

The Executive Candidate's **SURVIVAL** Guide



Kylie Hammond

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*"You are amazing. You are a shooting star.
I will follow you forever no distance is too far.
Never take for granted your ability to fly.
At times stop and rest, but quickly get back up
before your dreams pass you by."*

Eric Pio, American Poet

About the author

Kylie Hammond is the founder of Board Portfolio, the leading board search and advisory group in Australia. Nearly a decade ago, Kylie founded the Amazing Results Group, now the largest Executive Coaching and Mentoring group in the Asia–Pacific region. She is a leading Board and Executive Search, Board Talent Management Consultant, and Australia’s foremost CEO Business Mentor. Kylie represents executive clients via her exclusive Board and Talent Management Programs, manages a number of Executive Search engagements for them, and coaches a range of clients across executive, leadership, sales, business, women’s issues and career development areas. Working in partnership with many of the top CEOs, Kylie’s career management support has helped hundreds of senior executives execute highly confidential career moves. Visit www.kyliehammond.com.au to view a range of unique career coaching programs and executive resume writing packages.

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Introduction

The rules of job hunting have evolved considerably over the years and conducting a job search is not for the faint-hearted. If you are in the market for a new job or thinking about making a career change, you may find it a bit overwhelming as you survey the ever-shifting job seekers' landscape, while trying to decide what online resources to use or networking scenarios to include or avoid.

Unlike in the past when it was typical to work for the same employer for years on end, it is now common to change jobs more frequently. This is especially true for industries such as high-tech and financial services. Likewise, small companies may not provide sufficient rungs on the ladder for advancement, necessitating a change of jobs. There is also the increasingly common scenario of individuals finding themselves unemployed, due to circumstances beyond their control.

Looking for a new job can actually be a hard job in itself, especially in today's economic climate. However, if you follow the recommended steps outlined in this book, to carefully plan and execute a successful job search, you could soon be on your way to working in the career you've always wanted.

It's all right here in *The Executive Candidate's Survival Guide*, along with breakthrough strategies and advice that includes building your professional toolbox with a quality resume and a career portfolio. I'll teach you how to recognise a good opportunity, and walk away from a bad one. I'll offer suggestions on how to prepare for an interview and walk through the door with confidence, as well as negotiate a salary package with benefits.

In addition, you will learn the intricacies of professional and social networking. Many executives are uncertain of how new media can impact their career development and how important it is to develop and nurture important connections. The reality is there is no secret formula – just a basic understanding of how the process works and how it can work for you.

Talented executives are increasingly seeking a more proactive approach to career management. To find a secure executive position it takes more than possessing the appropriate skills and experience. The key is preparation and organisation. This book was developed to guide you through the process of preparing your resume, to applying and interviewing for top-level positions, so that you will stand out from the crowd.

These tips and hints come from many years of experience in the executive search industry and working with a large variety of companies and HR professionals. Armed with this insider knowledge, your chances of finding success in your executive job search will increase significantly.

Some critical job search elements I'll cover in this book are:

- Identifying your professional goals and analysing your options
- Understanding your value proposition and learning how to market yourself
- Developing a career portfolio
- Developing a resume for specific opportunities

- Leveraging the power of professional and social media, and making valuable connections
- Knowing how to work with executive search consultants and headhunters
- Discovering where to find the best referees
- Learning how to negotiate the best contract
- Making a graceful exit from an existing job

We've got a lot of ground to cover, so let's start the journey towards your new career today!



1

Laying the foundation for career success

Laying the foundation to search for a new job or career begins with a good education and strong sense of purpose, but that's only the beginning. To keep the momentum moving, you will need to arm yourself with a healthy dose of knowledge, liberally sprinkled with experience, and well-blended with motivation and a good attitude.

It is important to understand that you cannot be all things to all people. Otherwise, you will undermine the things you truly excel at. Carrying this forward to your job search, you should only apply for positions that will benefit from your knowledge and experience, and enable you to use your strengths for the benefit of the company and your career.

Identify exactly what areas you excel in and then determine how these competencies apply to the job. During this process, you are also bound to identify your weaknesses but these are not what you want to concentrate on. However, you do need to acknowledge your weaknesses so that you know when a job should be bypassed because it's unsuitable. Focus on a specific niche that will showcase your talents and skills. That is how you become known as an expert in your field.

Using the role competencies listed below, rate, on a scale of 1–10, how satisfied you are with each of these areas of your executive role. This will help to identify the areas you are confident about, and areas that can be improved through coaching and other means.

Decision Making:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Communication:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Results:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Managing Choice:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Customer Service:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Strategic Planning:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Team Development:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Risk Taking:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
_____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
_____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Feel free to add additional competencies. Make another list by writing down each of your strengths, identified above, and noting your achievements next to them for validation. This will clarify your successes and competencies, making it much easier to call upon them in preparation for your job search. Your list of strengths should also include:

- What you know how to do very well and have proven through success.
- Achievements leading to results.
- Skills representing years of experience.
- Capabilities which acknowledge potential for the future.

In today's uncertain economy, people often end up feeling as if they are carrying the world on their shoulders. However, with the right attitude and a clear vision, the world you carry on your shoulders could be one that fits comfortably, and does not make you bend at the knees.

Clarifying your vision

In knowing your goals and strengths comes a responsibility to identify your personal and professional vision. This is a step too many people purposely let slide by allowing themselves to be non-specific such as, "I want to be an executive in a large company." If that is true, then ask yourself these questions:

- What type of company?
- How large?
- What type of corporate culture will my strengths and management style most likely fit best in?
- What type of environment will foster my personal growth, and is most likely to provide me with the setting where I can make the greatest contribution?

Unfortunately, people often try to change themselves to fit the position that is available. To put it bluntly – that is a mistake. It is difficult to change your very core where values and vision are found. So ask yourself these additional questions:

- How can my values blend with the organisation where I am applying for an executive position?
- Does the company philosophy promote the same values?

If you are struggling to answer these types of questions, then you have not properly laid the foundation to look for a new job or career.

“If you want to be successful, find someone who has achieved the results you want and copy what they do and you’ll achieve the same results.”

Tony Robbins

A vision is composed of your core values and purpose. Consider what is integral to you as a person; that should not change no matter where you work. Then ask yourself how those values will support what you hope to achieve in life and at work. In other words, what future do you envision for yourself, and how those core values can get you there?

Use the worksheet at the end of this chapter to assist with identifying and clarifying your personal values. This exercise will help you to understand how your values impact all areas of your life.

Define your personal style

One way to clearly define your personal style, and how you would meet performance expectations, is to take a personality and self-awareness test such as one from the Myers-Briggs Foundation (<http://www.myersbriggs.org>). A personality test reveals leadership potential and styles, and can predict your ability to make innovative decisions and lead teams. Note that this is not an intelligence test. It identifies the types of personality traits you possess so you can determine the best type of career you are suited for.

It's not uncommon during an interview to be asked to take a similar personality test. By taking one or two on your own, you will have had the opportunity to honestly think about your responses and how they correlate to a particular company.

It's important to research and study corporate culture and leadership styles that have been successful so that you can identify, if and how, you are a good fit from a personal perspective. A personality test can help you specifically identify how you would make decisions or establish priorities, which just happens to be the same information the potential employer will be seeking.

PERSONAL SELF-ASSESSMENT

The following are personal self-assessment questions you should take the time to reflect on, and answer honestly:

1. What motivates you?
2. How do you sabotage yourself?
3. How do you learn best?
4. How do you release stress?
5. How do you enjoy yourself?
6. What do you do to look after yourself on a regular basis?
7. What do you think your weak points are?
8. What are your strong points?
9. What have you given up on in life?
10. When were you happiest in your life? Why?
11. When were you unhappiest? Why?
12. If you could have anything in the world what would it be?
13. What do you want to be remembered for?
14. What do you want the rest of your life to be about?

Identify professional goals

It's also important to identify professional goals within the context of your values and vision. Though the words “goal setting” have become buzzwords that tend to lose people's attention and cause their eyes to glaze over, the fact is that one of the most powerful steps you can take is setting goals.

Establishing specific professional goals actually begins with setting personal goals. Your personal goals identify what you want to do with your life. Then you set professional goals that blend with your personal goals. This will enable you to remain true to yourself and convey that sincerity.

Experienced interviewers or employers can detect internal conflict and may assume that discord will carry into the job. If you are unable to tell an employer what your specifically defined goals are, how can you determine if the job will enable you to create the future you want? Employers usually know when someone is simply “applying for a job” rather than taking a career step in a positive direction. Goals should represent what you are excited about and what can earn your dedication. Goals should also reflect building on the strengths and values you have already identified.

A good exercise in goal setting is to identify where you were five years ago in your career, where you are at this moment, and where you would like to be in another five years. This gives you an excellent perspective on your achievements to date and where you want future success to take you.

If you still have difficulty setting goals, you may want to consider taking some courses at a university or attending professional development workshops. Setting professional goals is very personal, but there are plenty of tools available that can help you develop clear objectives that provide direction.

Sum of our total experiences

Prospective employers often ask executive candidates to undergo executive assessments. The assessments usually come after a series of interviews, and are in-depth exercises. The exercises may include an interview with a psychologist, role-playing, business simulation exercises, personality tests, leadership traits assessments and others. The only way to “pass” these tests is to be fully prepared both personally and professionally. Fully prepared means having a firm grasp of your values, strengths and goals because these three qualities will determine how you respond.

Let's get real: a healthy attitude adjustment

Everyone needs an attitude adjustment every now and then, perhaps some more than others. And while you may try your best to maintain a positive outlook while immersed in an unpleasant working situation, it can be difficult dealing with all of that negativity. So how do you deal with it? Shake it off!

“If you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change.”

Wayne Dyer

There is a parable about a farmer who owned an old mule. One day the mule fell into the farmer's deep, dry well and began to bray loudly.

After carefully assessing the situation, the farmer sympathised with the mule but decided that neither the mule nor the well was worth the trouble of saving. Instead, he called his neighbours together,

told them what happened, and enlisted their help to haul dirt to bury the old mule in the well and put him out of his misery.

Initially, the old mule was hysterical! But as the farmer and his neighbours continued shoveling dirt on to his back, a thought struck him. It suddenly dawned on him that every time a shovel load of dirt landed on his back, he should shake it off and step up!

This he did, blow after blow. “Shake it off and step up ... shake it off and step up ... shake it off and step up!” He kept on repeating this phrase to encourage himself. No matter how painful the blows or distressing the situation seemed, the old mule fought panic and just kept right on shaking it off and stepping up.

It wasn't long before the old mule, battered and exhausted, stepped triumphantly over the wall of that well and walked through the crowd. What seemed like it would bury him, actually blessed him – all because of the manner in which he handled his adversity. (*Anonymous*)

This parable demonstrates a healthy attitude and a great way to approach life: Shake it off and step up! Too often we cling to past hurts and resentments, allowing these adversities to bury us in the rubble of self-despair. However, if we face our problems and decide to handle them in a positive manner, we can step out of the ‘wells’ in which we find ourselves.

How you feel about yourself can work one of two ways: It can work for you, by identifying your potential, or against you, by defining your weaknesses. For example, you cannot make more money than you think you can. Nor can you expand your career further than you believe you are capable.

To develop a healthy attitude and start feeling more positive about whom you are, you will need to develop a good opinion of yourself. The Abraham-Hicks teachings call this process a “Pivot: To

consciously change the direction of one's thought. To deliberately choose a thought that is in vibrational harmony with one's desire."

Feeding yourself self-defeating thoughts will only allow more adversity and problems to creep into your life. However, opening yourself up to new experiences and finding more positive ways to look at things, will have a huge impact on you and those around you.

This transformation needs to take place before you start your job search so that you can present a confident and positive image. Walking into an interview with a good attitude will automatically give a strong first impression, which is critical to your success.

Time for a change?

How do you know when it's time to find another position? Although it may seem the answer to that question would be easier for a rank-and-file employee versus a top level executive, that is not necessarily true. Even executives and high-level managers discover they want to change jobs at some point, despite receiving a high salary, great benefits, bonuses and company status. Obviously there is more to the story, or executives would never leave their positions.

The ideal executive or management position fulfills a number of personal and professional objectives with money ranking fourth or fifth. More important than money are things like job satisfaction, the ability to make a real contribution in terms of talents and competencies, the ability to fulfill an organisational purpose that blends well with professional goals and objectives, opportunities

SMART TIP

Look into educational opportunities that can help connect your skills and expertise to your new field of interest. This may involve attending weekend seminars and/or taking evening courses at a local university. You can also join professional groups in your target field for networking opportunities.

to be creative and forward thinking, as well as a number of other considerations. It is probably safe to say that most high-level executive positions offer these intangibles, in addition to generous compensation and other benefits, making you wonder why anyone would want to consider a change.

When needs change

The fact is that people and organisations grow and develop. During the growth process the needs of both change. An organisation may get a new Board of Directors and decide to pursue a completely different marketing strategy than the one you agreed to develop and promote. Or you may simply decide that you have reached an age where it's time to pursue a new career in a “now or never” approach. There are a myriad of reasons why people choose to make a change in their current job or change career paths.

The question is whether this is a wise move when you are firmly and successfully established in a quality position that obviously did meet your goals and needs at one time. This is not a particularly easy question to answer because each situation involves a unique set of circumstances. However, there are ways to tell if the time is now:

- Your management talents were ideal for the stage of growth the organisation was in at the time of your employment, but the business has now matured and no longer requires these talents.
- The company has changed its mission and it no longer meshes with your personal and professional goals.
- The company directors or management team are too restrictive, and your decisions are frequently second-guessed despite past successes.
- Organisational qualities that originally attracted you, are no longer there.
- The job no longer brings personal satisfaction.

