

Your Guide to Applications

Put your best foot forward with every application with the help of this step-by-step application guide.



 Workbook

The CAREER AGENCY

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Outplacement Australia

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thecareeragency.com.au

Your Complete Guide to Applying for a Job

You have your résumé and LinkedIn profile ready. You've spotted a great role. What next?

This guide is designed to help you maximise your chances of winning the hirer's attention and making the shortlist.

Just taking some quick but important steps before applying, can make a big difference to your odds of winning an interview spot.

In this guide, you will learn:

- ☑ how technology is altering recruitment.
- ☑ the latest on ATS hiring systems.
- ☑ shortcuts to the hirer's desk.
- ☑ how to read and decode the job advertisement.
- ☑ tips for working out if it's worth your time applying.
- ☑ how to tailor your résumé for keyword optimisation.
- ☑ an easy formula for increasing cover letter impact.
- ☑ useful job board strategies.
- ☑ new technologies to improve your application odds.
- ☑ important steps for protecting yourself from scammers.
- ☑ how to follow up if you haven't heard back.

With some roles attracting hundreds of applicants, the simple steps in this guide will help you create a standout application that will give you a competitive edge and your best shot at securing your name on their shortlist.

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Hiring meets technology

Behind the Curtain of High-tech Hiring

Like so many aspects of industry, technology has dramatically impacted the HR and recruitment sector. New innovations have changed how hirers source, screen and shortlist. In the past hirers posted a vacancy, sifted through the pile of applicants, and chose the best response. Today, hiring systems streamline much of this work.

Experts anticipate technology and AI will transform recruitment even further. Already we are seeing:

- **automated sourcing tools to find potential passive applicants** from social media sites, databases, and the open web.
- **smart writing tools** to help HR improve job advertisement content and email approaches to increase success rates.
- **Q&A Chat-bots** who can respond to applicant's enquiries in a conversational manner, schedule interviews, and perform early screening.
- **Analysis tools** to help with candidate job matching.
- **AI interview systems and screening tools** that analyse candidate responses to assess their skills, traits and suitability and to reduce hiring bias.
- **Games and machine learning** to screen capability of candidates in key areas of employability skills.

The vast majority of hirers are not using AI solutions yet, BUT there is one tool that hirers use regularly that you need to know about - Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS).

Applicant Tracking Systems help organisations manage the hiring process. This includes automating a large amount of the manual tasks.

98% of Fortune 500 companies use ATS.

It's important that your résumé works well in these systems.

Technology meets your resume.

What is an ATS?

ATS are systems that can help the hirer with all aspects of hiring including sourcing, screening, engaging, interviewing, candidate relationship management, analytics and on-boarding.

These systems are simply tools to improve hiring processes. **A key part of ATS functionality is helping hirers find, screen and assess your suitability for the role. Often this is through screening of your résumé content and online application responses against set criteria and filters.**

Optimising your résumé content for ATS can dramatically improve your chances of being shortlisted.

With online jobs sometimes receiving hundreds of applications, an ATS speeds up the hiring process for recruiters. However, no system is perfect and these programs have limitations. Even strong candidates can be disadvantaged through simple formatting issues or content limitations.

It's important to note that even hirers who use ATS to screen your resume content into their system, will still often view your original resume file if needed. The aim is simply to make sure your resume works well in these systems and to improve your visibility in relevant searches.

Optimising your résumé for ATS can help hirers find you in their system, ensures your information be read cleanly, and avoids what recruiters refer to as the 'résumé black hole'.

02

Actions

With a good understanding of the market
now is the time to begin applying

The application process – analysing the job post.

Step 2 – How to Decode the Job Post

The job ad tells you a LOT. Knowing how to read between the lines for insights and intel is invaluable.

Decoding the job post is useful for both putting your application together, and deciding if it fits your circumstances and needs.

YOUR STEPS

Most job listings are broken into common sections. These all contain important information. Read through these sections to identify vital details.

