



The Career Hacker's Guide To

Following Up



“Not following up with your prospects is the same as filling up your bathtub without first putting the stopper in the drain.”

- Michelle Moore, Selling Simplified

The art of following up is nuanced, so we'll explore it piece by piece in this article. In 15 minutes, you'll know everything there is to know about following up on your job hunt. For ambitious job seekers, this is everything you need to know about following up properly to maximize your chances of hearing back.

As with [building a great resume](#) and [writing great cover letters](#), the process of following up on your job hunt is much like doing great marketing and sales.

The advice you read from us isn't the typical job hunting advice —because you're not the typical job hunter. It will sound different

than what you read elsewhere, and that's a good thing. The world is vastly different than it was even just ten years ago, and job hunting in 2020 requires a different set of skills than it did then.



The screenshot shows a tweet from Len Markidan (@LenMarkidan) with the text "Creating great job applications is not dissimilar from doing great marketing." Below it is a reply from Nandini Jammi (@nandoodles) asking "Can you share some of your findings here on Twitter?". The tweet is dated 2:44 AM · Jul 18, 2019 and has 33 likes. There is also a link to see other tweets from Len Markidan.

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Why following up is so important

If you're not 100% convinced of why following up is worth spending your precious time on, here's a quick explainer.

TL;DR

— following up, not applications, is what wins jobs.

The act of following up refers to taking action on a previous item, such as a first email reach-out or a job interview. Great follow-ups are more about staying top-of-mind than triggering an immediate response. The idea is that, when the time is right, the conversation will continue because you've stayed diligent. And that's why it's so important.

Following up is different from leading up, which refers to proactively sending a confirmation message about an upcoming call, meeting, etc. We cover that in our [guide to preparing for and having successful job interviews](#).

Often job seekers think they're being ignored when they don't hear

back. You might think, “Shoot, I must not be valuable enough. I must not be worth their time.” Even great salespeople sometimes lose their motivation and determination when they don’t hear back from anyone. But the best salespeople—and the best job hunters—try new things, and keep pressing on. Remember:

People are not ignoring you—they’re just busy.

I like to remind everyone I work with about this simple but easily forgotten truth: When you’re not hearing back, remember that hiring leaders are busier than ever—especially when they’re managing the entire hiring process on top of their regular job responsibilities.

Early-stage companies don’t always have a dedicated talent manager or recruiter. This works in your favor, because the person hiring very likely has the authority to fast-track you if you blow them away. Following up on your initial application is a great way to keep pushing.

And, as we all know, if you really want the thing, you have to keep pushing. So keep this important principle in mind, and also know that **following up shows diligence and perseverance**—both of which are extremely attractive and valuable traits that hiring managers take into consideration in their decision-making process.

Ready to dive into the process?



When to follow up during your job hunt

Questions of timing and cadence.

This is probably the second most common type of question we get from job seekers:

“How soon should I follow up?”

“When is too soon? When is too late??”

This is probably the second most common type of question we get from job seekers: The answer might seem obvious to some, but it certainly isn't for everyone—and **it depends on exactly what you're following up on.**

On your job search specifically, you should follow up at every step of the process if you're not hearing back within a certain timeframe.

The times are:

After sending in your application / video pitch

- After having a short intro call
- After in-person or phone interviews
- After sending your response to a job offer, and not hearing back
- After someone specifically asks you to follow up with them

These fall into two distinct categories: calls and interviews are **mutual exchanges**, and **one-way communications** are things you send their way, without necessarily hearing back. In the next section, we'll expand on each category.

But in both cases, by far the most common question we hear from job seekers is:

“How often should I follow up?”

The short answer? You should follow up as much as you want the thing. The more you want it, the more you keep following up, until you get a hard “no” or (hopefully) a better response.

Let's see what that looks like in practice.



How to follow up like the pros

Every great follow-up sequence uses an omnichannel approach and a specific cadence to maximize your chances of hearing back.

