



The Sound of Silence

For Job Seekers

Job seekers typically describe their application experience as akin to sending their resume off into a black hole. It's as if their communication disappears into some cavernous void never to be heard from or about again. They receive no reply whatsoever, not even a polite "Thank you very much for applying; now drop dead."

The irony is that many if not most employers do now reply to candidate applications. In our surveys here at WEDDLE's, over 80 percent report that they do so. They use technology – a system called an auto-responder – to acknowledge the receipt of every resume they receive.

So, why aren't job seekers getting those messages? Because they're caught in spam filters located on either their own computer or the servers operated by their Internet service provider. So, one solution to the sound of silence is for employers to provide the email address from which their acknowledgement will come so job seekers can add it to the safe list on their spam filer.

I routinely urge recruiters to make that simple adjustment, but obviously, there are still many who don't get it or can't be bothered. And, that means you must take steps to open up the lines of communication with the employers in which you're interested. How can you do that? You have to make sure they hear the sound of your voice.

The Sound of Your Voice

Unfortunately, the Internet makes it so easy to apply for openings that a lot of people do. As a result, there are routinely dozens and sometimes even hundreds of applicants, each vying for the job you want. All of that activity produces its own noise which makes it difficult for a recruiter to notice any one applicant, including you. And, if they don't notice you, they aren't going to speak to you, even if they use technology to confirm receipt of your resume.

How can you make yourself visible enough to produce a dialogue? Ironically, the best way is to start the conversation yourself.

Talk to employers online and off. The goal is for you to be recognized by and stand out with as many people as possible in each organization to which you've applied. You want recruiters to know you, of course, but you also should strive to make connections with your peers in those companies. They can be powerful advocates if they are impressed enough to mention you to their HR Department.

You can communicate with employers in several ways on the Web:

- Use Technorati, BlogHub or any of the other blog directories on the Web to see who's writing about your field of work and industry. If you find a blog that's authored by an employee of an organization to which you've applied, read it regularly and comment on the posts. Unlike traditional blog exchanges, however, your input should not critique the views of the author, but

rather demonstrate your expertise in your field and your collegiality when discussing work-related topics.

- Also check and see if the organizations to which you've applied have Facebook pages. If so, write on their walls regularly. Unlike the posts of many applicants these days, however, your messages should not push your candidacy for this or that opening, but instead, position you as a thoughtful and discerning individual by asking good questions about the mission, values, culture of the organization. Show you care as much as the organization does about ensuring there's a good fit between it and you.

There are also steps you can take in the real world to help break the silence of employers. For example, use the meetings of your professional and trade associations and your undergraduate and, if applicable, graduate alumni organizations to connect with employees of the companies in which you're interested. These interactions can establish that you have the expertise to be their peer at work, but only if they're done correctly. To avoid the appearance of being overly aggressive or, worse, desperate, focus first on establishing a rapport with each person and then, after that's in place, you can let them know about your track record and that you've applied for a job with their employer.

The sound of silence is a haunting experience. It shreds your self-confidence and your hopes for the future. So, make it your job to turn off the silence and turn on a dialogue. Find opportunities to talk to the employers in which you're interested and keep talking until they hear you.

Thanks for reading,

Peter

Visit me at Weddles.com

Peter Weddle is the author of over two dozen employment-related books, including WEDDLE's 2011/12 Guide to Employment Sites on the Internet, The Career Activist Republic, Work Strong, Your Personal Career Fitness System and Recognizing Richard Rabbit. Get them at Amazon.com and www.Weddles.com today.

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