1. **Look at the job title – note the exact words used.** Most hirers will optimise their title with relevant keywords. For example, Senior B2B Sales Manager. The job title will also give you indication as to the level of seniority of the role, but you should also review the duties section to check the job title really reflects the level of the tasks.

2. **Find the company information** - this is often labelled 'About Us.' This background information highlights key points they want to communicate to you about their business. **Look for corporate values** as these are often important clues as to your fit for their business. The tone and how they describe the business can also give you a sense of the company culture. Finally **check the company is real (see page 12 for details on identifying job scammers).**

3. **Find the role details** – this outlines the job focus and main tasks. **Note the first few points. Hirers will often list what they see as the most important tasks first. Note any repetition of key words.**

• Are you a natural administrator who loves keeping things on track?
• Do you enjoy making a difference to others?
• Are you looking for a flexible role with a genuinely supportive team?

We are looking for the right person to join our business.

FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION TEAM LEADER

We are a national business consultancy and we specialise in helping organisations enhance their financial operations.

Our finance office team are a pivotal part of our process.

You will assist our financial consultants with administration and coordination including tracking and monitoring consultant project milestones, team liaison and record keeping.

This is a multi-faceted role that requires a skilled leader that can balance multiple tasks.

Skills and Experience

- Tertiary qualification in financial or business discipline
- Experience managing and leading teams
- Background knowledge of business and financial administration
- Well-developed communication skills including the ability to deal with confidential and sensitive communications
- Competent use of Microsoft Office and MYOB
- Excellent planning, problem solving, and organisational skills

As a values-based organisation we are looking for someone who is client focused and goes out of their way to help (this matters to us). You will be a natural administrator and able to prioritise and manage tasks to make sure things get done efficiently and nothing is missed.

Employee Benefits

We offer a range of employee benefits including health and well-being programs, flexible working conditions, Employee assistance program and an active Employee social club. There will be some remote work from home and flexibility around days and hours, with school hours an option.

If you tick all the boxes above and the role sounds like it's what you're looking for, please send your resume and an application letter telling us why you'd be the perfect fit.

4. **Search for the requirements section** – this will outline the **key skills, experience and credentials** they are looking for in a candidate. **Study these closely. They are critical points to feature in your resume. Check out ‘Must Have’ requirements’.** Words like "essential", "you need" "you will have", "necessary", "required" or "mandatory" may be indicators of non-negotiable requirements. If you don't have any of these, you may not be considered by the hirer and it may be worth deciding if you still want to apply.

Preferred skills are more flexible. These may be described as "ideal", or "desired". If you don't have all of these that's ok. This is more of a hirer wish list.

Also, **look at years of experience required and credentials.** This may give you clues as to whether you would be considered over or underqualified.

Make a note of the exact words used in this section, any abbreviations and the frequency of certain words. These indicate potential important keywords. We'll cover these more in Step 6.

5. **Benefits** – this is the employer's chance to get you interested in working with them through the perks and benefits they offer.

6. **Contacts and How to Apply** – this provides details on the application steps. **Note any special instructions or information/documents they are requesting.** This is also where to find the details of the person to contact for more information.

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If you tick all the boxes above and the role sounds like it's what you're looking for, please send your resume and an application letter telling us why you'd be the perfect fit.

The application process - avoiding job scams.

Step 3 – Protect Yourself

As with anything online, you should be aware of potential scams. If a job pops up out of nowhere, involves any costs, asks for highly personal information, or seems too good to be true – be wary.

If in doubt, research the company before applying.

Things to be wary of in job advertisements:

- unsolicited emails or job offers that don't address you personally or come from people or companies you haven't applied to.
- job offers made without an interview.
- request for a payment to process your application or training investment before you can start the job.
- promises of big money for just a few hours of work (particularly work from home).
- job advertisements that contain poor spelling, grammar, and punctuation.
- vague descriptions with no company name, or a company name or url that is similar but slightly different to the real company.
- advertisements with links to websites that require you to enter personal details.

