

# A Guide to Applying for a Position.

Prepared by





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## **1 APPLYING FOR A NEW JOB.**

Many people find the process of applying for a new job daunting.

Even some of the best sales people find ‘selling themselves’ problematic. When applying for a new job you are in effect ‘selling yourself’ and succinctly demonstrating exactly how you meet the job specifications.

We trust this guide will assist you in preparing your application so the organisation has the required information to select the best person for the position which could be you.

### **1.1 APPLYING FOR A POSITION**

#### **Is this Position for You?**

In applying for a position, you must be able to show that you meet the essential criteria. The advertisement will generally state that there is a position description available, make sure you obtain a copy of this position description. Before preparing your application, check the essential criteria described in the advertisement and/or position description to make sure:

1. You are suited to the position and eligible to apply, and
2. This is a position you are genuinely interested in.

#### **How to Prepare an Application.**

When you have ascertained that you have met all of the essential selection criteria and you are genuinely interested in the position your next step is to prepare your application.

## **2 COVERING LETTER**

Your application should include a covering letter. The covering letter is an introduction to your application and should state:

- The position that you are applying for including the exact position title and any reference numbers etc. together with your name, address and contact number
- Briefly state why you are applying and therefore why you should be selected for an interview
- A statement to say what attachments you are including such as your Curriculum Vitae (CV)
- Conclude with a statement about what you would like to happen such as your desire to be granted an interview
- Sign the letter

In preparing a draft of this letter you will be preparing an initial framework for your application. This is why it is important to prepare the Covering Letter as the first item.



## 3 THE APPLICATION

### 3.1 Resume/Curriculum Vitae

Your Resume should include:

- Personal Details - Name, Address, Telephone Contact Number etc
- Your Education and Training achievements and any current studies
- Membership of any Professional Associations
- A summary of your Work History beginning with your most recent position. Include starting and finishing dates, the Company and/or department, your position title and briefly list your responsibilities and most importantly your key achievements in the role
- List any Other Activities that you have undertaken outside of work which are relevant to the position that you are applying for e.g. club official roles, voluntary organisation involvement, public speaking
- Hobbies and Interests

### 3.2 Critical Competencies

Your selection for interview will depend on your demonstrating that you meet the critical competencies and specifications for the role and that you have the appropriate qualifications and experience.

When addressing the Critical Competencies:

- Treat each competency separately. Use each competency as a heading and provide your statement underneath that heading
- Provide a brief statement that demonstrates your experience, knowledge and application relating to the particular competency. The length of your statement for each competency is dependent on the position you are applying for and the amount of relevant information you can provide. As a guideline, one (1) or two (2) paragraphs should be sufficient for the most critical competencies. You should provide specific examples in your statement to back up your claims rather than theory or generalities. Dot points are ideal for listing events or achievements which demonstrate the competence
- Incorporate details of any activities you have undertaken outside of work which are relevant to the application

Professional organisations can compile your Resume / Curriculum Vitae, assist with the presentation and even help you address the critical competencies. However they cannot attend the interview with you, so the more time you spend thinking about and working on the application the better prepared you will be for the interview.



### 3.3 Referees

While written references can be submitted, more credence is given to referees contacted after you submit your application. In some cases the job description will contain a reference format to be completed by your referee and forwarded directly to the organisation.

- Generally, applicants should nominate three (3) referees in support of their application. These referees should be able to comment on your work experience and competence in relation to the selection criteria.
- Referees should be contacted for approval before listing them in your application.
- Provide names, relationship to you (i.e. Supervisor), current position (or retired), company, daytime telephone numbers and email addresses for each referee.
- We understand you may not wish the organisation to contact a current work referee initially. If this is the case please note this clearly against the referees details e.g. current supervisor, please do not contact until after interview.

### 3.4 Application Presentation

The presentation of your application is important as it provides the first impression and is usually the only material on which short listing can be undertaken. Poorly presented, disorganised applications or applications with insufficient detail will hinder your chances.

- Applications should be submitted in type written format. If you are unable to access a word processor you may submit a neat handwritten application. The layout, spelling, punctuation and grammar should be checked carefully.
- Do not attach any information that is not relevant to the position to which you are applying. For example, general qualification certificates or degrees can be listed and proof of these documents can be viewed at the interview or certified copies provided prior to appointment.
- Clip the letter and application together. If you submit your application bound or fixed into plastic or cardboard folders you should also provide an unbound copy, as your application may need to be photocopied for distribution to the interview panel.
- Number the pages of your application and ideally use your name and contact details in the footer
- The application package may include:
  - Covering letter
  - Application:
    - Curriculum Vitae
    - Statement demonstrating the critical competencies
    - Referees



### **3.5 Application Submission**

You must submit your application in accordance with the required criteria. In most cases you will be able to submit your application by hand delivery, post, fax or email. Applications must arrive by the closing date and time or they may be deemed late and not included. If you cannot get an application in on time discuss it with the contact person as an initial expression of interest may be considered in some circumstances.

Address the application exactly as requested in the advertisement, remember there may be advertisements for more than one position.

## **4 THE INTERVIEW**

### **4.1 The Interview Panel**

A panel, usually about three (3) people, will conduct the interview. The interview questions will relate to the selection criteria for the position and usually the same base questions will be asked of each person interviewed for the position.