- Ethical concerns have developed to the point where you feel the need to change jobs to protect your integrity.
- Organisational culture has changed to one that you are not comfortable working in.
- The business does not allow you opportunities to use creativity or innovation that are important to you.

Perhaps you have a dream job or career in mind, or have been approached by an executive search firm. People sometimes leave their jobs because they get offered a better compensation package with another company. They also change jobs simply because they are bored and are looking for new challenges. It is difficult to stay in a position where you don't think your expertise is being fully utilised or the job no longer holds your interest.

Like anything in life, thinking about making a change is much easier than going through the process. It's not easy to give up a safe and successful career despite the internal discord that tells you it's time.

Statistics show that the average baby boomer switches jobs 10 times in his or her career, so there is certainly nothing wrong with changing jobs. However, it is a big decision that requires a lot of thought and planning. Abruptly making a change is not a good way to handle the situation and can actually burn a few bridges. Not only do you fail to give the change adequate consideration, but this may leave an executive gap the organisation cannot quickly backfill.

When you make a change, you want to make sure it is for the right reasons. It's possible the current situation at work, leading you to consider a job change, is short term or the change you are planning will lead to greater dissatisfaction. Even boredom can often be rectified by accepting new responsibilities. The only way to prevent a disaster is to follow some steps that ensure you put the right amount of thought into your career or job change.

Changing jobs to change circumstances

Unfortunately, many people change jobs without evaluating their true reasons. Changing with insufficient information or hastily changing without researching your final destination can lead to predictable mistakes.

Research the new position carefully: Is the position you are considering with a company in a strong financial position? Is the position clearly defined? Does the company offer opportunities for growth or creativity you desire? Is the cultural fit good?

Evaluate your precise reasons for leaving the current position: If you are leaving because you can't get along with another executive, or are just generally unhappy, and willing to accept any job to get out, then you are moving too fast. There are better ways to deal with personality conflicts. Moves born of desperation seldom work. Career or job changes, especially at management levels, should be carefully planned.

Ask yourself if money is your main motivator for making a change? Being offered more money is always enticing, but it is a temporary lure. Once you are in the new position, and many of the same pressures you feel now begin to build, the appeal of the extra compensation may fade.

Verify if the job change is your decision or whether you are being pressured by family or other considerations? Though it's important to consider your family's needs, remember this is your working life and your career.

Making a career change

Making a completely different career change can be as life altering as it is career altering. A career change may actually mean starting over again, although you take your talents, abilities and experience

with you. Before making a career change, it's important to do a thorough self-assessment.

- Research the new career field, reviewing the advantages and disadvantages.
- Meet with a psychologist or career coach to explore your reasons for wanting to make a major change.
- Evaluate in detail what you are giving up by changing careers, in terms of networking, retirement, and reputation; then balance those losses against your gains in a new career.
- Take a personality test or an aptitude-assessment test, and evaluate the results in light of your proposed new career.
- Evaluate several possibilities, not just one.

When someone has a dream they hold on to for years, it's easy to romanticise that dream. As you sit in a manager's office feeling as if you are living in the age of discontent, the dream of a new career may take on even more importance to you. However, it's vital to keep the dream in perspective and make sure the career change is realistic, practical, affordable and fits well with your abilities.

Analysing your options

Once you decide it's time for a change, then it's time to begin planning. This includes networking and perhaps establishing a new set of connections that can help you locate your ideal job or get established in a new career. All of these concepts will be discussed in detail throughout the book.

You can also do a SWOT analysis that can bring everything into focus. SWOT is the acronym for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. If you decide that changing jobs or careers is the right decision, then you must evaluate your current skills, experience and education against the future considerations.

SMART TIP

Change should not be undertaken without a plan. You may want to explore more than one career or more than one job when considering a change. Write down your personal and professional goals once again and use them as guidelines for decision-making.

You may need to pursue additional educational courses in preparation for a new career.

Level of competition in your industry or sector

Even though the demand for executives and professionals in certain industries has increased dramatically in recent times, competition for the best positions in high-calibre organisations is still as intense as ever.

The number of employers in almost every industry or sector will continue to shrink as a result of industry shake-ups and consolidations, mergers and acquisitions, corporate collapses, international or multinational companies closing or downsizing their operations, companies outsourcing or contracting out many non-core or even core activities to lower-cost offshore suppliers, the impact of technologies on the requirement for people, cost-cutting measures and so on.

Therefore, expect intense competition for the best jobs in the best companies. If you are finding the competition too intense, a solution favoured by those willing to leave their egos out of the equation, is to identify niches, sectors, organisations or roles where you have a distinct competitive advantage, and where the competition is less intense. The fun of bashing your head against the wall soon diminishes. Seeking to work for a high profile, blue-chip organisation without a strong competitive advantage is a recipe for frustration and disenchantment.

Conservatism of many large employers

Employers tend to favour candidates with experience within their industry or arena. Many employers who have previously been convinced to take on employees from outside their industry, only to find out that these employees lacked sufficient industry know-how and expertise, have instead decided to take the safer route of employing people with specific industry experience.

Frequently, I hear the argument that employers should be prepared to hire people on the basis of their more enduring and transferable qualities, and attributes. However, it's not an argument that finds favour amongst many employers.

In addition, executive search consultants are reluctant to forward applications from candidates outside their clients' industries because they will inevitably receive a terse reaction such as: "Why did you send me someone who is clueless about my industry? I can't afford to give them six months to get up to speed. They have to hit the ground running."

If you want to move into a different industry, there are two partial solutions. First, patiently seek out employers who have a reputation for hiring people with qualities and attributes not necessarily linked to industry experience. Second, explicitly demonstrate how your skills and experience can be an advantage in a different industry or sector.

Bias of many employers against people from other countries

Even if you have experience in the same industry or sector as the employer, if that experience is from overseas, you can invariably expect the employer to prefer applicants with local experience. Of course, the logic from the candidate's perspective is that it should not matter whether the experience has been gained in Australia or

in the US, South Africa, the UK, India, Indonesia or anywhere else in the world.

However, if you try that argument on employers, many of them will tell you there is no way you can possibly be as productive as quickly as a local who understands the idiosyncrasies of the industry, market, culture and the way business is conducted.

Whether you think it's fair or not, it is a fact that this happens to many overseas candidates. Compared to a local job seeker, overseas applicants can expect to wait two to four or more times as long to get a job, and may only get 20 percent of the number of interviews for the same types of jobs as someone locally.

Potential solutions are to identify employers that have people from your country in decision-making positions – make sure you have sufficient funds to mount an extended campaign, work for free to get local experience or identify employers where experience in your home country could be an advantage.

Applying below or above your “level”

Many people are surprised when they don't get interviews for jobs they could do blindfolded with one hand tied behind their backs while standing on their heads. However, it's no surprise that employers favour employees who they perceive are more likely to stick around, see the job as a forward career move and will be challenged by the opportunity.

Employers assume that people who apply for jobs two to three or more levels below their most recent position will want to leave as soon as something better comes along. Why do they think that? Because that's what often happens. It's very difficult for someone who has been a Director of Finance in a \$500m corporation for the past five years to convince an employer they would be willing to take a job as an Assistant Accountant in a \$5m business. In addition,

there is always the totally irrational and unreasonable fear among bosses that these over-qualified executives might “want my job”!

Of course, it is obvious that if you apply for a job above your current level with a different employer, you are less likely to get interviews because you will probably be competing with people who have already been operating at that level for years. Why would an employer consider you if there are a dozen applicants who can already demonstrate that they can operate at that level? If you are applying for roles in organisations other than your current employer, consider applying for positions at around the same level of responsibility, proving yourself in the new organisation and then applying for internal promotions.

Although it could take longer to reach the level you want, it may prove to be a more successful strategy than consistently missing out on opportunities because you are up against people who can prove they are already capable at that level.

SMART TIP

Explore both promotion and lateral opportunities. A lateral move may lay the groundwork for a significant vertical move.

Bias of employers against entrepreneurs

People who want or need to “get a real job” after running their own business for a decade or more, face problems because employers believe that they may not fit into the culture, won’t take direction, won’t sit still, will want to change things the minute they arrive, and may discover how the organisation can be managed much more effectively.

Of course, the employers are right! Entrepreneurs and independent business people can make poor employees because they can’t take direction, have no patience and are always looking to change things. Why do you think they went into business for themselves in the first place?

Although not impossible, it is more difficult for someone who has been self-employed for many years to get interviews, than people who have been in the employed workforce. Many employers ask: “If they are so good at running a business, why are they looking for a job with my company? They should be out there making squillions or sitting on the beach with all the money they’ve made.”

Potential solutions include identifying organisations that employ former self-employed people in decision-making roles, who value independent thinking and entrepreneurial approaches, and identifying start-ups and smaller firms who don’t necessarily want conservative employees. Finding ways to get a seat on the board of a smaller firm or investing in a business where you can have a substantive impact are also potential solutions.

Expanding your professional goals

The skills that are needed to succeed in today’s marketplace will naturally change over time. To remain competitive, job seekers need to continually upgrade and improve their skills and techniques. As a result, it is your duty to keep up-to-date on the latest developments and changes in your industry.

For some professions, ongoing training is required to maintain certification or a licence. You may have an accepted list of development opportunities regularly presented to you; if not, you are responsible for building your own list of highly desired skills to acquire. Either way, engaging in personal development will help you keep your brand fresh and your mind engaged with your field of work.

Don’t wait for someone else to send you to a training seminar or decide that additional education should be a part of your personal development plan. Investigate what courses might benefit your career and register yourself. The key is to be aware of what’s important and upcoming in your field so that you are ready to adapt

and thrive in that environment. This is your basic responsibility in a frequently evolving job market and one that cements your status as a continuing success story.

Clarifying your personal values worksheet

Knowing your values is an essential element of your profile. Everyone has values but few of us have taken the time to identify them. Make the most of your life by developing an understanding of yourself and clarifying your personal values. These values give you an internal compass and help you shape the way you work. Knowing yourself will allow you to seek opportunities that will fulfill you most effectively, and enable you to do your best. You should revisit these from time to time as you prepare for new job opportunities or experience changes in your life. Below is a list of personal values many people consider to be important to their lives. Please carefully consider the following to identify your values, adding additional values if you like. Create an initial shortlist by ticking or circling the 25 values that are most important to you.

Abundance	Collaboration	Encouragement
Acceptance of diversity	Commitment	Endurance
Accessibility	Compassion	Energy
Accomplishment	Competence	Enthusiasm
Achievement	Competition	Excellence
Acknowledgement	Composure	Expressiveness
Activism	Concentration	Fairness
Adaptability	Confidence	Family
Advancement	Conformity	Fearlessness
Adventure	Connection	Financial Independence
Aesthetics	Consistency	Firmness
Altruism	Contentment	Fitness
Ambition	Continuity	Flexibility
Appreciation	Contribution	Fluency
Approachability	Control	Focus
Assertiveness	Conviction	Forgiveness
Assurance	Cooperation	Fortitude
Attention to detail	Courage	Frankness
Attentiveness	Courtesy	Freedom of choice
Authenticity	Creativity	Friendship
Availability	Credibility	Fun
Awareness	Curiosity	Generosity
Balance	Decisiveness	Global awareness
Belonging	Dependability	Global Peace
Benevolence	Determination	Gratitude
Calmness	Dignity	Guidance
Camaraderie	Diligence	Happiness/positive attitude
Candour	Directness	Harmony
Capability	Discipline	Having a say/voice
Carefulness	Discretion	Having dreams
Certainty	Diversity	Health
Challenge	Drive	Help Others
Change and variety	Dynamism	Help society
Charity	Eagerness	Honesty
Cheerfulness	Education	Honour
Clarity	Effectiveness	Hopefulness
Clear-mindedness	Efficiency	Humour
Cleverness	Empathy	

Imagination and Creativity	Perspective	The big picture
Impartiality	Physical challenge	Thinking time
Independence	Pleasure	Thoroughness
Industry	Positive attitude	Tolerance
Influence People	Power and authority	Tranquility
Ingenuity	Pragmatism	Trustworthiness
Inner harmony	Precision	Understanding
Innovation	Proactivity	Vision
Inquisitiveness	Professionalism	Wisdom
Insightfulness	Quality of Life	Workmanship
Inspiring others	Quiet times	Zeal
Integrity	Recognition	
Intellectual status	Reliability	
Intelligence	Resilience	
Kindness	Resolve	
Knowing your values	Resourcefulness	
Knowledge	Respect	
Leadership	Results	
Learning Leisure	Risk taking	
Living your dreams	Satisfaction	
Love for others	Security	
Loyalty	Self-control	
Making a difference	Self-reliance	
Making decisions	Self-respect	
Massive wealth	Sensuality	
Motivation	Serenity	
Music	Sincerity	
Natural living	Skillfulness	
Nature	Spirituality	
Open communication	Spontaneity	
Optimism	Stability	
Organisation	Standing up for yourself	
Originality	Style	
Passion	Support	
Persistence	Taking care of myself	
Personal expression	Taking responsibility	
Personal growth	Teamwork	

My main 25 life values are:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.
11.
12.
13.
14.
15.
16.
17.
18.
19.
20.
21.
22.
23.
24.
25.

Clarify your 6 key life values

From your selection above, group together common values, and by a process of elimination, select which are your 6 key values.

My top 6 values are:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Understand where your life values currently fit into different areas of your life

Review your 6 values above and list them in the areas where you utilise them. Note: values may be repeated.