During the application process, never give personal information such as bank or credit card details, passwords, tax file number, or copies of your passport and driver's licence. **If asked to set up a password on their site, use a unique password, not used for other sites.**

YOUR STEPS

1. **Research the company and website and don't provide any information until you are satisfied.**
2. Report any scams to Australian Cyber Security Centre or the ACCC
<https://www.scamwatch.gov.au/report-a-scam>.

The application process – other channels of hiring

Step 4 – Can You Bypass the Job Board?

Hirers now use a range of channels to find candidates, not just job boards. These may include social media, talent hubs, employee referrals, and their own career sites, to proactively source suitable candidates for available roles.

Many of these paths can improve your visibility with the hirer and give you the added advantage of no longer being an anonymous candidate.

One of hirer's most favoured approaches for finding talent is via referrals. These candidates are often looked upon favourably during the screening process.

YOUR STEPS

1. Before you apply, explore your network to see if you know anyone connected to the business you are interested in. LinkedIn can be a great tool for this.
2. If you know someone well enough – it might be appropriate to call them. This will enable you to find out more about the company and role.
3. **Check with the person you know at the business to find out if there is an employee referral system in place.** If they do have a referral system, and your contact is willing to put your name forward, this warm introduction can give you an advantage.
4. If they don't, see if they will provide you with an endorsement or testimonial on LinkedIn. Many hirers will view your LinkedIn profile during the screening process.
5. Check out any talent community they may have through visiting their career page on their web site.
6. It's also helpful to check out their business on Glassdoor. This is great to learn more about the business, its priorities and culture. This type of information is invaluable when customising your application.

The application process – job board tips.

Step 5 - No bypass? Maximise Your Odds!

If you can't get your application onto the hirer's desk via an alternative method like an employee referral program, optimise your application for success on the job board.

Job boards are high volume tools that attract a lot of applicants. **The most important tip is to apply within a reasonable timeframe but always tailor your application first.**

A degree of speed is important as many hirers will simply pull the advertisement when they reach a quota of applicants. **The trick is to make sure you see the post early as this will allow you time to respond properly.**

YOUR STEPS

1. Set up alerts on job boards and check them regularly.
2. When you find a good opportunity, tailor your resume, and apply as soon as you reasonably can.
3. If you are asked to log into a hirer's application system as part of the process, follow the instructions precisely. **Skipping any mandatory questions may lead to your application being voided. Put time into answering any online application questions properly as these may be designed to screen you out or screen you in based on your responses.**
4. If your résumé is uploaded into a system that parses your content into fields, make sure to check each field to ensure the information has come through accurately and edit as appropriate.
5. Follow all instructions for the types of file to use. If in doubt, stick with a Word file.
6. Always send an application letter unless they specifically request you don't.

The application process – how to tailor your resume.

Step 6 – Optimise Your Resume

Today, even the strongest résumé will perform poorly if you don't customise it for the role. The first stage of every hiring process is screening. This is all about a rapid initial review to see if you meet their brief.

Taking the time to customise your résumé to show your fit for their specific needs is the best advantage you can give yourself.

This is even more the case if the hirer is using an ATS. These systems are simply automating what a hirer will do, which is to assess your application against the specifications of this role.

If a hirer is using an ATS to find or screen suitable candidates, the important thing to realise about these systems is they are often looking for specific words or content.

For example, if the hirer programs the system to look for resumes that use the word <not-for-profit>, the phrase <non-profit> may not be picked up by an ATS.

The job ad provides your best clues for what words and criteria a hirer or ATS may be searching for.

YOUR STEPS

1. Analyse the advertisement for the job requirements including hard skills, soft skills, descriptive traits and terminology, and make a list of keywords.
2. Write down the exact phrases used to ensure an ATS matches them.
3. From your list, eliminate any ones you don't have. You should never include these. The goal is simply to feature your relevant skills to make it easy for the hirer to see.
4. Highlight important skills or criteria that come up early in the job post, or words that appear multiple times. These are likely important and should feature prominently in the experience section of your resume.
5. Add any additional skills you have uncovered as important through your own investigations (speaking to the recruiter/reading annual report, website etc.).

