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Job Search Guide

by

Advanced Corporate Search



PREFACE

We've all been taught to prepare for and learn to deal with change.

Downsizing, corporate takeovers, mergers, LBO's and international competition are forces of change. The rapidly changing structure of the corporate world is forcing more people than ever to confront the reality of a career crisis. Fewer executives are able to grasp the brass ring at the top. Many managers may never achieve the position that seemed within reach just a few years ago. Because change has been so pervasive, more executives than ever find themselves without their traditional mentor, who always assisted in planning and managing their careers. Many are now alone in sensing when it is time to move and knowing how to make the move.

Today's best managed careers rarely involve only a single company or even a single industry. It's not easy to change companies and industries while obtaining steadily increasing responsibilities. Many of us stumble along the way. Take advantage of the experience on which this booklet is based. Your job search can be successful and your career objectives can be met, even in the chaos of today's changing workplace.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE **i**

FORWARD **iv**

There are no Simple Solutions **iv**

A Job Search is a Job in Itself **v**

The Executive Search Community-Retained Search **v**

Take Charge of Your Career in Seven Steps. **vi**

STEP 1 DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE RESUME **1**

Where You Are Right Now **1**

STEP 2 CREATING A SEARCH PLAN **2**

A Schedule for Obtaining Results **2**

STEP 3 TARGETING AND RESEARCHING YOUR MARKET **3**

STEP 4 MARKETING YOURSELF TO YOUR TARGETS **4**

How You Do It **4**

Using Your Network **4**

The Executive Recruiter **4**

Your Combined Mail / Telemarketing Campaign - Doing Your Search **5**

STEP 5 ORCHESTRATING THE PROCESS **6**

Staying in Control and Staying Organized **6**

You Are In Sales Now, So Go For It! **6**

Keeping Records **6**

Preparing For Screening Interviews **7**

STEP 6 SELECTING THE JOB **9**

Is This The Job I Really Want? **9**

Referencing Your Prospective Employers **9**

STEP 7 CLOSING THE DOOR 10
 Your may be surprised how frequently search firms lose track of people.
 10

FINIS 11
 Suggested Further Reading 11

FORWARD

Three executive search professionals wrote this booklet, each of who also compiled significant accomplishments in corporate America. It is not meant to be a complete treatise on all of the fine points involved in the process of searching and obtaining a new position.

More importantly, it is intended to provide a comprehensive big picture, the seven specific steps, that will enable and empower the reader to quickly and efficiently begin penetrating the market and identifying those opportunities that will lead to future career growth.

It is a practical guide based on the observations and the real life experiences of the authors as they reflect upon careers in both the corporate and executive search environment. This booklet has been reviewed by corporate executives, the executive search community and outplacement practitioners. It is thought to be a "concise guide" of "great value" for the job seeking professional. It contains some "new and fresh ideas." It states "simple, practical truths."

There are no Simple Solutions

You may be out of work or your career may be stalled.

People love to seek simple solutions to complex problems. "I'll send my resume to the search firms I know, or better yet, I'll get a directory and do a mass mailing." Luck may seem to work in your favor and within a few weeks a headhunter calls with the perfect position. You may spend a couple of months in pursuit of the position only to discover that you finished the race as a runner-up. Don't fall into this trap! Don't relinquish control of your job search to anyone. Short cuts take more time than anticipated and often don't provide lasting solutions.

A job search is more than just finding a job. It is a matter of finding a job that supports your career objectives. If you allow yourself to be headhunted without being clear about what you want and where you fit, you are very likely to be back in the job market sooner than you planned.

Be realistic in establishing career goals. Don't try to be something you are not. If your career has been predominately in a specific business function don't target a general management position. In the hiring process, companies want to reduce their risk and maximize their flexibility. Target positions where you can build upon

what you know, that require skills you possess and that will allow you to expand the foundation of your career. Ask the question, "If I could choose, given the reality of my skills and experience, what job would I realistically create for myself?"

A Job Search is a Job in Itself

A successful search will take time and will require determination. It's been said that you should plan one month of job searching for each \$10,000 of annual compensation. You can reduce this estimate dramatically, if you use a systematic approach.