Work:
.....

Home/personal environment:
.....

Family:
.....

Friends/social life:
.....

Intimate Relationships:
.....

Understand where your life values do not currently fit into specific areas of your life

Again review your 6 values and list them in the areas where they are not represented. Values may be repeated.

Work:

.....

Home/personal environment:

.....

Family:

.....

Friends/social life:

.....

Intimate Relationships:

.....

Insights about your life values

Reviewing the previous two lists, is there anything that stands out about each area? What insight, if any, does this give you?

Work:

.....

Home/personal environment:

.....

Family:

.....

Friends/social life:

.....

Intimate Relationships:

.....

The impact of your values in your life

The key values that are missing in the main parts of your life are likely to impact your life. Can you identify what, if any, this impact is?

Work:

.....
.....

Home/personal environment:

.....
.....

Family:

.....
.....

Friends/social life:

.....
.....

Intimate Relationships:

.....
.....

Integrating your values into all areas of your life

What can you do to bring your key life values into all areas of your life?

Work:

.....
.....

Home/personal environment:

.....
.....

Family:

.....
.....

Friends/social life:

.....
.....

Intimate Relationships:

.....
.....



2

Developing your career plan

When D.T. Hall wrote about the Protean Career model in 1976 (see sidebar), he was seeing an emerging world. Today, we see this world as an established culture that is strengthening. The old ways are fading and you have to make your own success with a carefully developed career plan. By using personal and professional inventories, building your brand, focusing your job search, and committing to ongoing growth, you can live your plan, own your future, and embrace your personal and professional success.

Whether you have decided to look for a higher-level position or have found yourself unemployed, there is no need to panic and run about helter-skelter. Although you may want to accelerate the job search process, there are certain preparations you must accomplish first. This includes developing a career plan that will enable you to successfully conduct an effective job search.

Part of the process requires setting measurable goals. Some of those objectives may include sending out a certain number of resumes each week or contacting a specific number of people in your network. In this chapter, I will discuss some of the career management strategies you should concentrate on. The important

thing is to work out a plan beforehand that will help to keep you focused throughout your job search.

Searching for the perfect job for your skill set and aspirations may take time, but don't let yourself get discouraged. Finding a new job can be a full-time job in itself. Just remember that you are in the driver's seat with full control over what direction your career path takes you. In the end, you are the one who decides what you want to do and what you need to do to get there.

A NEW ERA: PROTEAN CAREERS

Decades of trust in the organisation as a developmental vehicle for long-term careers have given way to the idea of the "Protean Career." The term was first coined in 1976 by D.T. Hall, a researcher trying to explain a world where employers no longer took responsibility for the success or failure of their workers. He saw this world as an emerging phenomenon in the late-1970s, but it is a paradigm that has come to dominate the modern employment environment.

In a Protean Career framework, individuals are responsible for their own career plans and development, with organisations serving only as the locations where personal development occurs. The concept of being a "victim" of corporate downsizing or being "at the mercy" of the economy is not permitted. That's considered a dead-end mindset that won't work and should be discarded.

The Protean Career is one that the individual owns and manages, regardless of the success or failure of the economy. It is incumbent upon each individual to monitor and access the best opportunities in their specific market, to anticipate market needs, develop relevant skills, and adapt to succeed, in multiple circumstances. To do this it is necessary to cut free from traditional programming about work. Individuals make their own way based on personal and professional skills' inventories, a well-developed personal brand, an organised and targeted job search, and ongoing personal growth goals.

Taking inventory

The first step in preparing your career development plan is to sit down and take stock. You need to know what attributes you can use in the marketplace. To do this, you'll need to take a current personal and professional inventory of your skills, abilities, and knowledge.

It is important at this point to put aside the judgments and descriptions that others have assigned to you over the years. Break free of the moulds you've been slotted into by well-meaning friends or HR personnel. You are more than "Jeannie, who is so good at organising things" or "Pete, who tells those funny jokes." Each of those statements is a relative judgment and you need to take inventory of facts and truth.

Seek out more objective measures of your abilities and skills. In addition to the worksheets provided in this book, there are a number of online assessment tools that you can use to generate up-to-date personal and skills inventories, such as the Myers-Briggs program (<http://www.myersbriggs.org>) referred to in Chapter 1.

For additional offline assessments, most universities and graduate schools have career counselling offices that offer assessments and job development services to their alumni.

In doing your assessments, highlight the areas that separate you from the masses. Perhaps you have foreign language skills, are a champion black belt, or have served as the chair of your local housing authority.

As you build a fresh set of skill assessments from the ground up, don't judge yourself based on what others might think are "good" or "bad" skill sets. You are who you are, and every one of your capabilities and quirks comes with you as you turn your career in a direction that is fulfilling and financially rewarding.

Know your strengths

Understanding what areas you excel in can help identify what your strengths are. This may enable you to tell a prospective employer the immediate returns their company will get by hiring you. If you can accurately identify your skills from the onset, you will be able to match your strengths to the job description, thereby placing you among the top contenders for the position.

First, consider what skills you have gained through education and experience. These can be based on knowledge, such as degrees, languages, computer proficiency, technical ability, and any additional training you've had.

Next, think about your transferable skills. These would be expertise that you have acquired along the way in the course of doing your job. They are skills that you cannot learn anywhere else outside the workforce, although they can be taken to other companies and applied there. Positive attributes to consider would be interpersonal skills acquired while working as part of a team, planning skills, project management, and/or problem solving.

Finally, think about your personal traits – qualities that form your persona. These are characteristics such as being reliable, loyal, trustworthy, friendly, outgoing, a team player, or punctual. Chances are your education and transferable skills are tied into your personal traits. After all, you wouldn't have experience in your current industry if you were not already motivated and willing to learn more.

Use the Career Reflections Worksheet at the end of this chapter to assist with identifying your strengths while thinking about previous work experience.

“Inside every successful business person is an even more ambitious one trying to get out. He or she just needs a little help.”

Australian Financial Review

Understand your weaknesses

It's not possible to be good at everything because no one is perfect. Everyone has weaknesses, but rarely does anyone like to talk about them. However, at some point during the interview process a prospective employer will undoubtedly ask what your biggest weakness is. This can become quite stressful, especially if you are concerned that you may not get the position if you answer honestly. For this reason alone, it's important to identify your weaknesses beforehand. Become intimately familiar with them and be ready to confidently respond when asked. Consider your weaknesses “areas of opportunity,” because once you recognise them you can decide how to work around these areas and focus on your strengths.

Perhaps you are a “big picture person” who sometimes overlooks the little details. In that case, you would want to always ensure that you have a detail-oriented person on your team.

Or maybe you consider the inability to multi-task a limitation. The reality is most people do not perform as well when multi-tasking, and can work more quickly and clearly by focusing on one task at a time.

Properly identifying a weak spot is not a negative strike against you; instead it can have a positive impact. So, be honest in your self-assessment and use it to your best advantage.

Why branding yourself is important

Once you have your personal and professional skills listed, it is time to think about the brand that you want to take to the market. How do you want to present yourself to potential employers, based on what you know are your strengths and skills?

SMART TIP

If building your brand is challenging, work with a consultant. A career consultant can help you cultivate an image that reflects who you are according to your self-inventory, while working in the market to help you find the job you want.

Branding yourself is all about clearly defining who you are in your chosen profession, and letting potential employers know exactly what they are getting when they do business with you.

People today see a lot more advertising than they did 50 years ago. From this, we've all learned quite a bit about marketing and establishing brands. We understand

that some ads have more impact than others, and some products make us feel more strongly about them than others. Your task in building your brand is to take your assets forward in a way that make a positive, resonating impact.

Branding yourself is not unlike how a company or product is branded. For example, when you go to an internationally known restaurant, you know what you are getting no matter where in the world that particular eatery is located. These companies work long and hard on coming up with products, themes, and marketing plans to make sure you keep coming back. They know exactly what you are anticipating when you step into one of their establishments; it's not a guessing game.

Likewise, it's important to do the same thing for yourself. In a sense, you do this when you prepare your resume and carefully craft it to make it enticing to employers. You take the time to sit down and really think about your skills, abilities, and what you can offer to potential employers and clients. Branding is somewhat like this, but a bit more involved, with long term potential.

You brand yourself every time you learn something new or accomplish something remarkable. When you play a large part in helping your company reach a certain goal, people take notice – and so should you! Gather as much information as you can about the 'before' and 'after' of reaching that particular goal, and what your part was in reaching it. You should also take note of who helped you along the way, but never downplay your part in the achievement. Working as part of a team to reach goals is highly regarded by employers.

Building your own brand starts with embracing the features that are 'you'. Yes, you can change some things about yourself as you go through life, but you also possess a marketable set of abilities to work with, right now. No wishing or dreaming – take your current product out into the world with power!

Put together your image and use it as you introduce yourself to others and network in your workplace. Think through how you want others to see you and how you want to see yourself as you live your brand. Then make it happen.

Organisation is essential

With an inventory and a brand, the next step is out into the real world of the job market. Whether you have a job or not, finding your next opportunity isn't going to happen by accident. You will find the next best fit for you with deliberate, organised action.

One of the best strategies for owning your career future and living your career plan is to seek out your niche. It is tempting in a struggling economy to be open to everything, but that's not necessarily the best fit for your brand or your skills. You are not a jack of all trades. Remember, no one pays a professional premium for the everyman. Instead, you should find a niche for yourself, and thrive by showcasing your brand and proving what you can do that no one else can.

Embracing your uniqueness helps save time and energy by narrowing your job search parameters. With a targeted quest, you won't pursue unworthy or unsuitable jobs. You are looking for places where you can put your personality and talents to their best use, and a place where what you bring to the table is going to be valued.

For example, perhaps you would like to work in the energy industry. This is a pretty broad field that is growing fast, and the competition is fierce. However, deciding to work managing shale oil discovery in fields within 100 miles of the Arctic Circle is another matter. The pool of companies and jobs is smaller, but it becomes easier to demonstrate a good fit. If this is the kind of thing where your skills are a match, your ability to make an impact on executive search consultants and as a professional in this area, is greater than if you were pursuing a more nondescript job in a broader sector.

Making the commitment to a niche is not easy, but the rewards of a targeted search can be worth it. You are more likely to efficiently uncover long-term employment opportunities, to command a higher salary for your skills, and to feel fulfilled in your work. Each of these benefits will bring you lasting recompense for the "sacrifice" of giving up the ocean of job opportunities out there.

According to Psychologist, Edgar Schein, most people have one true anchor that drives their choice of career. Each person defines self-image in terms of that career anchor and it becomes the overriding

issue at every stage of their career. Use the Career Anchors Exercise at the end of this chapter to help identify your career(s) of choice.

YOUR PERFECT WORK DAY

As part of this exercise, list the top 20 elements of your perfect day at work. Not just an ideal day, but one that is perfect!

1. Where would you be?
2. Would you be alone or with others? Who?
3. What would you be doing?
4. What would you NOT be doing?

Let your imagination run free of the “shoulds and shouldn’ts.” We’ll use this information as a basis for your Goals Action Plan at the end of this chapter.

Creating a career portfolio

Unlike a resume that is a concise outline of your work experience, a career portfolio features a detailed compilation of documents that validate the statements made in your resume. This supporting documentation provides evidence of your capabilities and achievements that are typically presented during the course of an interview. Consider it your “career story.”

Your portfolio should reflect your job performance, the range of your endeavours, and the relevant knowledge and skills that a prospective employer would acknowledge and appreciate. It demonstrates your points of differentiation from the competition.

The elements your career portfolio should contain include:

- **Curriculum Vitae (CV) or Resume:** A CV is generally a longer, more detailed document than a resume, used by professionals in the technical, medical, legal, educational, and science industries. It provides a synopsis of the individual’s academic

SMART TIP

Carefully select and customise the contents of your portfolio for each application. Like your CV or resume, you want to highlight certain aspects of your knowledge and experience as it relates to the prospective employer you are meeting with.

and educational background, as well as relevant experience, and showcases publications, academic research, awards, patents and other achievements. Your CV will include details of your career history designed to capture the reader's attention with specific keywords and pertinent information that is presented in a chronological or functional format. A resume will

be shorter and not normally showcase publications, academic research, awards, etc. (The elements of a resume will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4). Although the CV or resume provides the foundation for your career portfolio, it's not possible to insert everything an accomplished professional or executive has done in the course of their career on three or four pages. That's why you may need these additional documents:

- **Cover letter:** A good cover letter highlighting pertinent components of your job history and experience should be included with each resume. Identify how you heard of the position (especially if someone referred you), why you are interested, and how you think the company would benefit by hiring you. Research the company and address the letter to the appropriate manager or department supervisor. In closing, be certain to ask for an interview and provide contact information including a telephone number, email address, and mailing address.
- **Biography:** Part of creating your own brand includes having a detailed biography that can be provided to prospective employers, published on your website, presented at seminars

and speaking engagements, and used for other public relation endeavours. A biography offers more insight into your personal and professional life by highlighting achievements in and out of the workplace, contributions to your business or field, and involvement within the community. I recommend creating at least two versions of your biography: a detailed, full-page accounting of your career story, and a shorter, concise description that can be used on social networking sites or at the end of reports and publications.