Circle all important words in the job advertisement and make a list. Eliminate any non-suitable words, and highlight regularly repeated words. Pay close attention to hard skills.

Senior Procurement Manager

The Acme Group started over 10 years ago and is now a leading construction specialist to government.

About the Opportunity:

We are looking for a Senior Procurement Manager to develop, implement, and manage the procurement strategies nationally for the business and to drive our supply chain function.

Responsibilities include:

- Drive corporate procurement and supply chain management strategies, including negotiation and management of contracts.
- Devise plans to manage risks and optimise compliance with regulatory requirements .
- Preparation and negotiation of commercial agreements.
- Analyse financial data to identify opportunities for cost savings
- Work as a conduit between Procurement and Sales to improve our service offering.
- Manage supplier contracts and tender processes for large government supply arrangements

To be successful in this role you will need:

- Degree or tertiary qualification in a Supply Chain / Logistics / Business Management, or a related field.
- Minimum 5 year's experience in a supply or procurement management role preferably in the commercial construction or government sectors
- Proven ability to negotiate contracts with suppliers, partners, and or subcontractors.
- Ability to build a network of suppliers.
- Ability to work under tight deadlines & in a high-pressured environment

POSSIBLE KEYWORDS

Senior Procurement Manager, Procurement Strategies, Procurement Management, Supply Chain Management function, Corporate Procurement, Negotiation, Management of Contracts, Commercial Agreements, Commercial Construction, Government Supply Arrangements, Indirect Purchasing, Supplier Management, Supply Chain Management Strategies, Logistics, Business Management, Analyse Financial Data, Regulatory Requirements, Procurement Strategies, Corporate Procurement, Compliance, Sales, Network of Suppliers, Manage risks, Optimise compliance, Supplier Contracts, Tender Processes, Negotiate contracts, partners, subcontractors, Tight deadlines, High-pressured environment

The application process – optimise your opener.

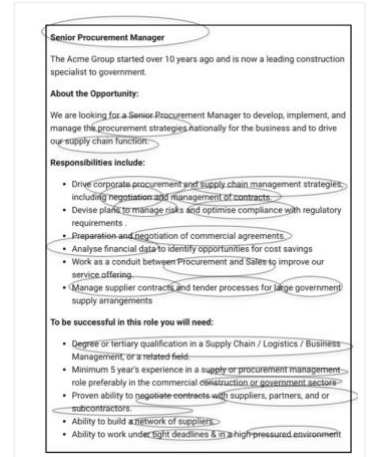
Step 7 - Edit Your Opener

Your opener is the hirer’s introduction to you. This is your chance to pitch the experience and skills that you have that make you a fit for their role.

Edit your headline and professional summary to feature your relevant skills and experience in alignment with their job post and keywords.

YOUR STEPS

1. Look at the position title on the job ad. If your background matches their position title use this exact wording as your headline, e.g. Change ‘Supply Chain Manager’ to ‘Senior Procurement Manager’.
2. Adjust the words in your professional summary to match their priorities and terminology (only if it is an accurate reflection of your background). See before and after example below.



Suburb NSW 2000 | Mobile: 0400 000 000 | Email: jane@smith.com | LinkedIn:/jane-smith

Jane Smith SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGER

Contributed to cost control, supply chain optimisation and the profitability of leading Australian companies across government and commercial sectors.

Integral and trusted advisor across sourcing and supply. Recognised leader and mentor, nurturing talent, championing diversity and inclusion, and building high-performance teams.



Suburb NSW 2000 | Mobile: 0400 000 000 | Email: jane@smith.com | LinkedIn:/jane-smith

Jane Smith <SENIOR PROCUREMENT MANAGER>

Contributed to the <procurement strategies>, supply chain optimisation and the profitability of leading Australian companies across government and commercial sectors.

Senior advisor to leadership teams on <supply chain management functions> including sourcing, <logistics> and supply. Recognised leader and mentor, nurturing talent, championing diversity and inclusion, and building high-performance teams.

