



THE UNIVERSITY  
OF QUEENSLAND  
AUSTRALIA

UQ Careers and Graduate  
Employment Unit (CAGE)



# Want the job? Call that employer!

## A student's tips

### Get help from a Career Advisor – and call that employer to discuss the job!

Trish, a recent UQ graduate, was able to secure part time employment while completing her degree in her field of choice largely through the networks she created as a student. As her employers knew Trish and her work, she was able to get to an interview easily then outperform other applicants. But what happens when you apply for a role and do not know the company or employers? What makes you go from a 'cold application' to one you are confident about?

*"As a UQ graduate who had secured employment prior to completing my degree I was confused by my lack of success in progressing down my chosen career path. It wasn't until I contacted a Student Services Career Advisor that I realised where I was going wrong and what my resume was really saying about me to prospective employers.*

*After successive failures to get even an interview for a job, let alone full-time employment, I went to talk to a Career Advisor. Even though I thought I was addressing the selection criteria really well, the best advice I got from the advisor was to always call the contact person given in the position advertisement.*

*For my latest application I read the Position Description, did my research, had a few brief questions in hand to initiate the conversation, and then rang the contact person. After a twenty minute conversation the Business Director said he was looking forward to getting my application and I was very clear about what they were looking for and how to address the selection criteria in such a way that I would be the ideal candidate for the position."*

Trish O, UQ Graduate

## CAGE's advice

### Take the time to research the organisation and be proactive

*A lot of people don't realise that it's perfectly normal to call the vacancy contact person. In fact, it's **encouraged** that you do make contact with potential employers prior to writing your application to get a stronger understanding of what they are looking for and see if you 'fit the bill'. Employers want someone who wants to work for them, not just anyone, so taking the time to research the organisation and be proactive in your application is important. By initiating what could be considered an informal first interview for information gathering and sharing is something that could help you provide a stronger, tailored application and even be more confident during the interview stage.*

Krista Lee, UQ Career Advisor

## What the employer says



Kelly Pfeffer  
Department of Public  
Works

### Get a true vision for what it is to actually work for that organisation and talk to the contact person

*"One of my tips for candidates when they are researching the employers that they would like to work for, is to get a true vision for what it is to actually work for that organisation. Ring the contact person for that vacancy and have a conversation with them about what the organisation is like, what are some of the major projects that they are working on, what sort of key attributes they are looking for in candidates who would be a good fit for the organisation."*

Main Office: Level 3 Student Services  
Building 21C, St Lucia  
(opposite Student Refec)

Email: [grademployment@uq.edu.au](mailto:grademployment@uq.edu.au)  
Phone: 07 3365 1704  
www: [careerhub.uq.edu.au](http://careerhub.uq.edu.au)

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## Things you should do before calling that Employer

There are a few things you should do before picking up the phone to call a prospective employer. Preparation is key, you want to build a first good impression! We understand that it's easier for some than others so we have included a step-by-step guide listed below, which may give you a bit more confidence. You may not need to talk about any of the information gathered, but it might make your responses more relevant.

### Your step-by-step guide

#### 1 What is the job about? What is expected of me?

- Read in FULL the job application and all materials/attachments as this will give you a brief understanding of the role, and often the organisation and hierarchy.

#### 2 Have a decent Resume ready to go

- Read it and know your own skills and experiences \*
- Have some good examples of demonstrated experiences which may interest an employer \*\*

#### 3 Research the company you are applying for \*\*\*

- Who are the stakeholders (KPI's & funding)?
- What are the core business activities and strategic direction?
- What primary role does the position have within the organisation and/or project?

#### 4 Prepare some questions

- Prepare questions or areas you would like further clarification or answers on
- Ensure these aren't questions that would be found on their website

#### 5 Contact the Organisation\*\*\*\*

- Call or email the details listed on the job description
- Introduce yourself, explain that you are interested in the position and would like to talk further about the role or that you have a few questions regarding the role/department/organisation, etc. Prepare yourself, write it down, you want a succinct 30 second introduction which would make the employer want to hear more
- Ask if there is a convenient day/time which would be suitable – be prepared, they will probably say 'now!'
- Your tone – professional and friendly. No negatives. A problem or a weakness is just a challenge you overcame
- Give a little taste of your background, and why you would like to work for this company (specific reasons)
- Ask them questions – get them talking comfortably about the company and the role. The goal of this conversation is to see what extra information you can find out about the sort of attributes or skills and abilities they are looking for in an applicant
- Thank the staff member when conversation starts to wind down. It's best to send a follow up email to the staff member within the next 24 hours to thank them for taking the time to discuss the role with you

#### 6 Don't be overwhelmed!

- You may not need to speak about all of the information gathered in these first few steps, it is just to make your responses more relevant.

#### 7 Use the information gained to tailor your written application

- Cover Letter, Resume and Selection Criteria

CAGE recommends the following workshops/guides to help you with that particular task referred to in the step-by-step guide:

- \* Resume Guides or Workshops
- \*\* Selection Criteria Guides or Workshops
- \*\*\* How to Research a Company
- \*\*\*\* Networking Skills

## We can help!

The UQ Careers and Graduate Employment Unit offers a variety of **Workshops** (i.e. Resume & Cover letters, Interviewing, Selection Criteria's and Networking). After attending workshops, students are invited to attend an individual Resume Review (written application) or Career Planning Consultation with one of the Career Advisors.

There is also a range of material available online on [www.careerhub.uq.edu.au](http://www.careerhub.uq.edu.au)

For further enquiries or direction, please email: [grademployment@uq.edu.au](mailto:grademployment@uq.edu.au)

*“Without language, one cannot talk to people and understand them; one cannot share their hopes and aspirations, grasp their history, appreciate their poetry or savour their songs. One of our strongest weapons is dialogue.”*

Nelson Mandela