- **Salary requirements:** Unless a job advertisement specifically asks for details, you will not normally need to disclose your salary requirements. However, you should have a realistic range in mind so that information is available when asked. Providing a salary range includes more than just an annual income. It's important to consider all benefits including health and disability insurance, superannuation, bonuses, and any other incentives. In essence, your salary requirements should reflect your preferred total compensation package.
- **References:** Use positive references from people who can make the best recommendations for you. You should use individuals who will speak highly of your character, skills, work experience, education, and job performance. Avoid using family members, although clergy members and personal friends are sometimes acceptable. Obtain the referee's permission before offering them as a reference so you will know they are comfortable with being contacted. Also, be sure to include the referee's name, position, and company. Unless specified it is not necessary to provide contact details for referees on a CV or resume – these can be provided at a later date.

- **Work samples:** Another part of building your portfolio includes work samples that showcase and highlight your expertise and qualifications. Depending on your profession, these can include publications or reports you have written, a screenshot of a PowerPoint slide featuring a seminar or workshop you presented, or special certifications you may have received. For example, if you are a real estate developer you could pull together colour photographs of projects you have worked on and present them in a portfolio. Be sure to include relevant press releases and awards you may have received regarding these projects.

Proactive career management strategies

No matter where you are at in your career, it is important to “manage” it at all stages. This includes implementing simple, proactive strategies that you can refer to at a moment’s notice.

- **Update your CV or resume:** Do this at least once a year, whether it needs it or not. And it should need it if you are focusing on your strengths and achievements, because you will want to document those accolades.
- **Know your strengths and weaknesses:** Understand what areas you excel in and what areas you should avoid or delegate when considering an assignment, project, or new job. Knowing who you are and what you are good at will help to clarify your value proposition.
- **Expand your network:** Everyone you meet is a potential contact, and should be categorised and added to your network. These do not necessarily have to be people that can help you – although they may be able to at some point. But the more people you know in particular fields and can refer you to others, the more people will want to know you. And that is helpful!

- **Use LinkedIn:** Create a profile and keep it current – like your CV or resume. Then start interacting on LinkedIn with like-minded individuals in networking groups. Not only does this expand your network, but it keeps your name in the forefront of people’s minds. Once a week or so is enough to stay current. We will discuss professional and social networking strategies and how to use them in Chapter 7.
- **Develop a strong work ethic:** This particular “trait” is in high demand as it seems many employees do not understand the value of a good work ethic, and how far it can take them. A good work ethic will enable you to not only meet an employer’s expectations, but also exceed them. Having a good work ethic includes having a positive attitude, refraining from office drama, and understanding your personal work habits.
- **Work with executive search consultants:** As you expand your network and your expertise becomes more widely known, search consultants will call you as positions they think you would be a good match for become available. Even if you are not looking for a new job, it is in your best interests to maintain these contacts because you never know when you will need their services. Plus, you can “pay it forward” by referring other individuals who may be a good match for a particular job.
- **Become a speaker:** Polish up your presentation skills and hit the “rubber chicken circuit” by offering to speak to different professional organisations about topics you are knowledgeable about, or on behalf of your company. This will definitely put a face to your name that people will remember as you become a recognised expert in your field.
- **Build your brand:** Find ways to gain exposure and build your brand by speaking at conferences and/or getting published. You can also become known as an expert through professional

and social networking opportunities, including guest posting on blogs and online communities.

- **Continuing education:** Executives often find that getting certifications on top of their degrees gives them a leg up in their specific industries. Plus, many professions require continuing education due to the ever-changing aspects of a particular field. Attend workshops and seminars to keep up-to-date in your industry, and maintain your status as an expert in your field.
- **Develop marketable skills:** Every job – no matter how dreadful – is an opportunity to learn new things and add to your list of achievements. Plus, you can improve your mastery in specific areas while learning how to adapt to new challenges. This will enable you to become a tremendous asset to your company both now and in the future.
- **Manage your financial portfolio:** Work with a financial advisor to build a strong financial portfolio that is diversified and solid. Circumstances can change in the blink of an eye and you will want to be in a position to weather any storm that comes your way.

Career anchors exercise

According to Psychologist, Edgar Schein, most people have one true anchor that drives their choice of career. Each person defines self-image in terms of that career anchor and it becomes the overriding issue at every stage of their career.

The eight career anchors briefly described below are taken from Dr. Schein's book entitled, *Career Anchors: Discovering Your Real Values*, which is available through major bookstores.

Instructions: Please read carefully all eight of the Career Anchors and then choose your top three. Once you have done this, please prioritise your choices, 1, 2 and 3 at the bottom of the page.

- **Technical/functional competence:** great satisfaction from exercising a specific talent and developing expertise; specialists who do not like managerial work.
- **General managerial competence:** ambition and range of skills to rise to positions of responsibility.
- **Autonomy/independence:** an overriding need to do things their own way; autonomous professions or roles.
- **Security/stability:** seek jobs that provide security through tenure, avoidance of layoffs, good benefits and retirement packages or solid reputations; give up autonomy for security.
- **Entrepreneurial creativity:** highly motivated from an early age to start own business, and work relentlessly to succeed.
- **Service/dedication to a cause:** a desire to help others or to further a cause; strong need for meaningful work.
- **Pure challenge:** need constant challenges and variety and all else is secondary; like to go from project to project, as in management consulting.
- **Lifestyle:** priority to integrate needs of the individual, family and career; want organisational flexibility and respect for personal and family concerns.

My top three values are:

1.
2.
3.

Career reflections worksheet

To further your professional ambitions and move into your career of choice, it is important to reflect on previous experience, while assessing your values and priorities. Choose several of your memorable positions and be sure to include what you liked and didn't like about each position:

- Type of job or volunteer position:
- How long in this position:
- Description of work:
- Employer/supervisor:
- Co-workers:
- Customers/clients:
- Scheduled hours:
- Vacation time:
- Salary and benefits:
- Job security:
- Meaning and purpose:
- Physical work environment:
- Location/transportation:
- Training/education:
- Overall what you liked best:
- Overall what you liked least:

Goals action plan

Setting worthwhile 'SMART' goals

Setting '**SMART**' goals is a coaching tool widely used to provide a simple framework, into which ideas, actions and thoughts are put into a list.

These '**SMART**' goals are: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant and **T**ime-specific

The key to success is knowing where you want to go and having a plan to get there. Your goals are like a road map and if you follow them, you'll be going in the right direction. Setting goals involves working out what you need to do to get where you want to go, how long it will take you to get there, and actually writing these goals down. When deciding what goals to include, make them big enough to really stretch your comfort zone – we often underestimate what we can achieve. The following SMART guidelines will assist you to get started. Each Goal –

- Must inspire you
- Must not relate too closely to another goal
- Should be challenging, but achievable within three months
- Should be stated in one sentence
- Needs to be measurable in some way, with the measure as part of the goal

Goals should be limited to only three to five at any one time. If there are less, there is little challenge, but more adds to the complexity and can act against success.

Using the 'SMART' guidelines above, list 3–5 things you would like to achieve in the next 90 days:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Why are these goals important to you?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Where would you like to be one year from now?
(include money, professional, personal activities, time off, etc. Don't worry about "how" you will achieve this, for the moment just list your desires).

.....

.....

.....

.....

Where would like to be five years from now?
(include money, professional, personal activities, time off, etc).

.....

.....

.....

.....

What are the top five things on your “things to do before I die” list?

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Using this form, write out a one page action plan for each goal.

Achievable goal:

Starting date:

Action required	Timing	Realistic outcome	Measures of success



3

Positioning your skills and capabilities

Each and every day, companies are hiring qualified and talented people just like you. However, there are thousands of other people in your situation in need of a job and looking high and low for their dream position – or any position at all.

The job market is more competitive today than ever before, so how can you beat your competition and win one of those coveted positions? The answer lies in a combination of knowing your competition and what you need to do to pull ahead of them in the job market race. A lot of your competition will go into the process blind and not heed the advice in this book. Make sure that you are one of those applicants who are forewarned and forearmed.

Finding your mojo

Executives, like yourself, have specialised talents and competencies that have equated to success while steering organisations through tumultuous and booming economic times. With the onset of the 2008 recession, many of these same executives found themselves without a job as companies were forced to downsize in order to

survive. It was a bit of a shock to many who previously had their skills sought after, in both domestic and global markets.

Suddenly (at least that's how it seemed) some of the most qualified, competent and experienced business executives and senior management personnel found themselves looking for jobs. These were in addition to candidates who decided to change companies for any number of reasons. Whether you were made redundant, think you are going to be made redundant, or have decided it's time to change jobs, it's important to develop a game plan.

For many executives it may have been a long time since you looked for a position after spending years working your way up through the ranks of a company. Thrown into a volatile economic marketplace, where businesses are contracting presents challenges to anyone looking for a job. Especially for those who are used to being paid high salaries for specialised skills.

The initial step is determining where exactly you fit into the big competitive picture. Approaching the job market requires:

1. Defining and understanding your value proposition.
2. Developing a Unique Selling Proposition (USP).
3. Assessing the competition.
4. Getting ahead of the competition by getting ahead of the job curve.
5. Effectively marketing your skills and experience.

Of course, each of these points should be important components of strategic job searches designed to locate available jobs, and/or lead to the creation of a job. This can be done by enhancing the application process in a way that presents the suitability of a person's unique qualities.

Understanding your value proposition

As you know, a resume is a promotional tool aimed at presenting you in the best possible light. As such, you must be careful to avoid superfluous language – and outrageous claims that have no merit. That’s why it is important to understand who you are and what you can offer.

Your value proposition is like a stripped down version of your brand, which we discussed in Chapter 2. It’s a very concise description of what you can bring to the table, and why a prospective employer should consider taking you on board.

The key is to encapsulate your achievements down to one phrase that’s easy to remember. It’s not quite a catch phrase, although you want it to be memorable. Citing specific things that you accomplished – such as growing the business by 40 percent or cutting costs by 30 percent – can be quite impressive to a potential employer.

When you craft your value proposition you should know exactly what you are talking about. Don’t make any off-the-wall claims to gain attention. You want to state exactly what you can do in no-nonsense terms. Overly flowery language will get you nowhere and will probably result in more than a few rolled eyes when people read it.

Instead, rely on terms relevant to your field and the position for which you are applying. This accomplishes two things. First, it lets the reader know that you are familiar with the terminology in your field. And second, indicates that you are crafting your responses, and not just sending out blanket resumes for every available position.

SMART TIP

Your value proposition is the short version of who and what you are. Use it in every aspect of your personal branding strategy. These simple one or two sentences should tell the reader who you are, what you do, who you do it for and how you do it.

Think long-term

Just like your resume, your value proposition is something that you take with you everywhere you go. And, it will need to be updated regularly. Every time you take on a new job or project, learn a new program, or accomplish a goal for your employer or client, you have something new to add to your value proposition. So, keep an eye open and recognise them when they happen.

Don't be afraid to ask for help. By reading this book you are aware there are professionals out there who make a career out of helping others help themselves. Plus, there is plenty of information available online and through workshops. I'm not just talking about motivational speakers active in the self-help community; I'm referring to people like myself who specialise in crafting brands and value propositions for their clients on a person-to-person level.

You know yourself best

At the end of the day, only you can really determine what you are comfortable claiming in your value proposition. Externally, people may perceive us in one way; but internally we often perceive ourselves in a completely different way. Familiarise yourself with both perceptions, and build your brand and value proposition based on these factors.

For example, you may have a lot of experience in your field, and therefore people perceive you as a leader when you are coming into a new company. But if you don't internally feel that you are a leader, then you shouldn't be making these claims in your value proposition.

Instead of focusing on leadership, focus on your knowledge and experience, and how that can translate into a solid base which you can build on in your new position. Quite often, companies are looking for good "soldiers" rather than new leaders. And once you're hired, you can build from there within the company.

“Take a chance! All life is a chance. The man who goes furthest is generally the one who is willing to do and dare.”

Dale Carnegie

Conversely, if you have strong leadership skills, but have not yet had the chance to really utilise them, don't be afraid to promote these if you are confident in your abilities. Companies like take-charge individuals and self-starters – it shows initiative.

What it all really comes down to is that you have to know yourself and what you are capable of. When you are branding yourself and crafting your value proposition, you must be honest. And don't be afraid to ask for help if you need it, especially when you want these assets to help land your dream job.

Creating a unique selling proposition

Developing your own Unique Selling Proposition (USP) is critical to your success, as this is what differentiates you from other candidates. This is a cleverly crafted statement that will tell prospective employers why they should choose you over other candidates. It's not necessarily about being the best, but rather offering something unique that others do not.

As part of this process, your goal is to identify the combination of skills, education, and qualifications that will make you unique to a prospective employer. Your personality will also be an important component of your USP. Don't try to package yourself in a way that you think appeals to everyone, because ultimately you will not appeal to anyone.

Before you start telling people who you are, spend some time thinking about what it is you really do. What is the message you want to convey about yourself, your credentials, the type of work you do, and the success the company will experience if they hire you? Prospective employers will want to know what you can do for them. Craft your message by answering the following questions:

1. **You.** Who are you? What is your purpose?

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2. **Specialty.** What business/field are you in?

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3. **Credentials.** What are your qualifications, education, background?

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4. **Clientele.** What type of company or target market do you serve?

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5. **Needs.** What are the needs of the company or clients you serve? What problems can you help them solve?

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6. **Vision.** What is your vision for this position? What long-term goals do you foresee to help the company meet its objectives?

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7. **Competition.** Who is your competition?

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8. **Differentiation.** What makes you stand apart from other candidates applying for this position? In other words, what makes you unique?

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9. **Benefits.** What can you offer that other candidates cannot?