The application process – optimise your skills

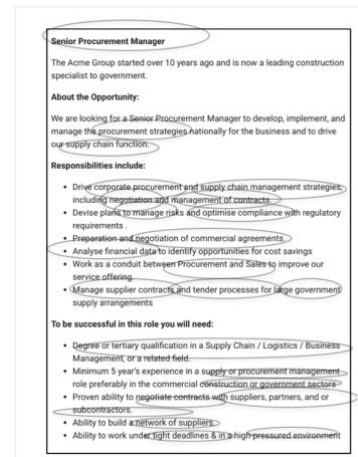
Step 8 - Edit Your Key Skills

Your Key Skills or Expertise section lists your relevant hard and soft skills. This is an easy to skim section for both the hirer and technology to get an overview of your skills.

Edit this section to align with their keywords. Again, only include skills that are accurate and align with your background. (The aim is to show your fit NOT keyword stuff).

YOUR STEPS

1. Add any skills you have that are relevant to this role.
2. Check you have reflected the exact terminology or phrasing used in the job advertisement.
3. Delete any unnecessary skills.



Tailoring this section shows the recruiter how your skills will best benefit them.

KEY EXPERTISE

Supplier Relationship Management | Contractual Negotiations | Data Analytics & Forecasting | Stakeholder Management | Bids and Tender | Strategic planning and implementation | Leadership, management and team development | Project Management | Category Specialist | Sourcing & Data Analytics | Customer Experience | Market Analysis | Mentoring | Diversity and Ethical Practices



KEY EXPERTISE

Procurement Strategies | Supplier Relationship Management | Contractual Negotiations and Commercial Agreements | Financial Data Analytics & Forecasting | Stakeholder Management | Bids and Tender Processes | Strategic planning and implementation | Leadership and team development | Project Management | Compliance | Sourcing & Data Analytics | Customer Experience | Market Analysis | Mentoring | Regulatory Requirements | Supply Chain Management Strategy

The application process – optimise your experience.

Step 9 – Edit Your Experience

Hirers want evidence of your success and experience.

Simply listing your skills in the Key Skills section doesn't show the hirer how you've used them successfully.

The best advantage you can give yourself is to edit your experience section to feature your successful use of the skills they are seeking.

For example, stating '*excellent customer service skills*' in your opener, doesn't demonstrate your ability as well as an achievement that states:

- Delivered responsive service and consistently met service targets. Routinely received 95% and above in customer satisfaction ratings.

YOUR STEPS

1. Look at the relevant hard and soft skills identified in the job post. Identify the most important ones.
2. Check your experience section **demonstrates** these skills.
3. **Use achievement statements with metrics** wherever possible to show your success with the skill.

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To be successful in this role you will need:

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- Minimum 5 year's experience in a supply or procurement management role preferably in the commercial construction or government sectors.
- Proven ability to negotiate contracts with suppliers, partners, and or subcontractors.
- Ability to build a network of suppliers.
- Ability to work under tight deadlines & in a high pressured environment.

4. Tailor the wording to subtly reflect their specific chosen terminology. E.g. change OH&S to Occupational Health & Safety.
5. Re-order important skills/achievements to feature more prominently. You can add a keyword heading to make these skills stand out (see below).
6. Reduce emphasis on non-relevant parts and replace with content featuring relevant skills.

PROFESSIONAL HISTORY

Supply Chain Manager, ACME CONSTRUCTION, QLD

3/2019 to 11/2020

New York based construction business specialising in roadworks projects.

Recruited to head ACME'S supply function with a focus on optimising margin and profitability of complex commercial and government projects. Led 5-member procurement team and played an integral role in cost management and supply negotiations for new builds and townhouse developments. Bid Manager and key support for operational projects.

- **Financial Data Analysis:** Shaved more than 20% from 2018 annual project cost base through review and renegotiation of more than 50 commercial agreements and supplier contracts to include volume discounts.
- **Procurement Management:** Increased process discipline in the supply chain management function enhanced accuracy of project time, materials, or equipment project. Reduced supply delays up to 20% on key lines.



