



GET THAT JOB!

Get that job: Applications!

Are you making the application mistakes that prevent millions of people getting a job interview? Despite there being a wealth of information available to help, many companies spend months eliminating 'hopefuls' who make the same errors over and over again... This revised and expanded Info Sheet details 20 tips to improve your application.

Short and sweet: The aim of your cover letter should be to get your CV read... The goal of the CV should be to make you look like 'a possible' and win you an interview. The objective in the interview is to prove you can do the job! Many cover letters, though, read like autobiographies; they try to do the whole thing in one fell swoop. At best, a long cover letter will be skim read; at worst, it'll get your application deleted or binned without a second glance.

Study the job advert & description: Most well written application processes tell you exactly what employers are looking for. If your CV doesn't show relevant experience, it'll get discarded pretty quickly. For that reason, make sure your application emphasises the skills most aligned to the role you're after.

Getting to know you: As well as looking at the job advert & description, take a thorough look at the company's website... Do your best to understand their values, style, ethos, mission statement and the like. Find out who works there, what they produce, sell or provide; ascertain why and for whom... Bear in mind that most companies are looking for a cultural match as well as evidence that you can actually do the job.

Tell the truth: Studies show that 71% of job applicants admit to "serious lying", on their CVs. It seems many people do so with the idea that lying on a CV is 'expected' by employers. Call us old fashioned, but we have a different view... We reckon if people are prepared to exaggerate, bluff or lie in their job applications they – er – can't be trusted to tell the truth. And with thorough checks now commonplace, especially at DMI, lying is a huge mistake... Similarly, don't write things that are demonstrably untrue in an attempt to impress! Saying that you pay fantastic attention to detail will do you no favours when you show up for an interview and demonstrate that this is not the case. Don't blag. Don't bloat. Don't bluff. Just present your strengths with honesty and integrity.

"I can see clearly now..." It's increasingly common for companies to ask a bunch of questions upfront as part of the application process. We've noticed that a lot of people answer these in an 'essay style', or as part of the cover letter.

That must seem quite reasonable, but we know from experience that recruiters, sifting through hundreds and hundreds of emails, will scarcely glance at the ones in which answers aren't clearly visible.

It's a style choice for sure, but we'd strongly advise DMI applicants to repeat the questions, in order, and answer them directly underneath the header. This shortens the cover letter, and makes it easier for recruiters to learn what you think without having to spend any time at all scanning for the information they want to read first.



Follow the yellow brick road: Do you think you'd win a client's business if you were instructed to submit a pitch by post but you emailed it? And how would you feel if you told a delivery company that you'd like your new sofa to arrive on Tuesday afternoon and it showed up while you were out on Thursday evening?

A great many candidates seem blind to the problem companies have when instructions aren't followed. People email applications when ads say post them, or they use blue pen when the advert says use black! At DMI, we see plenty of applications that omit critical information from the subject line; that don't include answers to questions, and that don't show any evidence of research. Speaking of which...

"Research is what you do when you don't know what you're doing."

We've paraphrased Rocket Scientist Wernher von Braun here, not because we think applications are like rocket science... But because his words could imply that research is a bridge between ignorance and knowledge! You know what people will assume you are if they can't see any evidence that you've crossed the bridge?!

In job terms, the more you show you know the company you've applied to, the better you'll look. You have to separate yourself from the 'Have a go at that' crowd and demonstrating you know the company is the simplest way to do it!

Examples that commonly demonstrate a lack of research include people starting their communications "To whom it may concern" or "Dear Sir/Madam", when the advert clearly names the person to whom one should apply! We also see poor research evinced in the incorrect use of names and job titles, as well as in fundamental misunderstandings about what DMI does...

Such blatant displays of sloppy attention to detail will practically guarantee your elimination. It doesn't augur well when it looks like an applicant has opened a file, copied and pasted it, and sent the contents just as they have a hundred times before.

Spell chick and prufe reed everythang: Often, job applications are sent when people are massively motivated to do their best. If they're riddled with spelling mistakes, poor grammar and sloppy attention to detail, they're going to fail because it suggests that, even when hugely motivated, applicants are careless. Check out our 'Proofreading Info Sheet' for more on this!

The British Chambers of Commerce recently spoke to their concern that many people leaving education lack language, numerical and research skills, as well as the ability to read and focus. Sadly, based purely on our own experience, we'd reluctantly have to say that it appears to be true...

You simply wouldn't believe the number of applications that come in with appalling grammar, spelling and attention to detail as soon as a job advert goes up.



