


How To Contact Employers



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Guides

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HOW TO CONTACT EMPLOYERS

INTRODUCTION

Contacting and interacting with employers is at the core of an effective job search. An employer has no idea you would like to work for them unless you tell them! Even when they are not currently hiring, employers have a vested interest in meeting good potential employees who are interested in their organization, and most will be happy to answer questions or to accept CVs for future consideration.

Why would I contact employers?

- To find out if the company has any current openings/summer opportunities etc.
- To find out more about any advertised positions
- To ask for advice and information
- To follow up on an application or interview
- To arrange an information interview (see CaPS Information Interview mini guide)

Who do I speak with?

Depending on your objective and the size of the organization you might contact:

- A Human Resources Representative or Recruiter
- The Head of the department you wish to work in
- A current employee of the company/department

HOW TO FIND CURRENT EMPLOYEES

You can find current employees via:

- The staff information/contact us page on company websites
- News reports (Google news)
- A direct call to the company to ask!
- LinkedIn, Twitter and other social media sites
- On-campus events such as career speaker talks, company information sessions, and career fairs

Using LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a professionally-oriented social networking site which can be used to profile your experience and credentials, research potential employers and gain information on different career paths and skill sets:
<http://www.linkedin.com>

To make the most of LinkedIn:

- Build a complete profile; include a professional photo and a brief summary
- Connect with other members (start with family, friends and professional contacts)
- Join like-minded groups, including the CaPS LinkedIn Group & McGill Alumni group (once you have graduated)
- Follow people and companies in areas of interest in line with your job search
- Use the LinkedIn for Higher Education page to track alumni
- Use the LinkedIn Company Directory to learn about local employers in your field
- Search for companies of interest and see if any of your existing contacts (or their contacts) have a connection with the organization

HOW TO COMMUNICATE

General tips

Be polite and professional but persistent. DO NOT give up after sending one email. The recipient could have been busy, or forgotten or been out of the office or sick or...anything. It is completely OK to follow up with a second email, and/or a phone call, as long as you are courteous.

Remember that employers are busy and that hiring and interviewing time frames are often longer than you might hope or expect. Even when organizations are actively hiring, your application is one of many priorities they are juggling. Show respect for their time.

Be clear about your objective. Why are you calling/emailing the company and this person in particular? In general, most people are willing and happy to help, if you are clear about how they can do so.

You can contact an employer by email, by phone, or in person. Which option you choose depends on the information you have and on what is practically feasible, but if in doubt, the more active and direct the method, the better.

Writing effective and professional emails

- Keep your subject line clear and concise (i.e. McGill Alumnus/ae request...; Research on XYZ field...; Follow up on August 2 interview) and avoid anything that looks like phishing (i.e. I need your help...)
- Always include a salutation (i.e. "Dear...")
- If you have never met the recipient, or don't know them well, use "Ms X" or "Mr X", NOT their first name
- Ensure your format and font are professional, and easy to read/scan

- Always double-check your spelling and punctuation before sending
- Put yourself in the shoes of your recipient. It is safe to assume that they are busy and receive a lot of email. They will be scanning quickly to find out what you need from them. Make things easy by getting to the point quickly and clearly.
- Keep things short. Introduce who you are, provide any necessary context, and outline why you are emailing.
- Avoid asking multiple questions and favours in one email (limit yourself to one or two)
- Aim for a factual, concise and professional tone

Practice good telephone etiquette

- Seek out a good quiet space where you will not be interrupted during the call
- Be prepared before making a call. Verify the name of the person you wish to speak with and ensure that you have paper, a pen and any relevant documents (i.e. CV, recent correspondence) close at hand.
- Stand up to make the call and smile before you start speaking to project confidence and positivity in your tone
- Greet the person by name and address them professionally (i.e. Mr., Ms., Dr., Professor)
- Identify/introduce yourself, BEFORE you launch into the call! If you have met them before, provide a little context to jog their memory (do not ask “Do you remember me?”).
- Ask “Is this is a good time?”
- Get to the point quickly, and clearly state your objective
- Always thank people for their time and assistance

In person: How to talk to strangers

- A smile, firm handshake, eye contact and a warm, friendly manner go a long way
- Be curious and genuinely interested in the person
- Ask for advice, ideas and information
- Have something to say
- Be open and offer help when you can
- Ask open questions (how/what? vs. do/are?) and listen attentively

EXAMPLES OF COMMON SITUATIONS

INQUIRING ABOUT OPPORTUNITIES

Why? To learn more about an organization you are interested in and to find out if they are currently hiring or anticipate hiring in the near future.