You have to initiate your own well planned campaign. This requires new skills, massive effort and all the charisma and salesmanship a person can possibly muster. Accept the reality that you must do this for yourself and channel your energies into initiating a search that will help you satisfy all of your objectives.

One of the things that have made some of you good managers is your ability to delegate responsibility. However, you must do this job yourself; you will fail miserably by trying to delegate this one. Visualize yourself as an entrepreneur in the business of selling yourself. You and you alone have to take control of your destiny.

The Executive Search Community-Retained Search

Most individuals have been recruited by a headhunter sometime in the past and believe that they can use this visible, but not very well understood, network to delegate their problem and become an instant candidate.

You cannot make yourself a candidate. To the retained search firm a candidate is an individual that shows interest in a position and meets most, if not all, of the qualifications specified by the client company. We're asked by most of our corporate clients to talk to people who are currently employed, performing a specified set of job functions in either a competitor company or in a company within a specific industry. No matter how much we may like you, if you don't meet our client's requirements, it's our job to screen you out of consideration. Because we must manage our client/candidate relationship, we won't tell you the bad news, unless you are clearly out of contention.

In recent years the stigma of being unemployed has been softened. With companies, industries, and even regional economies in a dramatic state of change, being unemployed is not uncommon. If you are unemployed, we think

that you are often better off talking directly to a company because a search firm will be required to justify your candidacy.

You may have some chance of success if you target search firms that understand and do work in your industry or your functional area of expertise. In order for you to be of interest, however, the search firm must be conducting a search that is appropriate. Be cognizant of industry ethics, retained search firms rarely present unsolicited resumes to even their best clients. This is referred to as "floating" resumes and is considered unprofessional behavior, which is demeaned, by most corporate Human Resource professionals and ethics setting associations in our industry.

Let's review some statistics. Only about five percent of all available positions fall to the executive search community. A successful search professional handles 10-15 searches a year and contacts 100-150 well targeted people to generate 3-5 qualified candidates for each search. Many people are contacted - very few obtain a new position.

Relying solely on the executive search community, no matter how widely you broadcast your resume, may never land you an appropriate job.

Take Charge of Your Career in Seven Steps.

We assume that you already have a realistic perspective of your capabilities and aptitudes. If you seek a career change, or are in the process of reevaluating your career goals, you probably need to do a self assessment before proceeding. There are many excellent books, career counselors and outplacement services available to help you with a self assessment.

Like it or not, you are in charge now.

This process is similar to what a retained executive search firm would do to help find and then select the ideal candidate for their corporate client:

- **Develop an effective resume.** (Who am I - what can I do?)
- **Create a search plan.** (Where might I work - what are the possibilities?)
- **Research your market.** (What firms should I contact?)
- **Market yourself.** (Do I make a cold call or can I use a relationship?)
- **Orchestrate the process.** (How do I sell myself; how do I manage my time; when do I ask for the order?)

- **Select the right job.** (Which opportunity meets my goals?)
- **Close the loop with your network.** (Be professional - business etiquette applies here too!)

This is probably the first time in your life that you have been an entrepreneur; in your one-person business you have to do it all. Even if you have the resources to hire a staff do not try to delegate. You will be a planner, a salesman and an operations pro - before you can go back to being an employee again.

STEP 1 DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE RESUME

Where You Are Right Now

In our firm, we receive over 250 resumes a week. Some impress us enough to be kept in our files for a year or two, and others go in the recycling bin. There is an industry standard for resumes, and after 20 years of working with hundreds of clients and thousands of candidates, we know, without question, that this standard works, and that it can also work for you.

Your resume and cover letter create your initial introduction to a prospective employer or their agent. It must show who you are, in clear, simple language that reveals both your professional life and also your style and personality. Do not forget, to be successful you must always sell yourself.

A resume is not a place to be indirect or evasive. You must account for all of your time. Many business professionals find the functional resume to be confusing, if not deceptive. We recommend that you avoid the functional resume entirely.

