Ten Ways to Get Your Resume to the Top of the Pile

Any advantage that you can get to help get your resume to the top of the pile is worth looking at. I have some employment agency contacts that I asked about what people can do to put them to the front of the line when the jobs are being handed out. I've put together their replies. These tips apply to whether you're going for a permanent or contract position.

1. As in every business, personal relationships are crucial. If you have any agents with whom you have a good relationship, keep in touch with them, especially if you have done a good job for them in the past.

2. Send your resume out to as many agencies as possible. It does no harm, and they take most notice of you when your resume first arrives. Often it is sent around to all the sales people at the company. Send out a certain amount each week, e.g. ten, to keep you in the mind's eye of at least some agents.

3. Make sure that your resume is presentable and easily readable. Make sure that your best skills are right at the front. Don't clutter up your resume with old skills and ones that you don't have much experience in—unless they're very marketable.

4. Keep calling agencies even though it is soul-destroying. Keep yourself in the front of their minds. The right job might have just come in and you'll be at the front of the line. Out of sight, out of mind. If you haven't been in touch for a while, they'll probably assume that you're off the market for whatever reason. Have a list of agencies that you call every two weeks, calling a selection of them every day.

5. Always, always, always adapt your resume for each job that you are applying for rather than just sending out your standard resume. It's not the job of the agent or the employer to find the skills that they are looking for. It's up to you to bring it to their attention. They may have dozens of resumes in front of them (or even hundreds) and they aren't going to give your resume more than thirty seconds in the first crawl through to cut the possible candidates down to a more manageable number.

6. Be friendly and alert when an agent calls out of the blue rather than surly and suspicious. He may be one of those reference spammers, but he also may be the genuine article and could be put off by your response.

7. Send scanned references along with the resume when applying off

any of the job boards with managers' contact names blanked out so that agents don't mine them for leads. It always looks good and impresses agencies to no end. If you send them, and others don't, then you've gained a little competitive advantage on them - and that's crucial in the current climate.

8. Follow up the resume with a friendly, positive call. Agents are human, too, and react positively to a friendly approach.

9. One contractor that I've heard of actually told the consultants at one agency that he would pay whichever recruitment consultant got him a job a personal bonus of $3,000. According to the guy who owned the agency, this put the contractor right to the front of the line.

10. When you do get an interview, do some research on the company so that when you're asked the inevitable "Do you know anything about us," you don't end up saying, "I think I've heard of you."

Preparation, hard work and a friendly demeanor are crucial to getting your resume to the top of the hiring manager's pile. Try these ten tips today and see what will come of your job or contract search.

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