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APPLYING FOR AN INTERNSHIP – Best Practices and Common Mistakes

Best Practices

1) Spend time on your application materials – not just your resume, but your cover letter too
2) Craft a formal business letter
3) Research the employer and customize your cover letter for the position – do not skip this step!!!
4) Include content that is relevant to the company and the position - don't just fill the page
5) List skills (particularly computer skills / software proficiencies) using sentence fragments or bullets
6) Address the qualifications for the position. Spell out what the employer is looking for. If it's not obvious that you meet the qualifications in your cover letter, they may not read your resume.
7) Adopt a tone that is gracious and respectful. Acknowledge that the employer is doing you a favor by taking the time to read your application. Examples of good tone:
   - "Enclosed are my resume and writing sample. I am eager to contribute to your organization and thank you for considering my application. I look forward to hearing from you at your convenience."
   - Should you have any questions or like more information, please contact me at xxx-xxx-xxxx or xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx. I thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you.

8) If you don't receive a confirmation message after applying, it is appropriate to contact the employer (after 24 hours) to confirm receipt. If you do receive a confirmation message it is still okay to contact the employer IF you have a good reason, which should be included in your message. Multiple inquiries or inquiries without good reason will not make a positive impression!

Common Mistakes

1) Typos/Grammatical errors/Sloppy writing
2) Not demonstrating effort (form cover letter, lack of attention to detail, missing components)
3) Irrelevant content (Think of your materials as poems, not essays. Each word should be important.
4) Not listing Skills, particularly Computer Skills/Software Proficiencies
   The employer will usually tell you which skills they are looking for in the position description. If these are not listed in your resume, the employer may skip over your application entirely, so if you have any of these skills and you are not listing them, you are missing out!
5) Not addressing the qualifications for the position
6) The wrong tone (a.k.a. It's all about Me!)
   - Let the employer make the decisions about who is the right candidate or who is qualified, and don't assume that you are being considered for the position! Examples of the wrong tone:
     o "...which translates perfectly to the responsibilities of this internship."
     o "My research background paired with my writing skills all lead me to believe that I am the perfect fit for this internship."
     o "My many leadership positions make me the ideal candidate for a social media internship."
     o "...will make me a valuable asset to the Vermont Energy Education Program." (This one would be ok if prefaced with "I believe...")
     o "I am looking forward to speaking to you about my potential role on the Ben & Jerry's staff. I can be reached at the phone number or email address listed above. (First sentence could be shortened to "I look forward to speaking to you.")
7) Not having someone proofread your cover letter. There are typos and then there are TYPOS. (i.e. costumer service or pubic communications). Don't be this person!