The Online Application

Many companies these days prefer an online application instead of a traditional application dossier. It is much cheaper for applicants, but not necessarily simpler: ultimately, as much effort should go into the virtual dossier as into the traditional documents.

In principle, there are two types of **online application:**

1. You send an email to the relevant email address in the human resources department, ideally directly to your contact person.
2. You apply on the company's home page using the appropriate **application forms**. These forms are part of a so-called **applicant tracking system**. Using the system, the company can manage and compare the data from the documents more quickly.

Be selective

Regardless of the type of online application you are working on, there remain a few key points. Just because the "virtual dossier" is quicker to create and significantly cheaper, it does not mean that you should submit applications randomly. Even with this type of application, you must be sure in advance about what you want and which companies and jobs are worth your consideration.

Even online, it must quickly become apparent to the reader - generally the human resources employee - why you are applying to this company. Therefore, there are a few important points to observe:

CV and cover letter

When writing your CV and cover letter, be just as careful and clear as you would with the traditional versions.

> **Important:** check how your documents appear when viewed on a computer screen, and perhaps even on a smartphone or tablet. It is also extremely important to check how they look when printed out in black and white. **Tip:** brighter colours would then be difficult to read and should not be used.

Here is a quick summary of the tips:

- Use a font size that is easy to read on a screen. In most cases, serif fonts (e.g. Garamond, Times New Roman) are preferred over sans-serif fonts like Arial.
- Choose font size 11 or 12.
- Use formatting tools such as **bold** and **underline**.
- Consider whether you actually need a cover sheet. The reader might overlook it anyway as it does not contain much information and go straight **to the first page of the CV**. Therefore, this should show your photo and the most important information at a glance.
- When composing the email, include a short version of your cover letter which points out the (really) important points. Keep this short, about six to eight lines. Make sure you add a signature.
- The **complete cover letter** in its formatted version should be attached **as a PDF**.

Applying using online forms

If you apply using **a company's applicant tracking system**, it is important that you have all documents (CV, cover letter, scanned credentials, evidence and work samples) to hand in advance.

Tip: test to see if there are any problems with your browser (e.g. Chrome, Firefox, Internet Explorer etc.). Not all systems function correctly on all browsers. You can spend a long time trying to fix something when all you need to do is change browser.

Has it disappeared into a "black hole"?

Many applicants have the impression that applications through online forms disappear as if into a black hole. Unfortunately, this impression is not always wrong. Human resources departments are sometimes unable to view and process all documents quickly enough.

Therefore, be patient after your confirmation of receipt: it may take two to three weeks for you to receive feedback on your application. However, if you haven't heard anything by then, be sure to enquire by telephone!

Make yourself known

If you have already made a personal contact, for example at a job fair, write a short email to say that you have now applied and your application is in the system. In the worst case scenario, your email will simply be ignored; in the best, it will be seen directly.

In most cases, after **uploading your documents** you will be asked whether they can be kept in the system long-term in order for you to be contacted again at a later date. Definitely agree to this!

Here are a few more **tips for using online forms:**

- Use **keywords** which aptly describe your abilities and qualifications. Using these keywords, it is then easier for companies to find you in the system at a later date. Examples of keywords include your field of study, your university/college, important skills such as programming languages, programs, languages and any practical experience in project management, recruiting, acquisition, team communication etc. Be especially careful that the keywords match the company's requirements.
- Use the online form on a company's careers website. You can also try to make contact with a company's employees, for example at **trade and career fairs.**
- Be prepared to be asked **about your motivation** as well as your education, training, posts and qualifications. Many companies want to know why you are specifically interested in them, what appeals to you about the position and what other goals you may have.
- You should especially bear this in mind if you have the impression that your **qualifications alone may not meet the specified requirements.** So, if your final grades aren't so good, try to build on other areas of your application.

Credentials and other supporting documents

Scan in your credentials and other supporting documents. These should be combined together into one file. You can always use various programs (e.g. PDFsam) to recompile them or save them as individual pages.

All documents in one file?

Most companies prefer it when you send all supporting documents together in one PDF file. Check to see if the company gives any instruction on this on its website or in the job description. You may choose only to send the most important credentials and documents first, whilst offering at the same time to send the remaining documents later if desired.

Also, be sure to name your file(s) accordingly: Job_title_Name_CV.pdf, Job_title_Name_Cover letter.pdf

Take note: if the company finds your application interesting, they'll gladly forgive you for small errors, but if you send emails randomly and aimlessly, it is less likely that they'll pay attention to your emails.

Be professional - even in an online application

A general tip: use a **serious email address**! What your friends find amusing might not be so funny to your future boss...

In addition, save your outgoing messages or send yourself your applications in Bcc:. This will give you an overview of when you've sent them. If you hear nothing at all from the company, not even a confirmation of receipt, feel free to enquire after a week as to whether everything has been well received. Some companies have firewalls which block GMX, Hotmail and other web-based email addresses.

Here is the check-list for your online application:

- Create your CV in PDF format. Make sure it is easy to read on a screen.
- Create your cover letter in PDF format. For an application via an online form, an extract often suffices as a letter of motivation. For an email application, attach the cover letter and write a short introduction in the email that will immediately arouse interest.
- **Be prepared:** you can draft your answers in advance in Word. This allows you to use spell check as you prepare and then paste your answers in the text boxes of the application form.
- **Be aware of time limits:** some application systems impose a time limit for completing the application. It is also helpful for this reason to read through the form once in peace, prepare the answers in Word and then log in again.
- **Make communication easy:** use a signature, add a coherent subject and use a serious email address.
- **Scan in all documents.** Be aware of the amount of data if necessary.
- **Use keywords** such as field of study, university/college, programs, programming languages, further skills and experience, using the most precise terms possible.
- **Go beyond online communication:** speak with employees at career fairs, ask if you are unclear about something in a job advertisement, make contacts using (online) networks such as Xing or LinkedIn.

Recommended reading and websites:

Svenja Hofert: Beruf & Karriere Bewerbungs- und Praxismappen: **Praxismappe für die perfekte Internet-Bewerbung: E-Mail-Bewerbung, Online-Formulare, Online-Assessment, Online-Bewerbung auf Englisch.** (Job & Career Application and Experience Portfolios**: Experience Portfolios for the Perfect Online Application: Email Applications, Online Forms, Online Assessment, Online Applications in English.**) Stark Publishing, 2012. ISBN 978-3866683624. EUR 16.95.

Christian Püttjer, Uwe Schnierda: **Perfekte Bewerbungsunterlagen für Hochschulabsolventen: Erfolgreich zum Traumjob – auch für Onlinebewerbungen**. Bachelor, Master, Diplom, Magister, Staatsexamen, Promotion. (**Perfect Application Documents for Graduates: How to Get Your Dream Job - Also For Online Applications**. Bachelor's, master's, Diplom (German University degree), Magister (German University degree), Staastexamen (German government-recognised exam), doctorate.) Campus Publishing, 2014. ISBN 978-3593500348. EUR 17.99.

Weblink Staufenbiel online-Bewerbung

Haben Sie noch Fragen?
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http://www.uni-due.de/abz/career.php

Viel Erfolg bei Ihrer Bewerbung!

Stand: 17.01.2016