

SPECULATIVE LETTER – Canvassing for Employment

Congratulations! You are obviously an active job seeker and know that 75% of jobs are not advertised and you are extending your employment opportunities by writing a speculative letter.

How should I Prepare?

= **Target your market** – What companies do you know about and think you would like to work for? Make a list from Internet searches, *Yellow Pages*, networking, and visiting companies.

= Research the company/business

Look up the company on the Internet.

- Find out as much as you can about the company/business

Look up the business/company in the *Yellow Pages*.

- Find out what they say they do.

Telephone the human resource section and the manager of the section where you would like to work. Find out and record their name and job titles. (Telephone both people, as you may get a different perspective).

- Ask them direct questions about the company
- Ask them about levels of positions – do they employ entry level staff?
- Are they aware of any positions vacant or that could be coming up?
- Is there any information about the company that they can send to you?
- What is their recruitment and selection process? Do they hold resumes on file?

Visit the Business/Company. This could be to walk in and have a coffee, look in the reception area, or drive past the work place. You can learn a lot this way.

- Where they are in relation to, public transport, parking, walking etc.?
- How do the staff dress?
- What is the layout of the workplace?
- Do the staff look happy?
- Is it a formal or informal environment?
- What are their hours/days of business?
- Is there any printed material about the company that you can have?

Develop a list of companies that you would like to approach and are good prospects based on your research.

= Customise your letter

Use your research to tailor each letter to the company/business to communicate sincere and genuine interest. Don't write -

Dear Sir/Madam

I am writing to inquire about positions, which may be available with your company.

This style of letter is usually unsuccessful.

Writing your letter

1. Personalise your letter – write to the person responsible for hiring staff, not 'To Whom It May Concern' or 'Dear Sir or Madam'. Check the results of your research.
2. This is a marketing exercise – your opening paragraph needs to generate interest in you. If through your research someone in his or her organisation suggested that you send your resume to HR make sure you mention this E.g. " John Millard suggested that I contact you about...."

3. Highlight specific aspects of your background that relate to the company. Market yourself.
 - Use and demonstrate your knowledge of their company (make sure you get your facts right)
 - Use your knowledge about typical jobs in the industry
 - Talk about your motivation ie. why you are contacting the company
 - Communicate how/why you suit their company. Avoid cliches – I am a ‘people person’.
 - Clearly state your intentions

E.g. *“I read about your company’s success in being awarded the contract to construct the pedestrian footbridge over the Brisbane River and I would like to be a part of that team. I am Civil Design Drafter with a particular interest in Bridge Construction.”*
4. Put yourself in the employer’s shoes when writing. What would an employer want to know about you and how do you satisfy their needs?

E.g. *I know that speed of service is very important in a Theatre Restaurant. One of my attributes is my ability to prepare meals quickly without compromising the quality of the food or the standard of presentation.”*
5. Mention that you are enclosing your resume and include it.
6. End with a proactive statement ie Ask for an interview. In some industries it is appropriate to offer to do a trial - remember that you will not be covered by Work Cover (Workers Compensation) but you can take out your own personal accident insurance (Ask the Student Employment Service for information/advice).
7. Do not repeat the information in your resume – it will make your letter too long and may frustrate the reader.

Your letter should be -

- Concise and clear.
- Persuasive
- No longer than one page
- Use action words to describe your suitability. See handout - *Action Words*.
- Typed
- The font used should be easy to read and no smaller than 11 point.
- It is acceptable to use “bullets” or “dot points”

Completing your Application

- Is it interesting so that they will want to read your resume?
- No spelling or grammatical errors. Ask someone else to proofread your letter
- Place it in an A4 envelope so that you don’t have any folds in the documents.
- Get it to the employer as soon as possible and before the closing date. Allow time for postal delivery.
- Print your letter on good quality paper.