Omnichannel approach

Using multiple communication channels (e.g. email and LinkedIn and Twitter)

Cadence

The rhythm or pattern with which you do something

HOW TO FOLLOW UP ON ONE-WAY COMMUNICATIONS (JOB APPLICATIONS, PITCHES, EMAILS)

Whether you're doing the classic "submit my application" thing or being more impressive and sending a [video cover letter](#) (AKA video pitch) to express your interest in the position at their company, this advice is the same.

Where to follow up on unanswered messages

Follow up via the same communication method—if you sent an email, follow up in that email thread (find the email and hit Reply). If you sent them a LinkedIn message, send another one. If you haven't heard back after 2-3 follow-ups on the same platform, you can either switch to email, or use a different platform on which your target recipient seems active.

(Example: You've followed up 3 times on LinkedIn, and they haven't responded. You see that they're tweeted consistently in the past couple weeks, so you send them a Twitter DM or tweet at the directly.)

How soon to follow up on unanswered messages

Anytime you're sending applications, pitches, and emails to someone, you should set a reminder to follow up with them if they don't respond. Above all else, the rule of thumb for when is simple: the sooner you want that job, the sooner you follow up.

A fast cadence is following up every 2-3 days, while a slower cadence is every 4-7 days, sometimes even more. Which follow-up cadence you pick depends on:

- how quickly you're trying to get hired,
- how quickly they want to fill the role,

- how many people they're hiring for that role,
- how popular the company is,
- and more.

Let's break it down.

If the company is super popular, they're probably getting a lot of inbound attention. Therefore, waiting too long on an application/pitch could cause you to lose the chance. And, if they're popular, they also might be drowning in applications and emails! Following up soon after your first reach-out is a great way to stay top-of-mind in a busy hiring manager's day.

In fact, if they're growing quickly, they're probably hiring for several of the same role. This adds even more complexity, noise, and risk of losing your application in the mix of everything.

If they're not looking to fill the role immediately, you can afford to space out your follow-ups. Use a slower cadence, to match their hiring pace. However, if they're looking to fill the job quickly, it's worth checking in sooner after your last reach-out.


Overall, use your best judgment and don't worry about following up too soon—better too soon than too late. 😊

HOW TO FOLLOW UP ON MUTUAL EXCHANGES (PHONE CALLS, VIRTUAL MEETINGS, AND JOB INTERVIEWS)

Once you've had a phone call, meeting, or official interview, it's safe to assume you're on your potential employer's radar. With that said, it's still important to stay top-of-mind and proactive about the opportunity to whatever extent you care about winning the offer.

The purpose of following up on calls, meetings, and interviews is to continue the conversation in a written format, reiterate anything you want to remember, show your excitement about the opportunity, and share additional information—whatever was discussed in the exchange.

Make sure you're emailing everyone involved in your interview process, too. [Cambria Davies](#) shares this great tip in her story about winning a role at HubSpot:



The Follow-Up Thank You Email That Got Me Hired One Week After the Interview

CAMBRIA DAVIES

[Interview? Check. Now it's time for the follow up thank you email. Here's how one candidate used this to secure the job.](#)

How soon to follow up on calls and interviews

Follow up on mutual exchanges as soon as possible—typically within a few hours max. Let too much time pass, and you risk them forgetting the context of the conversation, or just seeing you as unorganized.

If the other person specifically asks you to follow up after the call, do it literally right after the call. The minute you say you're going to follow up, the credibility clock is ticking. Don't let it tick too long.

Where to follow up on calls and interviews

Use the channel on which you most recently communicated—if your last messages were email, follow up via email; if it was all on Twitter, follow up on Twitter; etc. The exception? If, on the call, they asked you to follow up with them in a specific way.

(Example: “Great call, Maxine! I’m excited to continue this conversation. Can you please email me at joe@mystartup.com?” ← In this case, of course you should email them, even if the conversation previously happened elsewhere.)



Tools for your job hunt follow-ups

Software has eaten the world. Here are some of the best for your job hunt.

