

FOLLOW UP – THE JOB SEEKER'S IMPORTANT TOOL

- Send out your resumes and letters on Friday, expect them to arrive by Monday or Tuesday. Be sure to direct them to a specific person so you will have someone to call.
- Call on Tuesday or Wednesday but no later. It's better to be ahead of your mailed materials than weeks behind.
- Remember the purpose of the call: to schedule a meeting. You're not conducting a survey on the efficiency of the mail system, so don't waste precious conversation asking if someone received your letter. Instead try this:

"Hello, Ms. Sharpie? My name is Janet Jobhunter. I'm calling because I am hoping to meet with you briefly this week or next. I'm an accounting professional and I'm interested in working in your department. You may have received the resume I mailed to you this week?" (Pause for her answer.)

"Not yet? Well I'm sure it will arrive shortly. In the meantime, I wonder if we can set a tentative time to meet. Even if your department isn't hiring, I'd appreciate a few minutes to discuss my work experience and get your advice on other managers to contact the company."

Set the appointment or, if Ms. Sharpie does not want to commit to a meeting, ask for the names of other managers. Total time for the call: about 4 minutes. Is that pestering? I don't see how. If she can't take a four-minute call, why does she have a phone on her desk?

Of course, many people no longer answer the phone at work. They let the calls go to voice mail and then return the ones that interest them. Getting through a voice-mail defense can be tricky, but it's worth a try. Here are a few things I have done:

- Use the name of a mutual contact and leave specific details on the next step: *"Sally, this is Janet Jobhunter. I sent you a resume last week and happened to speak with a Bill Jackson, a mutual friend, on Monday. He suggested I set a brief meeting with you to get ideas about working at your company. I'm wondering if Thursday afternoon or Friday morning might work for you? If you reach my voice mail, just pick a time and I'll be there. I'm looking forward to meeting you. My number is 111-2222."*
- Call late in the afternoon, early in the morning, on the weekends or at lunchtimes when people might change their patterns and pick up the phone.
- When you receive voice mail, if you've already left messages, hit zero, the pound sign or star-the codes some systems use as a default to link the caller with a secretary or receptionist. If you get connected to someone say, *"I'm sorry to bother you, but I'm trying to reach Sally Sharpie, and it occurred to me she might be on vacation. Can you tell me if she's in this week? She is? You wouldn't happen to know the best way to reach her?"*
- A variation of step 3 is to ask if someone else keeps Ms. Sharpie's calendar because you'd like to set a tentative meeting, which she can call and rearrange if it's not convenient.
- If you have left three or four messages and received no response consider letting this contact go or choosing someone else at the company to call. If it's an important person in your strategy, set a schedule for yourself and keep trying on a regular basis, alternating between calls, e-mails, and brief notes.

The hardest thing about phone follow-up is developing the right attitude to do it. You have to be stubborn, yet completely gracious. Remind yourself of these important points:

- You are not being a pest. You are following through on a business contact using a standard business tool.
- The other person is not snubbing you. He or she is busy, disorganized or not authorized to set meetings. Whatever the reason for not returning the call, it's not about you. Make your calls and keep your spirits up. Eventually, you will be working again, and then you will be the one getting the calls.