

## Contents

<b>About This Document</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Preparing</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Reviewing Applications</b> .....	<b>2</b>
Step 1 – Do a Quick Scan .....	2
Step 2 – Review the Cover Letter .....	3
Step 3 – Review the Resume .....	4
<b>Sorting Applications</b> .....	<b>4</b>
“Yes” .....	4
“No” .....	5
“Maybe” .....	5
“Future Potential” .....	6
<b>Once You Have a Short List...</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Limited or No Suitable Candidates Identified</b> .....	<b>6</b>

## About This Document

<b>owner</b>	HR
<b>access &amp; use</b>	All Staff
<b>what it is</b>	<p>A guide that helps us ensure a standard and consistent method is used when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Reviewing applications and resumes submitted by job applicants</li> <li>◆ Determining which applicants should be granted a preliminary telephone screen interview</li> </ul>
<b>who uses it</b>	HR, Managers, and Staff involved in reviewing applications for the purpose of shortlisting or disqualifying job applicants
<b>used with</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <i>TA-MGR-5520-M. Position Applicant Tracking Spreadsheet</i></li> </ul>



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It may seem harsh to eliminate applicants after a surface scan, but if you have a lot of applications, you need to set your standards and stick to them. Hiring is a time-consuming process. It's advisable to narrow the field as quickly as possible so you can spend your valuable time considering only qualified applicants.

In the initial scan:

- ◆ Keep your 'Top 5' list front and center to make sure you consider all applications through the same filter and avoid distraction by 'shiny objects'.
- ◆ Eliminate applicants who do not have experience relevant to the position. Applicants should have included recent experience in the same sector or position, or explained in their cover letter why they believe their skills are transferrable.
- ◆ Give special consideration to internal applicants. We already know them and they know us. If an internal applicant is a good fit, has some related experience and is motivated to learn, they might be a very strong candidate.
- ◆ If you have a mix of solicited and unsolicited applications, focus first on the solicited applications—those who have actually applied for the position.

**NOTE:** Don't print all those applications, especially for the initial scan!

Save paper and money—review applications online and make your notes in the Applicant Tracking Spreadsheet for the position.

## Step 2 – Review the Cover Letter

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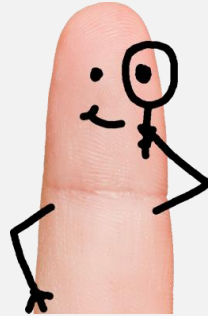
At this point, you've already shortened the list of qualified applicants, so the decision to select candidates for the preliminary telephone screen depends on more subtle clues.

The cover letter can often give you a feel for the personality of the applicant and highlight relevant information. In fact, some business leaders base their decision to interview on the applicant's cover letter because they believe that personality and cultural 'fit' are the most important factors, and that candidates can be trained if their skills require upgrading.

If you have requested any additional material, such as work samples, this is the stage to examine them.

When reading a cover letter, consider the following:

- ◆ Is this a custom cover letter written specifically for the position or is it a generic template?
- ◆ Does the letter tell you why the applicant applied for the specific position or why they want to work for our Company?
- ◆ Did the applicant highlight their achievements?
- ◆ Is the letter well-written with no grammar or spelling errors?
- ◆ Does the presentation and language style fit with Company values?



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## “No”

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We usually eliminate applications that:

- ◆ Lack one or more qualifications from the ‘must have’ criteria.
- ◆ Lack a degree, license, or credential required for the position.
- ◆ Contain grammar and spelling errors, or other careless mistakes, particularly if the position requires strong writing or editing skills, or careful attention to detail.
- ◆ Are presented in a way that doesn’t fit with Company values. For example, the language is too casual, or too formal, or unprofessional, or disrespectful.
- ◆ Fail to follow directions in the job posting. For example, requested work samples have not been provided, or cover letter and resume have been submitted as separate files.
- ◆ List a salary expectation outside the budget.
- ◆ Show a history of unexplained employment gaps.
- ◆ Show multiple shifts in career paths.
- ◆ Are submitted by applicants who do not live in our geographical area, unless the position has a budget for relocation.

## “Maybe”

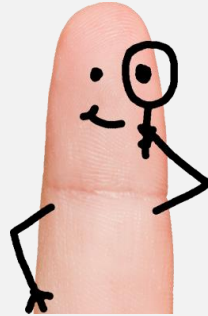
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Things are seldom black and white, and more often than not, the “maybes” out-number the obvious “yes” and “no’s”.

Set aside an application for further review when the applicant:

- ◆ Is missing one or two elements from the ‘must-have’ list, but the cover letter and presentation are so compelling that you want to give him/her a chance.
- ◆ Is missing one or two elements from the ‘must-have’ list, but was referred with a good recommendation from someone you trust, or you have some connection to the applicant’s previous work experience and can easily find out more information.
- ◆ Has no recent experience relevant to the position, but lists strong past experience.
- ◆ Has strong experience in the position, but not in our industry.
- ◆ Has strong experience in the industry, but not in this position.
- ◆ Has caught your attention, but you’re too early in the process of reviewing applications to know if he/she is a strong candidate in relation to the others.

If your “Yes” pile is sparse at the end of the application review process, revisit the “Maybe” pile. By the time you’ve been through all the applications, you’ll have a benchmark for a good candidate based on comparing applications, and will be able to more easily categorize applications as “Yes” or “No”.



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- ◆ **Extend the application deadline.** Perhaps the closing date was set too soon for applicants to respond, or the advertisement wasn't published until a day or two before the closing date. This may be a good option especially if applications continued to arrive after the posting close date, or you learn of people who wanted to apply but didn't have time to get an application ready.
- ◆ **Review the job posting, revise, and re-post/re-advertise in the same locations.** Are the required skills and experience reasonable and achievable? Will people with those skills and experience really want to do this position, for that salary, in that location? If there are only 2 people in the world with the required skills and experience (and 1 of them is you), you probably need to re-examine what's really essential for a candidate to bring to the job, and what you can train after they're hired.
- ◆ **Review the posting, leave as is, and re-post/re-advertise in new locations.** Sometimes the posting is perfect, but we're looking in all the wrong places. Do a bit of research. Find out where people with related skills already work, and where those companies advertise. If the job market is very competitive for people with the skills your open position needs, think outside the box. Are there related industries that people could transfer from with a bit of training? Where do they find workers?
- ◆ **Consider hiring a head hunter or recruiting agency.** If the position is very specialized, or at a senior level, a professional recruiter may have better success finding suitable candidates, especially if you're having to do this off the side of your desk. It will cost you more, but depending on the position, it may be worth it.

There are always good people willing to consider a new position. The trick is figuring out how to find them, or help them find you.