AUTOMATION TOOLS

Why do all this work manually when you can make robots do it for you?

First, let me say this: don't over-automate. Follow-up automation is primarily used by sales professionals running through long lists of leads. If you're running your job hunt correctly, you're rarely applying to more than a couple dozen companies in any given period, which means you don't need to spend hours creating automated follow-up sequences.

You can use a tool like [Hunter Campaigns](#) when you first send your pitch to a hiring manager. The benefits of Hunter:

- It tracks whether a recipient has opened your emails
- It's super simple — no fancy features built for sales professionals
- It can send follow-ups up to 14 days apart if you want a very slow drip
- It stops sending when a recipient replies to your email, or unsubscribes
- You can create reusable templates
- It's free!

We highly recommend sending your first reach-out message using a tool like Hunter for all these reasons, but especially because of the open tracking. There are other tools for that, though, so we'll go over that next.

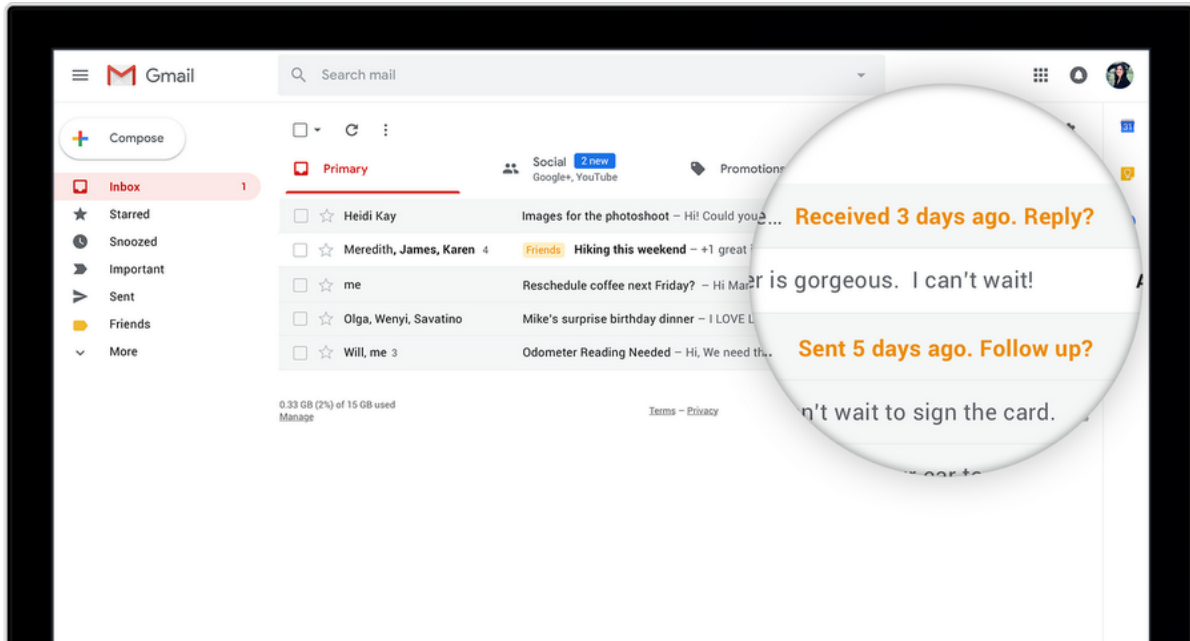
In case it's not obvious, don't automate the process of following up on a call or interview. Once you've had human contact, keep it human/manual. Use email/calendar reminders instead of automation.

REMINDER TOOLS

If you're not keen on using automation (or if you're following up on mutual communications, in which case you shouldn't be automating

your follow-ups) you can set reminders for yourself instead.

If you're using Gmail, it's got a great, built-in follow-up reminder feature right in your inbox:



Outlook also [has some features](#) to help you remember to follow up.

You can also install a third-party tool like [Boomerang](#) or [Followup.cc](#) to remind yourself to follow up after a certain amount of time. You can also use any reminders app, or create calendar events—whatever makes it easy for you!