Your resume should show your professional growth (arranged sequentially, present to past), and include your earliest job, all of your increasing levels of responsibility and accomplishment, and a clear description of your most recent position. There is nothing wrong with two or three pages sprinkled with facts. Do not leave out your humble career beginnings, and do not dwell on them either. Mention companies, products, accounts, numbers and relationships. Do not assume that people know your employer, industry or job function. Describe clearly what you did, for whom and to whom, where you were located, when and why you did it! What did you do that was creative, how did you get your promotions, why are you different? Be personal; find ways to let your values, management style, unique projects, and relationships in your function or industry all creep into the resume to bring it to life.

STEP 2 CREATING A SEARCH PLAN

A Schedule for Obtaining Results

Your search plan should include a schedule of deadlines for various actions. These include creating your resume, researching your market, making the initial contact with potential employers or their agents (i.e., the executive search community), marketing yourself through a follow up contact program by mail and telephone, and finally, orchestrating a series of meetings which will develop into interviews, culminating in possibly 90 to 120 days, in a couple of solid job offers.

If you are out of work you should establish a program of self care, designed to increase your self esteem during this time. Being out of work induces stress and you need to provide yourself with means to relieve stress. Establish a daily exercise program and avoid bad habits such as eating or drinking too much. You will sleep well and have the necessary energy for the hard work ahead, if you actively take control of your physical well being.

Regardless of severance pay, golden parachute, or savings in the bank, be certain to budget your life during this search schedule against your cash flow. This is an important part of managing stress and being in control.

STEP 3 TARGETING AND RESEARCHING YOUR MARKET

View your job search as a military campaign. Time spent in planning will help guarantee your tactical success. Targeting and researching your market is the planning stage of your executive search.

You must clarify your own ideas about the kind of company or industry in which you would like to work, career goals you would like this job to satisfy, the geographic locations you want to consider, and finally, the size of the market you are targeting!

To answer these questions, you need to research your industry, either from a technological or functional point of view. You should also study related industries that might meet your goals, and identify all of the companies that could potentially satisfy your needs. This information is readily available. Any good library contains references to various categories of companies: fastest growing companies, most profitable companies, best-to-work-for companies, and other valuable information. Since this process defines your target market, we can not overemphasize the importance of your working diligently at this research phase.

You need to identify at least three people in each target company: (1) the CEO, President, Chief Operating Officer, Division GM, etc.; (2) the highest level executive in your chosen function and (3) the highest level Human Resource executive. Find out where each is located. They become your targets for future contact.

During the weeks that you schedule for research and targeting, you should study periodicals to learn about current events (last 12-18 months) in the industry. Do this before you begin making your actual contacts, so that when you do reach one of your targets on the phone or have an opportunity for an interview you are informed. You need to give yourself research time.

STEP 4

MARKETING YOURSELF TO YOUR TARGETS

How You Do It

Every successful business needs marketing and so do you. Marketing, in your case, is packaging your background and advertising your ability to solve business problems of firms you select. There are three primary ways to market yourself: use your own network, use the executive search community, and use a direct mail/telemarketing campaign. You should use all three to be effective in your job search.

Using Your Network

While your chances of finding your new job through an executive recruiter are about 1 in 20, your chances of finding a job through personal contacts are about 1 in 2. At this stage in your career you should already have your professional network established. If you do not, it is time to start creating one - for this search and for the future.

To activate and inform your network you will telephone, write letters and meet with your contacts. When you do, do not make the mistake of asking friends or contacts to hire you. People love to help, but they hate being put on the spot. Do not beat around the bush; ask your contacts if they can help you.

You seek introductions to people who are in a position to hire you, search professionals who have been helpful to people in your chosen industry, or people in the industry with whom you may have lost touch.

The Executive Recruiter

You must determine which executive search firms to contact. You can use any number of available directories of executive search firms. Their specialties, levels and functions of positions they search, and their geographic orientation are listed, but just look at this as a guide. Every search professional has their own orientation, and is, therefore, specialized, based on their particular business specialty, interests and clients. Select those firms that work in your own, or related, industries, or that do search work for one or more of your target companies. Approach each firm as you would any prospective employer, with a cover letter and your industry standard resume.