Bullet point headings can be a good way of featuring relevant skills



Tailor the wording to reflect their terminology

Tip: Hirers want metrics - *“A résumé that includes quantitative information always stands out because a person is willing to put hard numbers into their description of success.”*

Jobvite The Summer to Evolve Recruiter Skills Sessions: Candidate Screening Best Practices

The application process – finalising your résumé file.

Step 10 – Check Your Résumé File

Once you have tailored your resume, **make sure to check any final instructions on the job post.** These are often on the bottom of the advertisement or during the upload process.

YOUR STEPS

1. **Check their preferred file type** for your resume. This may be a Word or PDF file. **Unless specified always use an ATS-suitable Word file.**
2. Double check your résumé is ATS-suitable in its formatting (see format tips box below).
3. **Save the file using your name and the title of the position you are applying for.**

Format tips for ATS

- Many ATS can't read headers & footers, so don't put contact or key information in them.
- Avoid placing any key content in tables, text boxes, graphs, or columns.
- Avoid hyperlinks.
- Include months and years in your employment dates and be consistent with the formatting.
- Bold, shading and lines are safe to use in resumes.
- Microsoft Word is the safest format to use, although some hirers may request PDF files.
- Avoid unusual or fancy fonts.
- Use common headings like Work History, Key Skills, Education.
- Avoid functional resumes as many systems are searching for employment dates. List your previous experience from most recent to oldest.
- Use keywords and phrases from the job advertisement.

The application process – crafting your letter

Step 11 – Make the Application Count

It's not always mandatory to send an application letter but it's a lost opportunity if you don't! A great cover letter gives you an opportunity to connect with the hirer in way your résumé can't.

The only occasion not to send one would be if they state they don't want one.

YOUR STEPS

1. Check any specific instructions regarding length or criteria.
2. Collect as much information as you can on the organisation (history, culture, values, markets), and the role (focus, responsibilities, priorities).
3. Determine the skills, traits and experiences you can promote in line with their ideal candidate description. Highlight important keywords to include in your letter.
4. Source the name and contact details for the person you need to address the letter to, and fill in the address details.
5. Include a reference line at the top of the letter that includes the job you are applying for and its reference number, if there is one.
6. Personalise the greeting with the name of the hirer. If you can't find a name, address the letter *Dear <Company Name> Hiring Team*.
7. Open your letter with something interesting that will catch their eye and explains why you are applying, or why you like their business.
8. Next write one brief paragraph that summarises your fit for their needs.
9. Follow this with a paragraph or two that outlines your key skills or qualifications in line with their ideal candidate requirements. Highlight a few achievements or personal selling points. Use metrics if you can. 'I increased revenue' is not nearly as impactful as - 'Through new sales campaigns, I grew revenues 20% within six months for Acme.'
10. Add any final points about why you are a perfect fit for the organisation's culture, or other special skills and experience you bring, and close the letter by reinforcing that you are ready for the challenge and inviting contact.
11. Reread your letter and check you have included all important criteria and keywords, and triple check your spelling and grammar.

THIS IS GENERAL ADVICE ONLY. HOW YOU CREATE YOUR LETTER SHOULD ALIGN WITH THE SPECIFICATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS OF THE SPECIFIC APPLICATION.

Ph: 0000 000 000 | E: sarahs@email.com | Redland Bay QLD 4165

SARAH SMITH

1st October 2020



Insert the current date

Mr. John Jones

Hiring Manager

Energy Care

johnjones@energycare.com.au



Insert the hiring manager's name and contact details

Ref: Customer Service Supervisor role - Job Vacancy 222



Insert the job details

Dear Mr Jones,



Address it to the hirer's name. If you can't find this out, use "Dear Hiring Team"

Your genuine commitment to making your customers happy came through clearly when I read your job advertisement, and immediately I knew Energy Care was an organisation I wanted to be a part of. My years of experience in provide **passionate, professional and innovative customer service**, makes me a perfect candidate for this role.