When? When you are job searching.

How? Calling or in person is most effective.

Who? Try Human Resources (HR) or the head of the relevant department/unit you would like to work for.

What do I say?

Intro + brief overview of your background

- *My name is...I am a McGill graduate in...with experience in...and an interest in...*

How you found out about them

- *I came across your organization while researching...*
- *I was referred to company X by...*
- *I spoke with X at a recent presentation at McGill...*

What you want

- *I am very interested in learning more about potential opportunities...*
- *I would like to contribute my extensive research and technical skills to company X. Do you anticipate any hiring in the next few months?*

FOLLOWING UP ON SUBMITTED APPLICATIONS

Why? To ensure they received it, to reiterate your interest in the position/company, and to find out more about the time frame for the hiring process.

When? Within a week of the application deadline.

How? Calling is most efficient.

Who? Ideally, get in touch with the person to whom you submitted the application. If it was online with no contact name, try HR or the head of the relevant department/unit.

What do I say?

Intro + why you are calling

- *My name is...I am calling to follow up on my application for position X*

Reiterate your interest

- *I am very interested in the position...*

What you want

- *Are you able to tell me anything about the time frame for the hiring process?*

FOLLOWING UP ON AN INTERVIEW

In addition to sending a short thank you note (see the CaPS How to Interview Guide for further details) immediately following an interview, it is worth following up with the company a week or so later.

Why? To reiterate your interest in the position/company, and to find out more about the time frame for the hiring decision. Especially important if you have received an offer at another organization and are trying to make a decision. Also, if you are not hired, you can follow up to ask for feedback on your application/interview and to express your interest in future opportunities.

When? Within a week of the interview or once the time frame you were given in the interview has passed.

How? Calling is most efficient. Emailing can work if you have a direct email for any of the interviewers.

Who? The interviewer(s). If not possible, try HR.

What do I say?

Intro + why you are calling

- *My name is...I am calling to follow up on my interview of X date...*

Reiterate your interest

- *I very much enjoyed meeting...and learning...and remain very interested in the XYZ position...*

What you want

- *I'd appreciate it if you could give me a sense of the time frame for the hiring decision?*

KEEPING IN TOUCH

Like any relationship, your connections with employers need maintenance.

- Keep track of who you want to follow up with
- Send a thank-you note or email within 24 hours of an information interview or Career Fair or to anyone who has been helpful to you
- Get in touch again with follow up questions, to share a resource, or to update a contact on your situation
- Let people know if you took their advice, read a book or article they recommended, or spoke to someone they referred you to
- Ask if they would be willing to let you know if they hear of any opportunities in your field

PROGRAMS & SERVICES



Ask a Career Advisor

Ask your career questions online and one of our career advisors will get back to you, usually within 48 hours.



McGill Mentor Program

Explore jobs and industries of interest. Get connected to a McGill alumnus/ae working in your dream field.



Career Leadership Program

Become a Career Leader and promote CaPS across our campuses while developing your own leadership skills.



myFuture

Log on to caps.myfuture.mcgill.ca for an extensive listing of jobs and internships. Register for CaPS events, browse publications and view employer profiles.



CV & Advising Drop-In

Drop-in hours are available to undergraduate and graduate students, whether you would like your CV reviewed or have a quick question.



P.A.C.E.

Join other students in this 10 hour/4 week program which helps you explore personal goals, values, interests and career options.

ONLINE RESOURCES

CaPS Website - www.mcgill.ca/caps

Your main portal to the services offered by CaPS and a wealth of information related to career exploration and job search.

Explore by Major - www.mcgill.ca/caps/students/explore/major

CaPS has compiled targeted career information for your major to give you some ideas of where to go next.

MyWorldAbroad - myworldabroad.com/mcgill

The authoritative guide to international careers. 4,000+ searchable resources, articles and inspiring student stories.

General Job Listings - www.mcgill.ca/caps/students/job/jobsearch

This page contains links to many job listings sites to help you find career and job opportunities.

Vault Career Insider - careerinsider.vault.com/career-insider-login.aspx?parrefer=7165

Downloadable career guidebooks, insider company surveys, industry profiles, career tips, jobs and internships. Information on companies in consulting, finance, law, marketing, public relations, accounting and business-related industries can be found here.

Going Global - online.goinglobal.com

16 million worldwide job and internship listings, employer profiles, and country-specific career information.

Career Cruising - public.careercruising.com/en/

Comprehensive resource to look up Canadian occupational information, educational paths and university programs.