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What is your Unique Selling Proposition? Read all that you've written in questions 1–9. Then write out at least two short scripts that encapsulate the gist of your answers above. An example would be:

“Kylie Hammond, talent agent and career coach based in the Asia Pacific region, provides a unique and innovative approach that represents an executive’s best interests during the end-to-end search and selection process, in a highly confidential and professional way.”

Script 1:

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Script 2:

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Practise reading each script out loud a few times. Then, phone yourself and leave a voice mail message with your script. Wait for a while, and then listen to it from the perspective of a potential employer. Do you sound genuine, trustworthy, and enthusiastic? Are you conveying what you intend? Would you want to talk with the person you are hearing? If “Yes” then great! Start talking with people. If “No” then spend some more time crafting the message you want to convey.

Sizing up the competition

Executive candidates must develop job search plans that are not only strategic in nature, but also require a full assessment of the competition. An important point to keep in mind is the fact the competition must be evaluated as follows:

- To identify the qualifications competitors possess, for comparison against your own.
- To improve your resume, so that it is focused, targeted, and displays uniquely appropriate competencies and skills that exceed those of the competition.

In other words, what you have to offer a potential employer is distinctive in many ways, however highlighting that distinction, requires knowing what to select as your USP.

Your biggest competitors are individuals who already work for the firm and who want to apply for the same position. It may sound odd to say current managers are your competition, but they apparently had the skills, competencies, experience and other characteristics that got them hired in the first place. You can learn a lot from them.

Sizing up the competition requires in-depth research and some intuition. It's necessary to consider the executive positions previously filled, the current job advertisements, and the mission and major activities of the company, so that you will have a clear sense of what this company needs for future success.

Part of that research should include reading the job advertisements, the company website, trade journals, newspaper articles, internet articles, press releases, Dun & Bradstreet reports, and any other relevant information.

It is also possible to assess the competition by perusing executive search websites. These websites may report hiring trends, and other interesting industry information that senior executives need.

In other words, assessing the competition requires gaining an excellent understanding of the company's problems, needs, strategies and vision for the future. You need to get a grasp on who they have hired in the past, and the type of people seen as assets for the future. These are the clues that tell you what competitors will address in their resumes.

Get ahead of the competitive curve

Getting ahead of the competition means making yourself appealing to companies that may not even have an advertised position. If a company sees you as a potentially valuable asset, it's quite possible a position could be created and designed just for you.

For example, executive search consultants are indicating a demand for executives who are able to manage companies developing sales channels for e-commerce. In fact, the Wall Street Journal recently reported that Target Corp. was looking for a new president after the last person resigned. The reason for the resignation? The website crashed costing the business millions of dollars. If you are interested in selling yourself to a company relying heavily on website sales, then your resume needs to showcase your ability to lead a large company to a position ahead of the internet curve.

Getting ahead of industry curves is important. You are not applying for a job that manages the past. You're applying for a job that can fulfill a vision and take on new missions in the future. E-commerce, globalisation and other major issues like these are where you find the need for problem solving, and where you can make yourself competitive.

In addition, the roles of top executives have been evolving. Job competitors who have done their research know that the need for strong skills in areas like developing public trust, collaboration, team building and corporate social responsibility has emerged. The days of leaders issuing orders from the top without input from

C-level executives are gone. If that's your leadership style, then it's time for a skill's update.

We will discuss in the next chapter how your resume and cover letter are tools for showing what you can strategically bring to a company. It is not just a listing of past experience and achievements. Getting ahead of the competition is only possible if you can get the attention of the decision-makers because you:

- Are able to specifically solve the company's problems.
- Can lead the company into the future and not just maintain the present.
- Will fit into the company's culture.
- Are current on management trends and don't simply rely on traditional methods.
- Succeed in selling your value proposition to the company.
- Succeed in selling your personal brand which makes you a standout from other competitors.
- Demonstrate that your skills and experience can translate well in the company.

Do a web search of the names of decision-makers at companies where you would like to work, and then trace those names back to online contact sites where these names appear. For example, are any of these decision-makers on LinkedIn, or do they frequently post on company social media sites?

Once in the right locations, jump into the discussions, comment on blog postings, and respond to any questions others may have in knowledge areas that are your specialty. In this way you develop a professional online presence that enables you to connect with the inner decision-makers. Of course this should be done with care.

SMART TIP

"You are who you know" is not just a clever cliché. Discover and introduce yourself to ten or more top executives who have a strong personal brand.

I will discuss the different aspects of using professional and social media in detail in Chapter 7.

In fact, you can easily stay current on any company mentioned online in news articles, press releases or industry reports, simply by setting up Google Alerts using relevant keywords. The alerts can be used to stay informed and give you topical material for posting blog comments, and discussing issues in forums.

How to effectively market your skills and experience

Many of us are taught from an early age not to boast about ourselves, and to keep it to a minimum when we do. So when it comes time to writing a resume, cover letter or going for a job interview, it is quite understandable that many people may find it difficult to convince a total stranger that they are the top choice for the job. Actually, it can feel really awkward to promote yourself, even if you believe what you're saying is true. But promoting yourself is what marketing is all about. And marketing yourself has become more important than ever before with the increased competition for jobs; it is a vital skill for gaining employment. So for executive candidates currently seeking a job, it is paramount that you find the inner salesperson within you.

Most people learn how to properly market themselves through trial and error. Self-marketing comes quite naturally to some people, i.e. people who are charismatic or simply find it easy to talk to strangers. However, most people have never really had to endorse themselves and have therefore never learned this valuable skill. With so many candidates competing for the same position in today's job market, promoting yourself is vital to your success.

The key points

Marketing is about understanding your target audience's needs and positioning yourself, specifically your skills and experience, to fit those needs. While you should always be authentic and truthful, there is something to be said for moulding yourself into a certain shape to reach a certain destination.

Self-marketing can bring up fears of rejection and failing. Nobody wants to feel like they're not good enough. Effectively marketing yourself requires confidence in your own abilities, a keen sense of self-awareness, and knowing when and where to best promote yourself. Today, professional and social media is an area where you can really effectively market your skills and experience. It's opened up a plethora of opportunities to globally market yourself at almost no cost. If you can master the art of marketing yourself, you can literally take the world by storm.

What makes you, you

The main thing to remember is that you are unique and that there is no one exactly like you with your specific experience and expertise. Certainly there may be other people out there with similar degrees or career paths, but they're not you. When crafting your resume or preparing for an interview, keep in mind that there are unique combinations that you bring to the table.

And it's not just about where you've been and what you've done. As stated in the marketing tips in this chapter, there are attributes you possess that may appeal to your interviewer or hiring manager that you may not even be aware of. These could be things that may not appear on your resume. The only way to find out is to leave no stone unturned. Going into a job interview or the hiring process in general is like a first date. Of course you're nervous but you want to do your best. So, put your best foot forward and be yourself.

The same thing applies to marketing your skills and attributes to the job market. What it all comes down to is setting yourself apart, while still staying true to yourself. It's a very fine line to tread, but at the end of the day all you have to do is follow the tips and use a fair amount of intuition and common sense. By properly marketing yourself, you will land that coveted job in no time.

10 TIPS FOR MARKETING YOURSELF

It would be easy to sit back and make various suggestions about how to best make yourself stand out amongst a sea of other job seekers, but you have to get down to the nitty-gritty and look at some real, specific suggestions. Let's talk brass tacks. Here are the top 10 tips to market yourself:

1. **Set an objective** – Always be clear about your marketing purpose and what kind of outcome you are looking for.
2. **Know your target audience** – Lay out in detail exactly who you are marketing yourself to, and take the time to learn and use their language.
3. **Do some research** – Invest some time in understanding your target audience's problems and needs.
4. **Blockbusting** – Blockbusting means breaking down any barriers that may hinder your self-marketing success.
5. **Identify your niche** – Branding yourself is just as important as marketing yourself. By giving yourself a distinctive brand you set yourself apart from all your competitors.
6. **Know your keywords** – This ties in closely to an aspect of tip 2: knowing the language. Take the time to research and use the appropriate keywords for your industry, career, or specialty.
7. **Know your experience and skills** – Before going into an interview or meeting with a search consultant, make sure you have evidence and examples of how your skills and experience will add value to the company.
8. **Bring the sizzle** – Self-marketing (bringing the sizzle) is all about letting prospective employers know the benefits of what you (and only you!) bring to the table. This can provide a stronger personal impression by identifying who you are versus what you do.
9. **Watch the trends** – Trends change incredibly fast, so always make sure you keep up-to-date. There's nothing worse than being out of touch with current developments.
10. **Reconnect** – Dust off the rolodex and reconnect with past colleagues, clients, and old friends. Offline networking is just as important as online, so make plans to have breakfast with old connections so you can catch up, brainstorm, and discover new opportunities. Besides, breakfast is the cheapest meal of the day!



4

Resume development for specific opportunities

Climbing the corporate ladder is a process that most often starts with a resume or a *curriculum vitae* (CV). A CV is often synonymous with a resume; however, it's generally a longer, more detailed version used by professionals in the medical, legal, educational, and science industries. It provides a synopsis of the individual's academic and educational background, as well as relevant experience, publications, awards, and other achievements.

In order to secure an interview for any executive position, having an outstanding resume or CV is essential. Your resume controls the number of interviews you get, plays a vital role in the salary you can command and influences the quality of job offers you receive.

All resumes are not created equal

In an unstable economy and unpredictable job market, a great resume is one of your most valuable assets. Depending on the type of position you are applying for, your resume should be adapted to focus on different aspects of whom you are and what you have to offer.

SMART TIP

Chances are your resume will be scanned on a computer for specific keywords to see if it qualifies for a closer look. Even if it is not digitally scanned, trained eyes will skim over it seeking particular phrases and words. To make sure you are using the right terms, scan the job advertisement to see what keywords were used to describe the position. You can also look up occupational descriptions in your industry to see what terminology is commonly used.

Each resume should highlight specific achievements and responsibilities as they relate to the position being applied for. Choosing what should or should not be included is one of those things in resume writing that is very subjective.

In general, use your best judgment on what you should include. Relevant experience is a very broad term, but you don't want to waste time by putting down your high school or college fast food job if you are applying for a high-end corporate job. However, if that corporate job is working for a fast food chain, showing that you have

boots-on-the-ground experience in fast food operations may well be a plus.

Sell yourself

It is not enough to let your experience speak for itself – you need to sell yourself. Remember, there are probably dozens of other resumes just like yours sitting on the consultant's desk. You want yours to stand out from the rest.

When writing your resume, don't be afraid to use buzzwords and synonyms that appear in the job description. You should never include anything that you can't back up with facts and/or verification from references. If you claim to have headed a certain company at some point in time and never did, someone will eventually find out. On the other hand, if you played a minor role in

a project's inception but learned a lot from what it produced, don't be afraid to promote your role a bit and play up your involvement.

When writing your resume, include all the skills you learned in each job. Let the reader know what computer programs you are familiar with and how you used them in day-to-day operations. Even if you only have passing familiarity with a certain program or system, it's important to list that as well. Often, it's these little things that can make a difference. If your resume has a feature that the next person's doesn't, yours may end up in the interview pile while their resume ends up in the trash.

Focus on your goal

Your goal with your resume is to get the interview. Your resume is just a faceless sheet of paper that gives the search consultant a good idea of what you are all about and whether or not you are worth their time, so do your utmost to convey your personality and best traits.

Resume writing is a skill and one that must be learned. If you are unsuccessful, don't be afraid to get help by calling the company and asking for more information about what they were looking for. In the end, never forget that your resume is a vital piece of the puzzle that is helping you get the right job.

Resume basics

A good resume presents your skills, experience, qualities and expertise in the most effective way, and helps position you among the chosen few who should be selected from the multitude. The following are the most important elements of your resume:

The essential format

The basic thing about resume writing is deciding on the format. You will not catch anyone's attention if your resume appears haphazard or is in a format that the interviewer doesn't recognise. If your resume lacks structure you will appear disorganised, and if it's in a format that isn't the industry standard, it may get passed over.

There are far too many fields and industries to go over every single format, but there are a couple of standards to consider. First, there is the chronological format. This layout goes over each job you've had in reverse chronological order, and outlines how long you worked at each job, what your title was, and what duties and responsibilities you had there. You should also include your achievements. A chronological resume will also have sections detailing your education and training.

Another commonly used resume format is the functional format. This style is best suited for people who are changing careers, lack formal experience, or have been out of the job market for a long time. A functional format focuses less on your work experience and more on the skills that you have. You will need to list the skills and abilities that you've picked up along the way that will be relevant in your new job. Group your assets under headings like skills (as in leadership skills), experience, achievements, and competencies.

The length of a resume

Many candidates are worried that if they don't comply with some arbitrary length limit, their resume will not be read. This is all nonsense! The experience I have had in preparing resumes for thousands of people refutes the validity of these so-called "rules".

The issue is not how long the resume is. It's about whether it conveys sufficient information to differentiate you from your competition,

and whether it sheds enough light on your approach and the value of your contributions.

If you need four or five or even six pages to demonstrate what you have to offer, because you have had a diverse career with numerous and varied job roles, or you have achieved a lot in your career, so be it. As long as the information is relevant and provides insight, you should include it. However if the job advertisement specifies 'no longer than 4 pages' then of course you need to comply.

Legibility and clarity is essential. If a resume is well designed and formatted with plenty of white space, headings and bullet points to separate the information, a four or five page version is much easier to read and assess, than two pages of densely worded prose using every square centimetre of the page in a font size that requires a magnifying glass to read.

The key is to make sure that the content of your resume is relevant and economically worded, and does not include superfluous information. Provide sufficient detail so that employers and search consultants realise you understand the impact of your work, that you utilise a well-reasoned thought process, and have the judgment and other skills needed for the types of roles for which you are applying.