Open with something interesting like why you are applying for the role

When you read my resume, you'll see I've been in frontline leadership roles for the last ten years, creating teams that understand how to deliver **outstanding service and exceed customer expectations**.



Explain why you are a fit for the role

My first role as a client service representative taught me how to **connect personally** with a broad cross section of the community, adapting to the individual needs of the client so they felt **heard and understood**. I regularly received the **highest client satisfaction ratings** in the role.



Highlight relevant experience or skills that makes you suitable to their needs

This led to me being promoted into leadership positions where I took the same philosophy of fostering connections to guide my staff. As the manager of 15 service staff with Acme's Brisbane Call Centre, my team achieved **20% more conversions** than any other team state-wide.



Feature a few past achievements or successes to reinforce your value

In addition to my service and leadership skills, my strengths also include **problem-solving and innovation**, as demonstrated by the online sales program I created with House & GardenWare during the COVID pandemic. The program moved their retail business online within 2 weeks, **enabling sales and customer continuity** and speeding up the sales process to **improve revenue by 30% within 1 month**.



Add any last important points you want them to know

I am confident that a personal meeting would allow me to better understand your business and customer needs, and further show how my contribution to Energy Care will be beneficial. Thank you for your consideration.



Finish confidently and invite them to contact you

Yours sincerely

Sarah Smith

Sarah Smith

The application process –extra tools for help

Step 12 –Résumé Tools (optional)

Just as technology has evolved to deliver solutions to help hirers, there are now new technologies and sites on the market to assist jobseekers too.

Jobscan and **Skillsyncer** are just two of the tools that have emerged on the market, aimed at assisting jobseekers with optimising their résumé for ATS.

Both work by comparing your résumé content with the content of the job advertisement.

YOUR STEPS

1. You copy and paste the job post in one field and your résumé in another.
2. The system scans your application and identifies any missing keywords or issues with your resume
3. Edit your résumé with missing words. You are seeking a score of 80%.

The technologies then scan each file and provide feedback, scores, and tips to help you refine your résumé in alignment with identified keywords including soft and hard skills.

It's important to note that no tool is fool proof, but they can be useful for identifying potential keywords you may have missed. Both tools have limited free memberships and paid memberships.

Be aware that these tools are not designed for the Australian job market, so some of the information on spelling, page length, and paper sizing, may differ. However, they can still be useful for identifying any important missed keywords.

The application process – those last important steps

Step 13 – Proof Absolutely Everything

Whilst most good hirers wouldn't eliminate a quality candidate for a minor typo, repeated errors in important areas can be a quick reason to reject an applicant.

Be extra careful with proofreading to pick up any grammar, typo, and spelling issues. Misspelt keywords not recognised by an ATS, may drop your ranking lower in the ATS results.

YOUR STEPS

1. Proofread everything in your application – your resume, the letter, email addresses, and any online form answers. A good tip is to spellcheck, review and edit first on your screen, then print it out for a further proof.
2. Spellcheck and Grammarly are helpful but don't rely only on them. They may not pick up words that are spelt incorrectly if that word is still an existing English word.
3. Be particularly mindful to check the organisation's name and the hirer's name. No one wants to send a letter that looks like it's been used for another company previously.
4. Check headlines, companies, dates, titles, and hyperlinks.
5. Take a break, read it, then proof it again slowly and in a quiet location.
6. Get someone else to run their eyes over it. Ideally someone with good attention for detail.

A final tip, as our minds can sometimes subconsciously fix errors as we read, many experts suggest proofreading sentences backwards.

The application process – last important steps

Step 14 – Spring Clean Your Social Media

It's always a good idea before applying for any jobs to assume the hirer will be viewing your social media.

A quick personal audit of your social media means you can move into the process confident nothing is lurking that will hinder your chances.

