



Strictly Classified

An Informational Bulletin Published by the Personnel Commission

How to Use Job Applications as a Tool in the Hiring Process

One of the most important thing you can do during the hiring process is to thoroughly review a candidate's application. Applications provide a great deal of valuable information about an applicant's experience, skills, and education.



In order to choose the best candidate for your position, it is important that you become familiar with the person's background before the interview process begins. The best way to accomplish this is by reviewing the job application. An application is the initial way a person is able to sell themselves to a hiring manager. Often times, he/she is highlighting the experience and education that best matches the career path he/she has chosen.

Important Tips When Reviewing Job Applications

Reviewing an application seems like a simple task. All you need to do is read what is written on the page. While that is true, it is also not as simple as that. If all you do is read through the application, you may miss important clues about the person's background. Follow the tips noted below to guide you through this process:

- ♦ **Review the class description and note the duties that are most important for your position.** Class descriptions list duties that are typical of all positions in a class. As you may know, not all the duties listed are required of all incumbents in the classification. Identifying the duties that are most important for your position will assist you in finding the candidate that best fits your position.
- ♦ **Review the application for relevant work experience.** Once you know what you are looking for in a candidate, you should closely review the experiences the candidate listed on the application to get a sense for how closely they match up with the skillset applicable to your position. You may also want to make a note of any special skills or abilities the applicant possesses that may be useful for your position.

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- ♦ **Note any gaps in employment.** It is important to know why an applicant may have a gap in his/her employment. Employment gaps are not always caused by negative reasons but identifying if an applicant has an unexplained employment gap will give you an opportunity to ask the candidate about the reason for the gap during the interview.
- ♦ **Review the applicant's reasons for leaving past employment.** It is important to know why an applicant left previous employment. You want to be sure the reasons for leaving are voluntary such as the applicant obtained a higher-level position or had to relocate. Some of the reasons you may want to question include "personal reasons" or "the job ended". Sometimes applicants will put these vague reasons because they do not want to provide a detailed explanation. In this case, ask questions to determine if the personal reasons were because of hardships on the job or circumstances that had nothing to do with his/her job. Find out if the job ended because it was temporary or the applicant was laid off. If the person was laid off, ask how many others were affected by the layoff, which may provide you with some additional clues. Resolving discrepancies in an applicant's reason for leaving can provide you an insight as to what type of employee you may be hiring.

Once you have thoroughly reviewed the application, the next step is to utilize the information gathered to help with the interview and hiring process. Interview questions that will assist you in finding the best possible incumbent for the position should be developed. You should also write down any questions regarding the information on an application that may need further clarification, such as employment gaps, unfinished college degrees, etc. Once you complete the interviews, as a last step you should consider using the application to verify an applicant's employment history. Call past employers and inquire as to why the applicant left the previous employment and ask whether the employer would rehire the applicant. This may provide you with some additional insights into the applicant's work history.

Applications are a important tool in the hiring process and, when reviewed properly, can help supervisors make informed hiring decisions.

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