Explaining your accountabilities

In your resume, you will need to detail what you were accountable for in the various roles you have fulfilled. Employers want to know the purpose, value and contribution of what you did.

Most people simply list their responsibilities or tasks. However, employers and search consultants want to know the level of your accountability and the purpose of what you were/are doing. For each role included in your resume, indicate its overall core or

underlying purpose. Inform the reader about what the role was designed to contribute to the organisation.

Providing this additional information will help set you apart from the competition because most people don't go into this depth. This offers employers greater insight about your abilities and the level of responsibility you have had. Plus, it will help convince employers that you know what you are talking about, and have thought through your value to the organisations with which you have worked.

Explaining your achievements

In addition to listing your duties and responsibilities for each job you need to consider what achievements you accomplished during the course of your employment or career. What are you most proud of? What are some innovative things you did? Achievements have three elements:

- **Action:** What you actually did to resolve a problem, address an issue or meet a need.
- **Process:** What was your method, strategy or approach.
- **Outcome:** What was the result, impact, value or benefit.

Identifying precise, measurable achievements need to be part of your resume because employers today are focusing on more than the tasks you performed. They also want to know how you did them. Anybody can create a list of responsibilities – and everybody will. What will make you stand out as a qualified candidate is how you handled them.

Start by simply writing down each job. Then list your responsibilities. Now comes the hard part. For each job, list something unique or special that you achieved, and demonstrate how you made the job your own.

- How did you take the initiative for a particular task?
- Were you promoted during your employment?
- Did you win any awards?
- What were you the most proud of while working in this position?
- What accomplishments or responsibilities can you quantify with numbers? For example, you may have increased sales in your division by 45 percent, or supervised a staff of 15 people.
- Were you responsible for or involved in the company's expansion? If so, what part did you play?
- When and how did you go above and beyond the call of duty?

Don't be vague. For example, an achievement such as: "Reviewed and restructured the company's sales force" does not provide sufficient information. What they want to know is how you did it and what the impact was. Reviewing is not an achievement. It is a task or process. "Restructured" is far too nebulous and vague to be of much use to the reader.

Be precise. Therefore, the achievement might be re-worked as: "Increased the company's revenue base by 10 percent by decentralising the sales force, and delegating decision-making to enable a higher proportion of sales to be closed in the field."

Even if the achievement is not quantifiable in terms of revenue or costs, you can still provide an indication of its value. For example: "Reduced employee turnover and increased productivity by introducing a performance management system that recognised contribution, challenged staff to accept responsibility, and empowered them to make decisions."

If you were not the person wholly or fully accountable for an achievement, indicate your role or contribution. The intention is to avoid weak, vague terms and phrases, and make your achievements as explicit as possible within the constraints of not getting bogged down in excessive detail.

How far back should you go?

There is no hard and fast rule about how far back you should go in providing details of your experience and achievements. However, as a general rule, there is usually little merit in providing details about experience more than 10 years ago, particularly if you have advanced quite a few steps up the ladder over the past 8–10 years.

However, sometimes it can be valuable to include details of jobs you had over 10 years ago, especially if you have some particularly noteworthy experience and achievements that may strengthen your application. If you are planning to go back into an industry or field you worked in over 10 years ago, then you should include details of that position.

If you have had numerous jobs over the past 10 years, or if your career does not yet span 10 years, only include details about your last 3–4 jobs.

For technical specialists in areas where technological life cycles are short, there is little value in providing details about jobs where the technology used is now outdated. However, this does not mean you should not mention these jobs – you should, just leave out the detailed description. You don't want any gaps in your resume that leave people wondering what you did during that time.

CAREER OBJECTIVE

Including a career objective in your resume is not recommended because:

1. The reader will assume that the position meets your career objective in some way (it's unlikely you would apply for a job if it didn't);
2. The reader does not really care about your career objective;
3. You can say almost anything you want without being able to substantiate it, as there is no valid way of corroborating what you say, which means it will usually be taken with a grain of salt anyway;
4. An objective says nothing about your ability to actually do anything;
5. It is usually too generic to be useful;
6. It often contains the sort of flowery, fluffy, imprecise language and phrases that many readers find questionable;
7. It adds no value.

Instead of including a vague and/or limiting career objective in your resume, use the cover letter to highlight and focus the reader's attention on your specific skills and achievements.

Jargon, terminology, or abbreviations

It is usually best to use straightforward, commonly used business English rather than excessive amounts of specific jargon, terms or abbreviations which only specialists in your field are familiar. Keep in mind that most executive search consultants are not specialists in your field.

Using abbreviations or acronyms can often be interpreted as an attempt to impress the reader. It is easy to bamboozle people with "science," but it is far more impressive to translate jargon and technical terms into business concepts that illustrate an understanding of the broader business implications of what you did.

SMART TIP

Putting abbreviations or acronyms in brackets after the full name of a term is not necessary, unless the term is going to be used several times throughout the document. It adds nothing and can detract much.

Even if you are sending your application directly to a potential employer, you should still avoid jargon and abbreviations. Although most employers reading your resume will probably be familiar with many of the terms used in your industry, many Human Resources Managers or Recruitment Officers might not be, and they could be the first to read the application and make an initial selection.

Academic results

For most positions, it is not important or even useful to include detailed academic results or transcripts. If a transcript is required, this is usually specified in the advertisement for the position or on the organisation's website.

If you have recently completed your degree and have done particularly well, I suggest including the number of High Distinctions, Distinctions and Credits. If your results lean toward the Pass end of the spectrum, it's best to remain silent on the issue.

If you are in the process of completing a tertiary or professional qualification, indicate when you expect to complete it.

If you have only completed a year or two of a degree and don't intend to finish it, leave it out. Including this information can do more harm than good. Employers prefer people who finish what they start.

If you obtained your professional and/or tertiary credentials overseas and they are not the same as the qualifications in the

country you are applying, it's best to find out what that country's qualification is equivalent to and indicate that on your resume.

Overseas tertiary institutions often use different nomenclature. For example, what might be called a Diploma in one country might be equivalent to a Degree in another, and vice versa. Another example is that some countries refer to an Honours level undergraduate degree as a Masters degree.

Memberships

Include: If being a member of a professional organisation is a requirement to getting a job in a particular field and/or if becoming a member of that association requires you to pass exams or demonstrate your competency, this information should be included on your resume.

Do not include: If you can become a member of an organisation just by paying a fee and there is no test or other evidence of competency required, then it says nothing about your competence or expertise, and is therefore not worth including.

Your contact details

The only contact details you really need to include on your resume are your daytime phone numbers (either work, mobile or both) and your email address. You will be submitting your resume by email 99 percent of the time. That means that your physical or postal address is not needed because employers and recruitment consultants will reply to or acknowledge your application by

SMART TIP

Make sure you have a facility on your mobile and daytime phone numbers for callers to leave a message. Recruitment consultants might not try again if they can't leave a message! I strongly recommend having voice mail or a message bank rather than one of those facilities where you just SMS a number.

email. Including your address may in some cases result in you being excluded based on your location. So, to reduce the chances of that happening, leave your address details off.

- **Phone number format and style:** Please consider the legibility of long phone numbers when including these on your resume. Put gaps between groups of digits in places where people expect them. It's easier to read phone numbers like this: 0419 907 088 and 02 9922 6175 than like this: 0419907088 and 0299226175. It's about being considerate to your reader who will not know your phone number. When the number appears as nine or 10 continuous digits with no spaces between them, it is much harder to read. You don't want an executive search consultant or employer to hesitate when picking up the phone to call you or cause them to accidentally call the wrong number.
- **Overseas phone numbers:** If you are applying for a position overseas, put the international dial code for your country and your area code in front of your phone number. It is also useful and courteous to indicate how far ahead or behind the time zone your country or city is. A useful website that will quickly tell you what time it is in most cities around the world is The World Clock at (<http://timeanddate.com>).
- **Email accounts and addresses:** Many people use Gmail, Hotmail, Yahoo or other free web-based mail services to send and receive emails. If you are sending emails and documents to recruitment firms and employers, and are expecting emailed responses, I recommend using a proper Internet Service Provider's email service. These are usually more reliable than many free email services, which have a nasty habit of blocking or detaching attachments before they reach their destinations.

Free email services also often include advertisements below email messages and you have no control over what that may be. Do you

really want your email, in which you're applying for an executive position, to end with an ad for online dating services?

Another issue to consider is the "name" part of your email address. If your email address is along the lines of hotchick@hotmail.com or bigguy@bigpond.com, I recommend getting another email address that is a tad more business-like. I know it's boring, but you really cannot expect employers to take you seriously if you use a frivolous email address.

SMART TIP

Register your own name as a domain name for sending and receiving email. Not only does this look more professional, it is inexpensive and very easy to implement. Plus, you are not tied to a particular Internet provider and have the freedom to use any email service of your choice, including Gmail, Yahoo and others. While many of the ".com" domain names have already been registered, the ".me" domains are rising in popularity especially for unique personal branding purposes.

Personal Information

- **Irrelevant information:** Personal information such as your date of birth, age, marital status, country of birth, ethnicity, gender, the number and names of your children and spouses, the breeds and names of your pets and so forth should not be included. It is illegal in many countries, such as Australia and the United States, to ask for this information to assess a person's suitability for a position.
- **Special circumstances:** However, some employers specifically request certain personal information – usually gender, date of birth, country of birth, citizenship – and have good reasons for requiring this information. Organisations who are exempt from anti-discrimination laws who may require this information include the United Nations, international aid agencies, military services, police services, accredited security services, secret

services, judicial bodies and some other government agencies involved in national security or defense. If they have such requirements, they are entitled to ask for the information through some form of legislation or other provisions of their legal charter.

- **Different customs overseas:** Employers in some countries still believe that personal information has a place in a professional resume. You should investigate this if you are applying for a position overseas and are unsure of what is expected.

Photographs

Some people believe that the inclusion of a photograph enhances their application because it allows the reader to “put a face to a name” or some other such unsubstantiated assertion. Normally I do not recommend including a photograph for the following reasons:

- **Quality control:** If using a colour photo, the black and white laser printer the recipient uses to print it will eliminate any benefits of colour. Plus the image will be greatly distorted after it has been scanned or photocopied. Second, unless the photo is of professional quality (taken by a professional photographer under proper lighting with a high quality camera), the end result may be unflattering.
- **Individual perceptions:** You also have no way of predicting the reaction of the reader. Will they like the look of you? Will they think you look too similar to someone they dislike? Will they think you are too attractive (or not) for their organisation or work area? Will they draw erroneous conclusions about your personality or style based on your appearance? The bottom line is you cannot foresee what may go through someone’s mind when looking at your photograph.

- **Risk of backfiring:** A client of mine learned a salutary lesson when she insisted that her photograph be included in her resume because she was considered by many people to be particularly attractive. She assumed that males would want to include her in the shortlist based on her visual appeal. However, her photo had the opposite effect when a prospective employer told her search consultant that he felt this was a “manipulative attempt to ingratiate herself” and that she should let her achievements, not her appearance, do the talking. Unfortunately, she was not considered for the position although she may have been the best candidate.

In short, the risks of using a photograph normally outweigh any potential benefits.

Exceptions:

- **High impact corporate resumes:** In some circumstances a resume may benefit from high impact formatting, which unlike a standard resume, will creatively showcase your experience, capabilities and potential, in a visually high impact manner. Utilising impressive strong visual communication, including corporate photographs, your background can be presented with ingenuity and flair that highlights your creative capabilities. I recommend that you search online for a professional photographer specialising in portrait and lifestyle photography – make sure you have a look at their online portfolio/gallery of images. It is best to have a range of portrait images taken – half body and full body. In situ images, such as in the office, work best for corporate resumes. Either at a desk, laptop, leafing through paperwork, or on the mobile – not always looking at the camera. You should be the focus, not the background or any office equipment. And both men and women should dress

conservatively, suits for men and corporate attire for women (no sleeveless tops or low necklines).

- **Models and Actors:** If you are applying for positions where a certain type of physical appearance is required for the job, such as modeling, acting or being an extra in a commercial, the foregoing comments does not apply. Nor if an employer explicitly requests that a photograph be included. If you are applying for a job in a country where photographs may be expected or required as part of the application process, such as India or Germany, then they should be included. You should research the country where you are applying so that you will know what their employment customs are.

Interests and hobbies

Consider relevancy to the job. Interests, hobbies and other extracurricular activities are generally not useful inclusions in your resume because they are unlikely to be valid or reliable indicators of your ability to do the job.

Some people believe that if a person is involved in certain types of activities outside work, it indicates something about their personality or their leadership skills or some other traits. Most organisational psychologists will say that this is nonsense and can encourage typecasting and lead to erroneous assumptions. There is absolutely no basis for making a valid connection between what a person can do on the job and what they do outside work.

Exception: The above does not apply to graduate positions where employers often want to know a person's interests and hobbies since there is usually little work experience from which to draw conclusions.

Employers may assume that people who have been leaders at school or university are somehow equipped to handle leadership roles at

work. This is not necessarily true since many people become leaders at school or university because they have a personality and style that makes them charismatic. Whether they are effective in a leadership role is an altogether different question.

Proofreading and errors

Similar to emailing a document containing a virus, sending a document containing spelling or typographical errors is probably a good way to get excluded without really trying.

The rule is this: Thoroughly read the document yourself first, and then have someone else read it to eliminate all errors. A single typographical error can mean the difference between getting an interview and a rejection letter. If you are not confident or competent in grammar, find someone who is. You can also hire a professional proofreader to edit your resume.