You can always contact your prior employer and find out which executive search firms they use. You might be able to arrange a direct introduction to the firm and be able to use that executive search firm's resources for outplacement advice. The single most effective way to utilize the executive search community is to use your industry contacts to discover which search firms do work for your targeted prospects. Through networking you may be able to uncover opportunities.

Your Combined Mail / Telemarketing Campaign - Doing Your Search

When we conduct a search for a mid-level manager, we will typically make 100-125 phone calls to potential candidates, generating an "interested" and "potentially qualified" response of about 15%. We discuss the best 8 to 10 of these prospects with the client, and narrow the field to 3 to 5 who will go through the client interview process.

Reversing these numbers means that you, as the job search executive recruiter, will need to make 300 to 400 quality contacts to generate three good offers. Therefore, it is important for you to get mentally prepared to expend the level of effort that is necessary for satisfactory results. You will find that right job, but you may have to contact 400, 800 or even 1,200 people before you are successful. That is why the next stage - orchestrating the process - becomes so important. Now you see why we say a job search is a numbers game. The more contacts you make, the more you will expand your network and the greater your likelihood of receiving an offer of a job you really want. It takes a search firm 90-160 days to complete a search. It may take you 20 to 50% longer!

STEP 5 ORCHESTRATING THE PROCESS

Staying in Control and Staying Organized

You Are In Sales Now, So Go For It!

If you have never been in sales before, you are now. Furthermore, you are the product. So, if you do not know how to sell, you may want to read a book or two about selling. You must always be positive, honest and direct. Be snappy in your speech. Practice being energetic and cheerful. Nobody wants to hear problems or sad stories - they want solutions and you have to discover and articulate meaningful and realistic solutions.

Keeping Records

If you are computer competent, it will be a big help to keep records of all your activities on a database. Organize yourself, record all of your activity, and always know where you are in the follow-up process.

Marketing yourself will be extremely stressful and will require energy and enthusiasm. You should become more physically active now than you have ever been at any other time in your life. Find a stress reliever that works for you: run or meditate, and plan to get up early in the morning to prepare yourself for the day.

Start telephoning early in the morning and make contacts for several hours. Try to schedule a meeting at mid-day, maybe for lunch or just coffee. These meetings should be with people in your network who can potentially lead you to a job.

There is a secondary benefit. Practice telling your story: who are you, what have you done, and summarize your skills. Explain what happened in your career to get you to this point. You are practicing your positive salesmanship and developing your "sales pitch".

Gradually, you will replace this mid-day meeting with introductory meetings with prospective employers that will lead to actual job interviews.

Keep your calendar organized. Plan the required follow up activity. This includes sending follow-up letters for any of your meetings, contacting people for a second time, or calling people who were previously unavailable. You may want to continue to use your mornings for introductory telephoning; the mid-day meetings, and you may want to relegate your follow-up activities to the afternoons.

A realistic goal is 20 to 30 first interviews out of initial contacts of 300-400. Do not count lunches with members of your network, or courtesy meetings with executive recruiters, as contacts unless the meeting is directly related to an open position. From these 20-30 initial interviews you should end up with two or three solid and appropriate offers.

After screening out various positions (or being screened out), you can expect to be invited back by 6-10 companies, often for multiple interviews with different key individuals in the organization. Be flexible, you may be attending dinners, flying to other cities for interviews, or meeting executives at the airport. Do whatever is needed to keep the flow moving in a positive direction.

Preparing For Screening Interviews

As you get into the first screening interview you want to be certain that you have as much information about the company and its business as possible. You can acquire data from your local stock broker or by calling the company directly and requesting a 10K, an annual report and product literature. Although this should be part of your ongoing research process, it is probably best to do when you are getting ready for your face-to-face interviews. If you are working with an executive recruiter, you should ask for, and obtain, background profiles on the people that you are going to be meeting. Make sure you know as much about them as they know about you. Learn to ask open-ended questions that illustrate a familiarity with the products or services of the company, its client base and market share. Study the financials and ask pertinent questions about footnotes to earnings reports or the balance sheet. Discuss competition, products and challenges the company faces. Ask people about their background, education and likes and dislikes. Never discuss compensation in the first meeting. If they ask you, try to elicit their thoughts by responding with "what do you have in mind?" Don't let finances be a deal breaker. If you sell yourself, the price is always negotiable.