YOUR STEPS

1. Check your privacy settings on all sites and make sure you are comfortable with what is visible in the public forum. Lock down anything you need to be private.
2. Delete or hide any posts or pictures on social media that could portray you negatively. Check photos you are tagged in on sites like Facebook, and review your post activity log.
3. Check your LinkedIn profile is complete (an all-star rating). Audit your profile against your résumé to make sure all the content and dates align.
4. Look for opportunities to use LinkedIn and other social media sites to present yourself as an ideal candidate. Follow industry leaders, join industry communities, share relevant content, and engage in professional conversations.
5. If you are not in stealth job search mode, a good tip is to follow the company you are targeting on their social media pages (do not do this if you are worried your current hirer may notice). This may be flagged by the hirer, and see you tagged as a warm or job-ready candidate in their system. Many companies promote job opportunities and latest news on their social media sites, so it will help you keep up to date with opportunities and points of interest in their business, which can give you an advantage in an interview.

Step 15 – Application Submitted. Now What?

The most frustrating part of an application is the wait.

YOUR STEPS

1. Once you've submitted your application the first thing to do is make sure they received it. A lot of organisations and job boards have systems that send an auto-notification of their receipt of your application.

If you are worried or unsure if they have received it, contact the hirer to confirm (unless they've asked not to be contacted in their ad). Or if you know someone in the business they may be able to check your application has reached the hiring manager.

2. If you have a response that they have received your application, take a note of the application closing date and whether the organisation is contacting only unsuccessful applicants.
3. Track all the relevant information about the application. Ideally keep this information on a job search spreadsheet to help you manage your applications. Be sure to attach the tailored résumé and letter you sent, and any notes about the role or your interactions with the organisation during the process. You can also use an electronic tool like JibberJobber, Skillsyncer or Huntr to manage your applications.
4. Make a note in your diary for two weeks after the closing date to follow up with the company if you haven't heard anything.

Step 16 - You Haven't Heard Back. What Now?

If after several weeks, you haven't heard anything from the hirer you may want to send a friendly but brief follow up email.

Keep in mind hirers are busy and may have received hundreds of applications so you don't want to make them feel guilty for not having responded. Keep it brief and positive.

Subject: XYZ Position

Dear (Name)

I hope you are well. I'm touching base to follow up on your <XYZ> position that you had advertised on <Seek>.

Would you mind confirming you received my application? It was an ideal fit with my customer service background, so I wanted to check my résumé came through safely. Also, I wanted to enquire if you knew what the timeframe might be for shortlisting?

If, for any reason, you haven't received it – I have reattached it here and would be happy to provide any additional information you need.

Wishing you all the best with your hiring search.

Jim Smith

You could also follow up with a phone call. If you speak directly to the hirer, be sure to reiterate how enthusiastic you are about the position.

Application Checklist

- Have you assessed if the role is worth your time investment?.....
- Do you have any mutual connections that you could contact?
- Have you sourced background information on the organisation?.....
- Did you reach out to the contact person to ask any questions needed to help with your application?
- Have you checked out their LinkedIn, Social Media and web pages?.....
- Have you assessed opportunities for a referral or warm introduction?
- Are you comfortable the hirer is a legitimate company?.....
- Have you carefully decoded the job post to identify all important criteria, skills and keywords?
- Have you tailored your resume opener, experience and skills to feature your key selling points and relevant experience to match their brief?
- Have you removed any irrelevant information from your resume?
- Is your opening profile tailored to align with the role description?.....
- Does your cover letter clearly explain why you meet their hiring needs?.....
- Have you addressed all their ideal candidate criteria?
- Have you used metrics or stories to highlight your successes?
- Does the letter explain why you want the job?.....
- Will the hirer get a feel for why you are a fit for their culture or values?
- Have you finished your letter with a strong call to action?.....
- Did you check what format the file needs to be for submission?
- Have you carefully completed all online questions?
- Have you checked your resume content against their exact keywords?.....
- Have you checked everything for spelling, grammar, and typo issues?
- Did you audit your social media?
- Did you make a calendar note to follow up on the application?