Adjust your spell checker: If you are applying for jobs in Australia, set Word to check for English/Australian spelling. If you are applying for positions in the United States or any other country that might spell words differently to English/Australian spelling, make sure that you set the Word program for that country's spelling usage. Some people ask what they should do if applying for an Australian based position in a company run by Americans or owned by an American company – if the position is in Australia, use English/Australian spelling.

Use apostrophes correctly: Many people seem to want to apostrophise everything. For example, some seem to think that plurals need apostrophes. They don't. In addition they think that the possessive form "its" (as in "its profits increased" or "its culture needed to change") needs an apostrophe. It does not. It's wrong to use an apostrophe in such cases. In the previous sentence, the apostrophe in "it's" is correct because it reflects something that has been left out and contracted ("it is"). Your spell checker may not

pick up these errors because the individual words are correct, and it may not recognise the context in which you are using them.

Check your capitalisations: Some people want to capitalise just about everything. For example, the word “internet” seems to deserve a capital “I”? Although it may have started out as this exotic, unknown place in cyberspace, it has become just a plain, ordinary thing like a table, computer, software, system, planet, city, train or dog. Many people also want to give words like “server,” “system,” “program” and other computer related words capitals. These are common, garden variety things and again don’t deserve capitalisation. Capitalising words to add emphasis or draw attention to them can annoy people, and simply isn’t correct use of the English language.

Of course, all proper nouns such as the names of people, organisations, business units, brands, specific products, position titles and places do need capitals. But other regular nouns don’t. It is however quite common practice to capitalise words in titles, particularly in books, newspapers and other publications. For your resume, it is fine if you capitalise the titles of the sections in your document. For instance, “Professional Experience” is acceptable.

As you can see, it is vital that you have a good resume that goes over your relevant work experience and achievements in detail, and tells potential employers what you can bring to the table. This piece of paper is what helps you land an interview when everyone else is out in the cold.

Obviously, there is a lot more that goes into crafting a good resume than simply writing down who you are, what you’ve done, and where you’ve been. Next, let’s go over design elements and other criteria to help your resume stand out from the crowd.

What your resume design says about you

Today's corporate executives face numerous time constraints including evaluating candidates for job interviews. Resumes that don't make the first cut will be immediately tossed with a flick of the wrist (or click of the mouse).

Writing a resume has become an art form that utilises strategic marketing techniques in a powerful presentation. It's not just about compiling a list of your professional history with a brief summary of your duties and achievements.

Be consistent with your style. Headings, subheadings, and body text should remain uniform throughout the document. For example, if you capitalise WORK EXPERIENCE, you should do the same for EDUCATION and other headings.

When using tabs, the text sometimes gets distorted when the document is emailed to another computer. However it is okay to use tables so that you can properly align text and maintain the structure.

Design your resume to appear distinctive, crisp and professional without looking as though you spent twice as long on the design as you did on the content. Unless you are a qualified or experienced graphic designer (and even then), keep it simple. The more complex you get, the more likely it is that the elaborate design on which you worked for hours will be distorted at the other end, and will detract from the important content of your resume.

If you are mailing a hard copy of your resume, avoid fancy paper and opt for paper with a plain, smooth finish. And resist the temptation to add embellishments such as a logo or other illustrations that you feel "represents" you. The best alternative is to simply set your name in a larger, bold font.

Font

Use standard fonts such as Arial, Times New Roman or Georgia, because many recruitment firms and employers only allow their employees to have a small number of fonts available on their computers. These standard fonts are easy to read on the screen, look reasonably good on paper, and are contained in the standard version of Word.

Spacing

Do not right justify the lines of text, it should be aligned to the left. Experts in graphic design and printing say that text is easier to read when the lines are of unequal length and the spacing between words is constant. This is because it forces the brain to concentrate and

not miss any words, and it is easier for the eye to recognise where it is on the page. When the lines are of the same length, the eyes and brain get fatigued more quickly, lose concentration and can miss, or skip words and lines.

SMART TIP

Your resume must be visually appealing and easy to read. The traditional style is one column with everything aligned to the left. Do NOT right justify.

WHAT THE COVER LETTER SHOULD INCLUDE

Including a cover letter with your resume is an excellent opportunity to introduce yourself and communicate your brand and value proposition. However, it should not duplicate your resume. Instead it should highlight relevant components of your experience and education while demonstrating why you would be a good fit for that company.

Since resumes are more formal, a well-written cover letter can be injected with energy and personality that will give the reader better insight into your character while hopefully building a rapport with the employer. Consider this your “sell-sheet” and use it to your best advantage.

The cover letter should normally only be one page in length with three or four paragraphs. Use a standard business letter format and a simple font such as Times New Roman, Georgia or Arial in 10–12 point size. Although it is not required to have the font or style on the cover letter match the resume, it does add a nice, polished touch. The cover letter should also include:

1. How you learned about the position or why you are submitting your resume.
2. The name of anyone who may have referred you.
3. Why you are interested.
4. Your qualifications for the position.
5. How the company would benefit by hiring you.

Research the company to find out who the appropriate hiring manager is so the letter can be properly addressed, and don't forget to include your contact information. Most importantly – ask for an interview!

Submitting your resume: uploading vs. mailing

Most employers and executive search firms prefer you to attach your resume to an email as a Microsoft Word document created on a PC running Microsoft Windows. If you use an Apple computer make sure you use the MAC version of MS Word. It is also not recommended that you send PDF documents. Most resume software packages used by recruitment firms convert the data scanned from resumes into a database, and this seems to work best with Word documents.

Danger of sending viruses

Sending a virus with an emailed document is definitely not a good move. It's just poor form and will probably result in your inclusion in the pile of rejected applicants. I think everyone understands that computer viruses and other damaging bits of computer code are easily transmitted by email. The internet is a public utility and we therefore have obligations to the general community of internet users.

There is no excuse for not having up-to-date anti-virus software installed and activated at all times. Use a well-known brand of anti-virus software such as Norton or McAfee.



5

Applying for roles and researching companies

When looking at different job opportunities, it's important to do your homework i.e., “due diligence” and “research.” Don't wait until just before your interview and try to do a crash course the night before. Instead, spend some time doing advance preparation by researching prospective employers so you can get a clear picture of what the companies are about. This will enable you to determine how well your skills and experience match the needs of the organisations. It will also help you to develop better insight into knowing when “opportunity” is knocking at your door and how to respond accordingly.

Recognising an opportunity

Although great opportunities may present themselves several times throughout your life, chances are you will not necessarily recognise them. The reason is that most people don't start looking for another job or change careers until they are dissatisfied with their current status, and are often oblivious to new and interesting prospects.

However, you should always be on the lookout for new opportunities, even when things are going well. This puts you in a position of

strength. Plus, you will not feel obligated to accept a position if it doesn't meet your criteria. You will also have established new contacts to add to your network, to use in the future.

So, how can you become better at identifying the next “best thing”? Just like anything else in life, you work at it and refine your recognition skills. Opportunities can be multi-dimensional and need to be examined from all sides. If an idea initially presents itself as flawed or has too many obstacles, keep turning it over and carefully examining it before discarding it. Any potentially successful opportunity should be well thought-out beforehand.

Also, consider the timing and how it's related to the opportunity at hand. It may be a great idea to enter into a partnership with your brother-in-law, but is this really a good time? Would it be better to wait a year or two until the economy stabilises? If not, the venture may be doomed for failure.

Don't be afraid to step outside of your comfort zone to explore new opportunities and seek new challenges. While there is security in familiar terrain, there may not be as much room for growth, and expanding your range of skills and knowledge.

Use caution if you are looking at a new opportunity based solely on money. People who change jobs or careers to enhance their bank account are usually “short-timers” who often find themselves even more dissatisfied than before. This strategy is of no benefit to you or your company. Instead, concentrate on building your skills, and improving expertise that will make you more attractive to future employers.

When considering new opportunities you will also want to think about how demanding and stressful the new position will be, and how you will be able to successfully achieve a satisfactory work/life balance. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (<http://www.cipd.co.uk/>) reports that 30 percent of sick leave can be attributed to stress, anxiety and depression – all of which are

amplified by a person's inability to properly balance their work and personal life.

Fraudulent opportunities

It's equally important to know how to recognise a fraudulent opportunity or scam. Often, when something sounds too good to be true – it is! A dead giveaway is when you are asked to make an “investment” to indicate your interest. In situations like these, the trickster will simply scoop up your money and head for the hills. Of course, I'm not talking about services or websites that require a retainer or subscription fee to provide legitimate connections to potential employers.

Another red flag is when a potential “employer” asks you to provide a free work sample or mock-ups, or work on a trial basis. You're not applying for an internship, and at this stage of the game your portfolio and credentials should speak for themselves.

Using the research guidelines in the next section, investigate each and every company and/or opportunity before proceeding.

Researching company websites

As an executive candidate, who is probably used to having an administrative assistant handle details, it can be disconcerting to realise that you now have to do your own time-consuming research. However, the more time you spend researching companies that are growing or re-organising in expanding industries, the more likely you are to uncover available positions. Thanks to the internet, it's easier than ever to research businesses around the world.

Identifying and contacting prospective companies include:

- Discovering companies that are most likely to benefit from your skills and expertise.

- Recognising companies with problems or issues you are uniquely qualified to solve.
- Expanding the pool of possible companies to include those outside your area of expertise, if your skills and experience are transferrable.
- Determining geographical areas where you are willing to work, since this can establish boundaries as to which companies to contact.
- Sending a resume and letter of interest to specific top executives of selected companies (go right to the top and skip Human Resources).

One way to identify companies that are expanding, or that may be going through a re-alignment that could benefit from your talents, is to read the newspapers, internet news sites and industry reports. For example, if you discover a business that has decided to expand operations overseas or has announced they are opening new offices, there's an excellent chance the company will need top-notch executives to get it off the ground.

Once you determine the companies of interest, then it's time to investigate if you have any personal connections through your networks. The best approach is to have someone connected with the company introduce you; however, don't scratch the company off your list if a personal connection is not available. Sending a targeted resume and letter explaining the competencies you can bring to the company, may just gain you consideration. Depending on their needs and growth projections, companies can create positions at any given time.

Conducting due diligence

Unfortunately most job candidates don't thoroughly investigate a potential employer. In fact, many will simply read the job

description or advertisement without doing any research. Typically, they already know a little something about the company, and feel they can simply trust their intuition by asking a few questions during the interview. Often, people are so glad to just have a job offer on the table that they give in to desperation and misguided perceptions.

Also, it isn't just job seekers that fail to properly investigate things. More often than not, companies don't check out their job candidates thoroughly either. Additional diligence is required on both sides of the equation so that the perfect match is made between the employee and the employer.

Failing to research and understand the company you hope to work for (and vice versa) is one of the main reasons why employees get laid off or end up quitting their job. Unfortunately, many people have no idea what they're signing up for until it's too late.

Good due diligence is a very comprehensive process. The amount of due diligence you want to undertake is entirely up to you, but when you are considering a potential employer, you should at the very least take the following three steps:

Research

In today's information age, there is no excuse for not doing a lot of research. You don't have to go out and hunt things down or call anyone. If you have access to the internet you have an invaluable tool at your fingertips. Here are the things you should be looking for:

- Industry-specific or common business articles about the company.
- Product and/or marketing brochures.
- Annual and quarterly Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) filings.
- The company's website, as well as their competitors' websites.

- Articles about the prospective company's industry, including articles about its competitors. Whatever problems that industry has, are your potential employer's problems, and they will be yours as well if you take the job.
- Competitors' product and/or marketing brochures.

Investigate

Although we are a lot less interpersonally connected these days, there's still a lot to be said for doing things the old fashioned way by simply talking to people, whether on the phone or face-to-face. Of course, you have to talk to the *right* people. In other words, those people who can actually help you gain some insight into the company that you may be working for someday. If you can gain access to some of these people, talk to:

- The company's human resources manager.
- At least one or two managers in any departments (such as manufacturing, marketing, and/or accounting) that you could potentially work with.
- At least one or two customers, business associates and/or vendors of your potential employer to get their respective opinions.
- At least one of your potential employer's competitors. Simply call a competitor's sales representative, or manager of a department similar to the one you will be potentially joining. Be truthful and let them know that you are considering a job with their competitor, and ask for their advice. (This could even open the doors to more leads.)
- At least two former company employees who can be found using your own personal contacts or asking current staff members for a couple of names.

Ask yourself some questions

Research is a comprehensive task that we often don't want to invest the time doing, unless it's related to our current job or work assignment. However, if we're conducting research for personal matters we can often become careless or haphazard. A lot of people like to "trust their instincts" or "go with their gut." Instead of throwing caution to the wind and relying on ephemeral feelings that may or may not exist, ask yourself a few questions:

- What things do I absolutely need to be aware of?
- What are the best sources to find this information?
- How reliable are these sources?
- Who can give me the inside scoop and prevent me from wasting time?
- Have I investigated thoroughly enough?
- What problems could occur if I have inaccurate information?

This may all seem overwhelming, but keep in mind that after our families and friends, our employers (and co-workers) are some of our most important relationships. Also, keep in mind that other people who do business with your potential employer (including competitors) have done their due diligence. How can you afford not to do the same?

*"It's amazing what one can do
when one doesn't know what one
can't do."*

Jim Davis

Developing rapport with prospective employers

To effectively communicate with a potential employer, it is essential to develop a rapport that synchronises your credentials and behaviour with their culture. In order to successfully do this, you need to look at the world from their perspective.