Here are the areas that we feel are most problematic:

- **Bad English:** Successful DMI applicants will be working alongside serious movers and shakers in industries renowned for their fast pace and intelligent nature. You must be able to read, write and speak English to a high standard. Take a look at our 'Proofreading', 'Better Grammar' and 'Punctuation' Info Sheets for more help – but be committed: you need to be consistently excellent, not just able to bluff your way through the application.
- **Misjudged humour:** Be very, very careful if you're trying to be funny in your application. Without the essential communication clues of vocal tone and body language, jokes often miss their mark. That's not to say you can't show personality... Just be careful!
- **Indifference:** An application that lacks passion is, of course, acceptable. It may, however, be passed over somewhat quickly when viewed next to another that is more enthusiastic. As Sales guru Zig Ziglar nearly put it: "For every opportunity you miss because you're too enthusiastic, you will miss a hundred because you're not enthusiastic enough."
- **Too little effort:** Keep the tone of your application appropriate to the position and company you're applying to. There are no circumstances under which we can imagine being wowed by someone using text speak, slang, emoticons or swear words, for example.

Don't try to be 100% better at one thing, try to be 1% better at 100 things: Being brutally honest, we'd have to say it's unlikely that you'll have one huge, irresistible, unique quality that will win you an interview! But we'd also say you don't really need one... Remember, a horse isn't required to lap the rest of the field in order to win a race – it just needs to cross the finishing line a nose before the others!

The same is true with job applications. Don't spend hours trying to bedazzle recruitment teams with just one knockout skill, quality or sentiment... Instead, spend the time getting the whole application a little bit better all over.

"I only want to be with you": One of the big secrets to your application's success is ensuring it conveys the degree to which you primarily want to work with that one company... Not any company that'll take you – just that one! Most employers appreciate bespoke applications that have their company at heart, which is why research and attention to detail are so vital...

You can probably appreciate, then, how it looks to recruiters if you call your CV attachment 'CV-13: DMI' or 'CV-Corporate'... These things strongly imply you have your iron in more than one fire. Whilst that is actually quite reasonable from a candidate's perspective, it isn't the best first impression to give potential employers – and it's so easy to avoid!



Be professional: Obvious? Yes... And yet we've seen application letters on papers torn from spiral notepads, as well as scribbled on the back of Ikea furniture instructions! Deej swears a person once sent an email attachment of themselves weightlifting... Just send the relevant info, presented professionally and as instructed.

Who ya gonna call? It's very likely that the answers to any initial questions you have are readily available to those with initiative. Look online, ask around, and, if it's at all possible, avoid phoning the company with questions: it looks dreadful when candidates call to ask things that are already answered somewhere in the application package.

Like a narcissistic opera singer, it's "Me, me, me, me, me!" This issue is imperative, so we're going to take an unusually long time to explain it. To illustrate the point, here's a genuine quote from an application that caused us to despair: "I would like to work at DMI so that I can get my foot in the door, make connections and build up my contacts in the industry..."

You may not believe how often we see something that exclusively benefits a candidate enthusiastically presented as though it's to DMI's advantage. Take our word for it when we say you don't sell yourself well by simply announcing what you need and want!

Instead, try thinking of potential employers as like a 'full sponge': they need wringing out before they can soak anything up! They want to hear how you can help them before they want to hear what's in it for you!

Here's an example using something applicants frequently write: "I want to put the skills I've learnt to good use in the media industry". Sound alright? Well... Yes and no! See, thousands of people want to put the skills they've learned to good use in the media industry! That desire – in itself – has no direct benefit or interest to employers. So...

"Ask not what the company can do for you – ask what you can do for the company": If you take away only one tip from this sheet, make it this one: when applying for a job, talk less about what you want for yourself and more about what you can do for the employer...

The example we used earlier – "I want to put the skills I've learnt to good use in the media industry" – sounds really weak if the next candidate is saying: "I believe the skills I've learned will help DMI achieve an increase in widget distribution..." or what have you! Do you see how much more appealing the latter is?

Be patient: At DMI Productions, our fun, friendly and passionate values mean we strive to get back to every applicant personally. This takes a loooooooooooooooooooooong time. If you haven't heard from us in the first week or two, it could simply mean you're in a 'maybe' or preliminary 'yes' pile. Prepare for the worst, but hope for the best and sit tight.

Alrighty, then. Run through your application to see how well you could measure up after heeding this advice! We'll wish you good luck, with the sincere hope that we might see you soon!