Be sure to follow-up, close quickly and cleanly with prospects that you have eliminated. These can become valuable future business contacts. If you liked the person, but did not like the company or the environment, let them know honestly and directly why you did not pursue the opportunity. If you did not like the person, use your best social skill and business etiquette to disengage elegantly. The last thing you want to do is harm any portion of the network you have worked so hard to establish. Close up all loose ends. You never know whom you may meet again, and how. All correspondence should be sent on good plain bond paper. If you are not computer equipped hire a secretarial service that produces professional-quality business documents. Do not use dot-matrix printers or colored paper. Do not print on both sides of the paper. When you like a company be sure to think about your ideal references and contact each person before the company asks you. Explain the specifics of the job and solicit their opinion of the fit. It's important to broach this issue because this is the first thing they will be asked in the

reference check. Companies usually want references from superiors, peers and subordinates. Have a short and long list ready to hand out or fax.

STEP 6

SELECTING THE JOB

Is This The Job I Really Want?

The acid test is to imagine how successful and fulfilled you might be after two years in the job. In other words, does the position meet your objectives? Another question you may want to ask yourself is "How will my resume look in two years?"

Referencing Your Prospective Employers

Checking the references of your possible future employer can be the single most important step in satisfying your career goals. Very few candidates conduct reference checks on the hiring executive and their staff. Find out what kind of a person this boss is, what is the industry scuttlebutt; will you enjoy working for this person; is your style and personality compatible; will you be able to work together to achieve mutual goals? Do not wait until you have an offer before you do this reference research. It may take a few days or weeks to accomplish.

STEP 7 CLOSING THE DOOR

Your may be surprised how frequently search firms lose track of people.

Your career management and overall job success are based on learning to nurture your network of friends, colleagues and contacts. Make sure people know where you are, especially if you have relocated. Send a note with your new title, responsibilities, address and phone number so they can update their database. This applies to executives you have contacted in your job search. Within the first month on the new job (before it will be considered "bad taste"), put yourself in good stead with the executive recruiters in your network and send a complete updated resume with your new position described - it makes possible future contact much easier.

FINIS

We hope that this booklet has been informative and helpful. We invite your comments; please contact us at:

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Suggested Further Reading

What Color Is Your Parachute? by Richard Nelson Bolles 426p/1991/paperback

The Complete Job Search Handbook by Howard Figler 366p/1988/paperback

Job Search: The Total System by Kenneth & Sheryl Dawson 244p/1988/
paperback

The Executive Resume Book by Loretta Foxman 210p/1989/paperback

Does Your Resume Wear Blue Jeans by C. Edward Good 178p/1985/
paperback

Resumes: The Nitty Gritty by Joyce Lain Kennedy 28p/1987/paperback

The Resume Writer's Handbook by Michael Holley Smith 184p/1987/paperback

How To Leave Your Job & Buy A Business Of Your Own by C.D. Peterson
207p/1988/hardbound

Out The Organization: Gaining the Competitive Edge by Madeleine & Robert
Swain 1988/paperback

Job-Bridge: An Outplacement and Career Transition Program by Robert
Wilson/1988

The Headhunters by John Byrne 280p/1986/hardcover

The Complete Q & A Job Interview Book by Jeffrey G. Allen, CPC 216p

Sweaty Palms: The Neglected Art of Being Interviewed by H. Anthony Medley
190p/1984/paperback

Knock 'Em Dead by Martin John Yate 155p/1988/paperback

Out-Interviewing the Interviewer by Stephen Merman & John McLaughlin 223p/
1983/paperback

The 40+ Job Hunting Guide by E. Patricia Birsner 250p/1987/paperback

Rites of Passage at \$100,000+ by John Lucht 547p/1988/hardcover