

How To Follow Up A Resume Submission

How soon is too soon to send an e-mail or make a phone call after a resume submission? When does persistence become annoyance?

You filled out the online application form. You pressed Submit or Send or Upload. Maybe you got a confirming e-mail, maybe not. Now comes the winter of your discontent as the clock ticks, hours turn to days or weeks, and your thumbs grow weary from twiddling.

If it's any consolation, etiquette experts get really miffed over candidates being left in the dark. "It really frustrates me that the people who put these [job postings onto online application systems] don't use a simple batch processing type of thing to let the person know when the e-mail comes in and what they can expect," said Peter Post, director of the Emily Post Institute and author of "The Etiquette Advantage in Business: Personal Skills for Professional Success." "The problem for the person who's applied, the question of whom to contact and when is you don't know what to expect. You're just wondering, 'What happens next?'"

Following up with the company after you apply is a critical step in the job search. According to Jill Gaynor, Staffing Consultant at John Leonard Employment Services, follow up "projects your level of interest and commitment to the position at hand." A call to the hiring manager can bring your name and resume to his/her attention, Gaynor said, and separate you from the hundreds of resumes still to be reviewed while showing you understand the importance of timely follow-through.

But how to follow up without being annoying or coming off as desperate? Ladders asked hiring managers, career coaches and the etiquette gurus at Emily Post for their advice on when to follow up after you've submitted your job application and resume and how to do so without committing a follow-up faux pas.

Watch the 'close date'

Bruce Powell, managing partner of human-resources consultant IQ PARTNERS Inc., advises job seekers to note the close date on the job posting. "Don't call or follow up before the posting has even closed," he said. If there is a posting deadline, Powell said, wait a week after the deadline to follow up to give the company a chance to sort through resumes and schedule interviews. If you follow up before this date or a day after the deadline, you come off looking impatient, he said. "A week (five business days) is a good balance between giving the company ample time to take first steps but not waiting so long that they're likely to be deep into the hiring process already."

No 'close date?'

If the job posting doesn't provide a clear close date, HR experts and career coaches generally agree that one week after applying is an appropriate amount of time to wait before you follow up. But practice prudence, Powell said. He suggested job seekers avoid coming on too strong when they call or write. For example, don't ask why you haven't been called yet. Instead, keep the tone of the conversation or e-mail light and friendly, and, if you can, slip in a few questions and have a bit of a conversation if it seems appropriate.

“Take every opportunity to make an impression and get remembered,” Powell said. “This is a bit of a feeling-out process, though; if the person sounds rushed or is giving you one-word answers, then don’t hold them up.”

What to ask when/if you call or write

According to Powell and Heather Krasna, a career services professional and author of “Jobs That Matter: Find a Stable, Fulfilling Career in Public Service,” good questions to ask on a follow-up call or e-mail might include:

- Have any decisions been made yet?
- Is it OK to follow up in another week if you haven’t heard anything yet?
- What’s the time frame for the job-requisition process?
- What’s the time frame for the hiring process?
- What technical qualifications is the company seeking?

How not to be annoying, part 1: No constant calling

If the job posting doesn’t stipulate “no calls,” recruiter Lorne Epstein welcomes calls, given that it shows interest and a genuine desire to get the job. But ah, the annoying factor: He says one call is good enough, and the caller should definitely ask how to follow up before doing it again.

“Annoying happens when someone calls a couple of times a week or every week and I have made it clear there is no news or nothing to tell them,” said Epstein, founder of InSide Job on Facebook. “Many companies can be slow with hiring, and with vacations and holidays the process can take months. Once I tell you to stop calling, stop or I will make your resume go away.”

How not to be annoying, part 2: No unwanted calls

Calling to follow up in itself can lift your resume to the top of the pile, Krasna said, given how few people take the time to call about jobs they’ve applied for.

In such a case, be careful of calling to find a person’s name to follow up with, Post recommends. “One of the things you want to show us is that you know how to follow directions. Just be careful of that stuff. Read the fine print.”

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