OPEN TRACKERS

Curious if your recipient saw your email? Nowadays it's possible to see!

The only email app that has this built-in is [Superhuman](#), but there

are several third-party tools to help you achieve this. Keep in mind, you don't want to "request a read receipt" which requires that the recipient manually marks the message "read."

You want this to happen as soon as they open it. (Also note, some people don't appreciate mail trackers. If you have any doubts that your recipient is sensitive to this kind of thing, e.g. they work in cybersecurity, you may want to ignore this step.)

Hunter Campaigns, mentioned above, automatically does this for you. You can also install their [MailTracker](#) extension, or the [Mailtrack.io](#) extension, which are different despite having very similar names.



Caution: avoid these when following up

The most dangerous and common pitfalls to avoid in your job hunting follow-up process. Learn from them, and avoid them at all costs!

FORGETTING CERTAIN PEOPLE

Consistent with Cambria Davies's tip above, Melissa Williams says this on the [YesWare blog](#):

“If you're going to send a follow up email to multiple decision makers, make sure you address it to everyone on the chain”

This is an easy mistake to make—you're so focused on the message itself, you don't realize you're hitting Reply instead of Reply All. One quick fix to make sure you never make this mistake: set your “default reply mode” to Reply All. Here's how to do that in [Gmail](#) and [Outlook](#).

BEATING AROUND THE BUSH

Avoid beating around the bush when you follow up. It's easy to default to phrases like “just wanted to check in,” and you're not wrong for using them—but don't open with this. Instead, get straight to your point.

OMITTING CONTEXT

If I said to you, “Just following up on this. Did you get a chance to review it?” you'd have no idea what I was talking about. Instead, the easiest way to avoid this is simply to change the word “this” to “my previous message about XYZ” or “my pitch to your company” (hyper-linked again).

SOUNDING GENERIC

Be careful not to make your follow-ups sound generic. This is the quickest way to turn someone off to the idea of working with you. Make sure you write each one from the heart, referencing specific points from your previous communication. If you're using automation, you'll need to spend some time considering all the possibilities and bits of context for each specific follow-up.

NOT FOLLOWING UP AT ALL!

Surprisingly, the biggest pitfall of all is simply NOT FOLLOWING UP. We put blood, sweat, and tears into this entire career guide specifically to help you understand why and how to follow up on your job hunt. If you're not doing this, you're making one of the biggest mistakes possible.



Common questions about following up

A lightning round of the most frequently asked questions about following up during your active job hunt!

I'VE HAD A VERY PROMISING ROUND OF INTERVIEWS, BUT NOW I'M NOT HEARING BACK. WHAT DO I DO?

Keep sending those individual, personal emails to all people you've interviewed with, every 2-3 days until you get a "yes" or "no."

WHAT SHOULD I SAY IN A FOLLOW UP EMAIL?

When you haven't heard from them yet:

Just keep checking in, reminding them of your original message—how intrigued you are by the company & the position, and how you believe you can uniquely add value to the organization. Keep reiterating your offer for a short call to see if there's a mutual fit.

After you've interviewed:

Remind them how excited you are, and how you're continuing to think about ways to help the company achieve its desired results!

IT'S BEEN MORE THAN 3 WEEKS AND I STILL HAVEN'T HEARD BACK. NOW WHAT?

Of course, it's unrealistic to try to keep following up forever. This is why you should never rely on a single opportunity to pan out!

Hopefully by now you've been sending more pitches, getting into more conversations/interviews, and moving along in the process with more serious companies. If not, that's what you should be doing.

Find the serious ones, and focus on them.

Final resources

Congrats on making it this far!

Subscribe to the Daily Job Hunt newsletter. Join 200,000+ readers and get a kick in the inbox every morning.

Read the Career Hackers Manifesto: The core principles of discovering and doing what makes you come alive.

THE DAILY JOB HUNT

 careerhackers
manifesto

And check out the other career-hacking guides in this series:

