

6 Steps to Take Before Applying to Jobs

Job seekers often use a 'spray and pray' approach when job searching. They troll online job boards, upload their general resume to a host of semi-qualified positions, and sit by hoping and praying for a response.

The results? Lacklustre.

For starters, online applications are a lot more competitive and don't offer big returns. Second, employers screen out 'semi-interested-semi-qualified' candidates when there are other qualified professionals in the cue. Which leaves job seekers spinning their wheels, feeling frustrated.

To improve job application success, address the following 6 steps **before sending off applications:**

1. Assess the alignment of your skills with job posting requirements

For example, does a job require certain experience or skill sets outside of your offerings (i.e. team leadership)? If you've never had direct oversight of a team before, be prepared to demonstrate transferable skills and examples in your resume to boost application chances (i.e. mentoring or training others).

If the majority of the job requirements reach beyond your abilities (10+ years of leadership), and you have no relatable or transferable competencies to 'sell', give the application a second thought before hitting send. In fact, forget it altogether. If you are clearly not qualified for the role, applying is a time-waster. Locate positions well-suited for your abilities!

2. Know your value

You can't effectively sell something unless you are clear of the value it provides. When applying for jobs, *you* are the item being marketed.

Rank higher with both computer and human screeners by demonstrating an understanding of the target company's pain points and aligning personal value with job requirements.

If you aren't sure what your unique value proposition is, spend time carefully considering it. Analyse recent roles and identify areas you've consistently excelled at. Start and maintain a brag file. Draw up succinct examples that back-up 'your claim to fame' so you are ready to share specifics when called for.



3. Identify key words and understand 'industry speak'

To increase ATS (applicant tracking system) resume screening, your resume and cover letter must include appropriate keywords and key phrases. Human readers also seek out these facts.

How can you tell which keywords or phrases need to be added to your resume? The job posting will tell you. Take a pen and underline the major skills, tasks, and requirements in the posting. What common keywords and phrases are repeated? What specific industry terms (technical systems, acronyms, competencies, education) are asked for? All of these need to be integrated authentically into your resume to increase application success.

4. Tailor the content of your resume for each application

A one-size-fits-all resume isn't going to cut it. ATS will screen it out. Employers will toss it in the trash.

If you want an employer to take an interest in your offerings, you need to align your resume content with the job requirements. Customisation takes time, but it can pay off big time. Employers are more likely to read a resume if it addresses their needs. ATS is more likely to qualify it.

Look for nuances and special skills in the job posting and share examples of demonstrated success in these areas. Provide the proof. Cut out unrelated content or details.

5. Research the organisation to get a better understanding of long-term career fit

Too often, job seekers apply for roles without truly understanding the nature of the work or the culture of the company. Before applying, look up the company on a site like [Glassdoor.com.au](https://www.glassdoor.com.au) to read employee feedback. Analyse LinkedIn connections to see if there is anyone in your network who already works at the company and arrange to speak with them directly.

Why waste time applying for a job that isn't going to support your long-term career goals? You do have career goals, right? If you aren't sure – figure it out. The only person in charge of your career success, is YOU. Having a plan in place is paramount to your livelihood and career health.

6. Polish up online profiles

The majority of employers research candidates online before making a hiring decision. They look on sites like LinkedIn and Facebook for supporting career details, further proof of ability, or warning signs. So before you start applying for jobs, give your online profiles an overhaul.

Ensure your online presence is professional. Keep content up-to-date, accurate, and on-brand. Spend the same amount of time perfecting your online image as you would spend updating your resume.

Don't have an online presence? Start one. It's a digital age so you need to get with the times. Show employers that you are capable and savvy with a controlled personal brand.

Adrienne Tom is an award-winning resume writer with Career Impressions, where she partners with executives and top professionals from around the world to create compelling career tools.

