your resume online (as the employer has asked), don’t sit back and relax. Conduct research to find the name of your potential boss/manager then send him/her a customized cover letter with your resume by regular mail.

In the cover letter, make sure to let the person know you followed the rules by applying online, but since you both know that great candidates sometimes get lost in the ATS, you decided to send a hard copy of your application package. People like to see their names in print, so you can bet that the envelope will be opened by the person to whom it is addressed.

This approach is one sure way to get eyeballs on your documents and get the attention of the decision maker.

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 **Activate Your Referral Network**

Whenever possible (like always!) locate a referral to submit your application materials.

Why will refer you when they don’t know you? It could be possible they want to have great coworkers, or they may be interested in expanding their network and make connections themselves for the future. Some referrals even receive a $ bonus!

The referral MUST submit the application materials for the applicant as their application materials go into a different part of the corporation’s applicant tracking (ATS) system.

If the job seeker submits their materials first, they go into the overall ATS system and the referral cannot help. The application materials once submitted cannot be changed to the referral part of the ATS system.

You may be the only person, or among only a few other applicants, in the referral part of the (ATS) system!

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