### **4.2 Prepare Yourself for the Interview**

- Be aware of what the position involves. This information will be contained in the position description and you will need to demonstrate a good understanding of the requirements of this position. Do your own research if necessary.
- Find out as much information on the organisation as you can. The internet is a good place to start. If you are applying for a senior role, where possible, obtain copies of annual reports and familiarise yourself with relevant content.
- Focus on the critical competencies and think of examples of situations where you have applied these in other jobs, outside interests etc.
- Understand the duties and responsibilities of the position and how you would carry them out. Think of any problems you may encounter and how you would resolve them e.g. a different computer system.
- If the position has a supervisory role, think about your responsibilities as a supervisor/manager as well as the “technical” aspects of the position.
- If you have any relevant reports or other work that will provide examples of your suitability for the position, you could prepare it for presentation at the interview. This must be brief as a panel cannot be expected to read a report or even part of a report during an interview e.g. ‘This report (show to the panel) was a study I did for ABC Company to establish a purchasing policy for raw materials’.
- Take a pencil and notepaper with you to the interview in case you want to make notes, say a reminder for a question later in the interview. Only make notes if absolutely necessary as it will distract you from the interview at hand.
- Prepare a few questions that you may wish to ask the panel about the organisation and/or the job.



### 4.3 Attendance at the Interview

If you are invited to an interview you have obviously impressed the selection panel with your application. The interview is an opportunity to reinforce this impression.

- Ensure you know how to get to where the interview is to be held and how long it will take.
- Dress appropriately for the position. If the position is, say a Public Relations position your dress would need to be very professional. If the position is a more informal position the dress should reflect what you would normally wear to work if you had this position or neat casual clothes in the case of an operator or trade position.
- If it is not possible for you to attend the interview at the nominated date or time, talk to the contact person. It may be possible to alter the date and time of the interview. Remember, it is often challenging to get the interview panel together and they will appreciate your efforts to attend at the allocated time wherever possible.
- Be on time. 10 minutes ahead of schedule is fine, late is unacceptable and too early can be an embarrassment as other applicants may still be waiting.
- Ensure that you are comfortable when you enter for the interview – ask for directions to the bathroom before the interview time if you require it.
- It is alright to ask for a glass of water before or even during the interview if you need it.
- There are many hints on getting over nervousness but that is something you have to address. A small mint such as Tic Tac can help some people who suffer with a dry mouth – but try it first!

### 4.4 The Interview

When you enter the interview room you will be introduced to the panel and directed to a seat. The introductions may give you an indication of the panel member's specific interests. For example, the IT Manager is obviously going to be interested in your systems competence while the HR Manager is likely to have a broader interest in behavioural aspects.

- To assist you, if you are nervous, sit firmly in the chair so you are comfortable and well supported.
- You may know the members of the interview panel and they may know you. However do not assume that they know about your suitability for the position. Answer the questions as if they were largely unknown to you. You may ask how much detail they want e.g. do you want me to give you more detail?
- Listen to the question carefully and answer the question asked. If you do not understand a question ask for clarification or for the panel member to repeat the question before providing a reply. The interview panel are looking for a demonstration of the competencies related to the question. Answering the wrong question is generally a waste of time and can be damaging.



- Give direct answers, theory is fine but practical examples and experience is a definite demonstration of competence.
- If you have a question or want to clarify or stress any point, briefly note it down for the end of the interview.
- If you have prepared well you will have some examples of competency demonstration. Wait for the right time to use these. You will probably only get to use a few of them.
- Honesty is important. The panel members can often detect when you are stretching the truth and may embarrass you if they pursue more detail and depth. They respect honest answers e.g. No, I do not have specific experience but I have work in a XXX situation that has similar technology.
- Feel free to ask questions but at the right time. You will generally be given time at the end of the interview to ask questions. However, it may be necessary during the interview to ask clarification questions. It is not necessary to ask questions. No questions are better than irrelevant or annoying questions.
- The interview panel will be recording your response and making notes. This should not distract you from answering. Direct your responses to, firstly the panel, and secondly, a panel member, usually the one that asked the question.
- Be aware of body language. For example, if a panel member looks as if they are “unsure” or “frowning” see if you can clarify your answer for them, even ask; Has that answered the question or do you want more clarification?
- If you have not already been told, ask what the next steps in the process are.
- If you have referees that are your current employer, advise the panel on how you want these handled.
- At the completion of the interview be respectful and thank the panel. Try not to show any disappointment or disapproval, as generally you will not know how the interview panel has rated you. More searching questions could be an attempt to obtain a greater understanding of your level of competence and potential.

## **5 SELECTION AND REJECTION**

Depending on the organisation, the final short listed candidates may need to undergo some competency or psychological assessments. This will be used to support your claim for the job and provides a behavioural profile derived from your response to a number of questions.

If you are successful you will be notified by telephone and/or in writing. This notification may be a simple offer or it may be a letter to invite you in to discuss aspects of your contract. Respond to these letters immediately.



If you are not offered the position then you should also be notified in writing. It is a good idea to call and seek feedback on your application and interview from the selection panel convenor. This will help you next time; you never know another position may emerge in the near future.

We hope this will assist you in applying for to position and wish you all the best in preparing your application.