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Applying for a contract via email

Introduction

The contractor who manages to beat the rest of the applicants to a position is not necessarily the best contractor for the position. But, they are the best at knowing how to get offered a position. This article explains strategies for the very first stage in getting yourself noticed: The email application.

Introduction

So, you've seen the job you want on a job site you wish to apply for. A good strategy is to send an email followed by a phone call later in the day.

It is better to initially email them rather than phone. Phoning the agent rather than sending an email does not necessarily give you the best chance. You might only get a few minutes to talk to them if they are busy, and it could be hard to get all your salient points across in that time. They might have something else on their mind so won't be listening fully to what you are saying.

An email gives you the advantage of being able to get all your arguments across at a time when they are thinking about the exact role you are applying for.

So, what is the agent looking for in an email?

What is the agent looking for?

When scanning the many emails they get, they will want to know the following:

Does the person have the skills required?

Is the person available to start when the client wants them?

If you pass those criteria then they will very likely call you.

So, how do you ensure you catch their eye?

The Email Application

The email needs to have high impact and targeted to ensure it captures the intention of the agent. You want them to read the CV you attached and then give you a call.

Here is a recommended structure:

For the subject title use the job reference and the job title. E.g.

Subject: Re: Ref 123ABC; Lion Tamer

This makes it easy for the agent to identify the position you are applying for immediately amongst the many emails they will be receiving for various other roles they might be trying to fill.

For the email message, here is a suggested structure:

Dear {Agent Name here},

I'm writing with reference to the job site ad - {job reference here} for a {job title here}.

Please find attached my CV. My main strengths are:

{main strength bullet point 1}

{more bullet points here}

I am available from {availability date here}.

Regards

{your name }
{phone number}

Some points to note:

Use a maximum of 5 bullet points that directly target the application. If the advertisement asks for skills A, B, and C, then make sure they are included.

Don't use sentences. They are not as effective as capturing attention.

The opening line probably won't even be read. It is just there for professionalism and politeness.

Availability date is important. There is no point wasting each others time if the timing isn't ideal. Best to get it out of the way early. Also, by stating you are available means the agent does not have to guess. You will have a head start over someone who omits their availability.

Note that price is not on the email. Price is the last thing that should be discussed. The risk is you could go too low and show that you would be happy earning that rate, or that you go too high so they do not phone. Good clients are generally flexible on price if they can get the right person. This will be discussed in a future article about negotiating price.

Your phone number is on the email. This saves them having to open your CV to find out your phone number.

If you have more than 5 years experience put this as the last bullet point. It will get you noticed.

Here is an example:

Dear John,

I write with reference to the jobserve add - ref 123/JJ.

I've attached my CV. My major strengths are:

Team Leadership. Full project life cycle.

.NET Framework, ASP.NET, C#.NET

OOAD, UML, Design By Contract, Design Patterns

Extreme Programming(XP), training and mentoring.

10 years industry experience.

I'm available immediately.

Regards

Bob Smith

020 1234 5678

Then give them a call

Wait a couple of hours. If they have not phoned you then phone them.

Effective job search techniques are explained in **How to Find A Contract - A Guide for UK Contractors**

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