When developing common ground with a prospective employer, it is important to learn about the company's background, understand what their long and short term goals are, how outside influences could affect them, and identify what characteristics make them unique. And this all comes back to RESEARCH.

Many companies announce new executive positions in general or industry news, or through press releases. If you read them it's possible to glean information about the type of experience the company found desirable. In fact, press releases and announcements often describe the person's background, experience and unique qualifications that fit the needs of the company. This is extremely valuable information that you can use to shape and guide the details you add to your professional resume.

The next step is to read any past or current job advertisements for a variety of positions. These will usually contain fairly detailed information about the organisation of the company, the types of duties staff handle, experience and skills the company finds valuable to the business, and much more.

The executive and manager job advertisements are the most valuable to you. At this level, the company will often indicate the future direction of the company, the type of leader the business is seeking, and the unique qualifications seen as matching well with the firm's mission. This information gives you an excellent idea of what the competition will be promoting as their exceptional qualifications. Possessing knowledge of this type gives you plenty of

opportunity, with a little imagination, to craft a brand that appeals to the business decision-makers.

BUILDING RAPPORT

It's not easy to establish rapport with someone you don't know, at a company you may be unfamiliar with. Lay the groundwork by introducing yourself through an associate or in a cover letter that identifies you as someone with common interests.

Relationships are built on harmony, affinity, conformity, and trust.

Associations that are mutual can go a long way towards opening new doors.

Prioritise your requirements to make sure they are mutually beneficial.

Perceptions and first impressions are critical in building a good rapport.

Observe the company's working culture to see how you fit in.

Recognise the company's needs to see how you can help.

Trust is an important component in any relationship, especially a working one.

Uncover hidden job markets

No doubt you have heard the dire news that there are fewer jobs available. Yet, people are still landing new jobs every day! These aren't jobs at the local fast food restaurants either, though that's just the kind of story the media loves to relay. "Ex-CEO flips hamburgers out of desperation!" Is this the whole story? Are top managers doomed to taking low-level positions? Of course not! They just need to know where to look.

In the current economic conditions, it's a fact that many jobs are likely to have a large number of qualified applicants. People at all

SMART TIP

Statistics show that hidden jobs account for more than 75 percent of all job openings.

levels are searching for employment, and businesses don't have to be as aggressive as they normally would be when it comes to job advertisements.

When the economy was growing, Human Resource managers spent a lot of money advertising executive and managerial positions in professional trade magazines and journals, and paying executive search firms. Today they can forgo that expense and go “underground”, so to speak. In fact, many companies prefer not to advertise positions right now because they net too many applications.

Going underground simply means jobs are not advertised in the traditional manner and other methods are utilised to find qualified candidates. The business puts out the word that it needs a manager or other high level position filled and the applicants seem to appear.

Knowing where the companies are spreading the word is key to finding the jobs in the hidden job markets. You have to be more aggressive about discovering where the jobs exist and not count on

advertised positions as your primary source. People are successfully landing jobs every day because they take non-traditional routes to the corporate office.

SMART TIP

The best jobs aren't buried in the display ads – they're secreted within the companies you want to work for. Your challenge is to rummage around and dig them out. Start by selecting one particular company and finding out everything you can about them. Then use that information to your advantage!

Learning to be the hunter

Where should you begin your search? Even executives can feel a bit overwhelmed at the thought of entering the hidden job market. Highly qualified people, like yourself, are used to being the hunted

and not the hunter. However, the ebb and flow of the economy has made it necessary to become a hunter, and that means entering the field fully prepared to initiate contact with potential employers who may not have a single job advertised.

WHY JOBS ARE HIDDEN

There are a multitude of reasons why a company may not advertise a position including:

1. Not wanting competitors to know.
2. Not wanting a deluge of resumes from unqualified candidates.
3. Concern about the effect the news will have on stock prices.
4. Needing to confidentially replace someone.
5. The company is using other means to locate qualified candidates such as an executive search consultant and/or social media.
6. The company has implemented a hiring freeze which means the position cannot be publicised.

There are a number of strategies you can employ to uncover the hidden job market. The first steps require a change in attitude and approach. It's difficult for people to change behaviours that are rooted in common practice.

So, put the newspapers and trade magazines aside and begin your job search anew with fresh approaches. You need to employ practical strategies that will uncover these positions. In fact, you may discover that some firms will agree to meet with you simply because you are so highly qualified, even though there is no current position available. At the executive level it is more about selling unique talents and abilities rather than promoting skills. Although these companies can't interview you if they don't know you exist.

Following are some ways to uncover the hidden job market:

Tap into networks

Networking works. It always has and always will. You know someone who knows someone, but may be completely unaware of the association, because it's two or three people removed from your inner circle. There are a number of ways to network which we will discuss in detail in Chapter 6, and you should use them all.

Networking can produce interesting results, but it needs to be approached with an open mind. The person you least expect could be the one who comes through with a job lead. In one interesting study completed by Mark Granovetter at Stanford University, it was reported that 27.8 percent of the people who got jobs through personal contacts did so through distant friends seen less than once each year. Only 16.7 percent found jobs through people they saw at least twice a week.

Cold calling

This form of job searching is still just as effective today as it was half a century ago. The basic premise is the same: you target a specific company or employer, and send them an unsolicited but customised cover letter with your resume. Before doing so, make sure you have researched the business, and understand their needs so you can address them in your letter.

After a few days, follow up with a phone call and request a meeting. Naturally, you shouldn't be pushy or aggressive. But at the same time let them know you are enthusiastic about meeting with them in the hopes of gaining more knowledge about their company. And perhaps you will gain a couple of referrals to other companies who may be looking to fill suitable positions.

Reference professional and trade periodicals

Although businesses are not generally relying on advertisements, that doesn't mean they don't exist. Even if specific jobs are not advertised, the information gleaned from the periodicals about companies and industries can lead to the identification of those that are movers and shakers. Libraries offer an array of major newspapers and professional periodicals.

Contact search companies specialising in executive placements

Contacting executive search consultants seems like an obvious method for finding advertised jobs, as opposed to hidden jobs. What you will discover though, is that search consultants specialising in executive and high level management positions, have a well developed network of their own. As a result, the person you are working with can contact companies and professional connections to generate interest in your qualifications. The business and executive search consultant have a working relationship based on trust and past successful referrals. The consultant has built a reputation for sending quality candidates to clients so when a job candidate is recommended, it's taken seriously.

In other words, executive search consultants can present your resume and get it a level of attention you might not otherwise get. In addition, there may very well be an available position open now that has not been advertised.

As previously mentioned, uncovering the hidden job market for executive and managerial positions requires implementing a variety of strategies. It's critical to become proactive and aggressively pursue as many avenues as possible. One thing is certain – there are jobs available, and that is what needs to be kept in mind at all times. Stay motivated. Stay focused. Above all, don't get discouraged. I'll talk more about how to effectively develop and act on potential job leads in the next chapter.



6

Developing a professional career network

Historically, studies have estimated that only about 20 percent of the job market is actually advertised. So that means 80 percent of the jobs available out there are unadvertised and therefore hidden, as I discussed in Chapter 5. Developing a professional career network is one of the best ways you can tap into these opportunities.

Networking is a varied process. You need to develop a list of both professional and personal contacts, let them know that you are searching for a job, and ask them if they can point you towards someone who may be able to assist you. Start by sending out an email so they have time to think about your request. Next, follow up with a phone call or face-to-face meeting. Start off with those closest to you and broaden your search as you go.

The key to networking effectively is not to put your contacts on the spot about a specific employment opportunity. You just want them to point you in the right direction. Most of your contacts will be more than happy to help you, but things will go a lot smoother when you aren't putting additional pressure on them.

You should also keep your network list organised. There are many programs you can use, from spreadsheets to email and calendar

programs. Keep track of your contacts' names, titles, company names, email addresses, phone numbers, mailing addresses, who referred you to them, dates of any communication you've had, and any follow-up dates you need to keep. I have attached a couple of worksheets at the end of this chapter to help you stay focused and on target.

Not all networks are equal

We are all familiar with the saying, "It's not what you know, but who you know." This really rings true in today's fast-paced business world. While there is a certain amount of competency that is expected in any field, in general you will find that no matter where you go, there are people who have risen to higher-level positions by forming relationships with the right people at the right time. Today, success is all about networking. And when you network well (on top of being the best at your job), you are guaranteed to go places no matter what career you have.

Networking is about more than just your friends and family network (though they can help get you a job as well); it's about working with people in your field and forming relationships that can help you advance.

The easiest way to network: by making friends

If you're lucky, you'll work with people who you click with right off the bat. Such relationships can be a double-edged sword; on one hand, you can befriend someone that can take you places. On the other, you may end up befriend someone who can drag you down. The key is to network with the right person at the right time. Here are some tips to remember when networking with your office colleagues and mentors:

- Notice how other senior executives treat your friends and mentors. Try to use the positive mentors as role models on how to act and how to perform well.
- Mentors will come and go, and it's okay to change mentors as your skill set grows. It's also okay to have more than one mentor. Don't limit your social circle, and be open-minded, even to workers younger or less experienced than you. Today's intern may be tomorrow's CEO.
- Education is not optional today. If you don't have the appropriate qualifications, make your education a priority. This is also a great way to network and form social bonds with co-workers.
- Business cards should be conservative and updated regularly. Always keep some handy when you're attending work-related events.
- Make an effort to show up to company social events. While some of them may seem quite dull, they are great ways to meet and greet with other families, and other employees with connections.

If you are lucky, you'll connect with someone in a position of power or authority without even trying. Quite often, it is your work ethic and knowledge that will get you noticed. Putting your heads together in the office can often lead to collaboration outside in a way that can help shape your collective futures in a positive way.

SMART TIP

Always send a thank-you letter to any contacts that have referred you to a job. You should even go a little further and let your contacts know via email if you get the job, strengthening your professional network.

Identifying a contact

A lot of people don't have the luxury of simply connecting with someone in their office. Maybe you haven't had a chance yet or maybe the office atmosphere is not one that is conducive to interpersonal interaction. Assuming that you are already doing the best that you can at your job, there are other things you can do to form valuable network contacts.

One thing you have to do is recognise the people who will be able to help you in the future. These are the people that have been in the organisation or industry for quite a while, are respected by others, and will be sticking around – in other words, they aren't going to be retiring any time soon. These people should also be fairly approachable and accessible day-to-day at your job. You don't want to go waltzing into the CEO's office to chat about last night's ball game. But mid-level professionals are perfect for day-to-day mentorship and networking opportunities.

The feeling out process

Once you identify a possible contact, you should attempt to form a relationship. In many ways, just being yourself is a great start, especially if you are curious about how to improve your performance and ask a lot of questions. Remember, your networking contacts are also trying to see how you can benefit them. Share ideas with these contacts and gather their input as well.

If you are not getting a warm reception from your prospective contact, the best thing to do is to just walk away. If you appear too eager, you can come off as a sycophant. Sycophants are generally not respected in the office, and your possible contact will probably pick up on it, especially if you are going out of your way to cater to them. For example, if you know this person is a fan of a certain sports team, and you go in to work every day talking about the team like you're a fan even though you're not, chances are he or she will

discover your little charade in due course. So it's best not to fake it or overdo it. Just be yourself.

Keeping your network

In today's age of professional and social networking, it is easier than ever to maintain your network. Even if you have left the company where you had many contacts in your network, you can still keep in touch and collaborate. This doesn't have to be an obvious attempt at keeping in touch for the sake of it. Include these contacts in emails or messages about news items that you find interesting, pertaining to your field. Call them occasionally to chat about things. Most of these people probably want to keep in touch with you as well, so don't be shy. Remember, they are utilising your skills as a network contact just like you are using them.

This may sound a tad callous and impersonal, but you have to look at your network contacts this way. It's not like you are the only one benefitting from the relationship – your network contacts benefit as well. They recognise your competence and potential, and vice versa. Networking is a great compliment and most professionals appreciate it.

Don't over think it

Quite often, networks form by sheer happenstance. Don't go into the business world feeling pressured to form a network. Such pressure can cause desperation that will be palpable to those around you. In business, you should let nature take its course in your everyday relationships. You also shouldn't be afraid to help guide your relationships in a way that will be mutually beneficial to all involved.

A huge factor in networking is your competence. You may be out there working hard and looking to network, and all the while others

are looking at you for the same reason. If you know your job and do it really well, people will want to get to know you, provided you are open to it. Having a good personality goes a long way, but there is no substitution for competency. Having both makes you a force to be reckoned with, and one that others will want to have in their network.

The power of traditional networking

There's no question that professional and social media are a great form of networking. However, even with today's technology and the ability to connect with people around the globe, it does have its limits. Traditional networking is still a much preferred method of meeting people because you can use advantageous strategies to obtain job leads, gather information on particular companies and individuals, or grab the attention of a company recruiter.

SMART TIP

Traditional networking is a lot easier if you are already involved in a professional/trade organisation pertaining to your field, as these associations provide an excellent jump-off point. If you aren't currently involved in such an organisation, now is the time to get involved. Organisations like these are often specifically used for job searches and networking, so always be professional and tactful.

Plus, it allows random and spontaneous encounters with people from diverse backgrounds. These are individuals you may not typically connect with online, because you may have different interests, careers, and income levels. Another benefit of conventional networking is that face-to-face encounters make it easier to establish trust and instill confidence in one's abilities.

Traditional networking also tends to produce higher quality leads because people who attend local networking events, seminars, and meetings are there to conduct business and learn about new opportunities, rather

than just socialise. However, conventional networking does require more effort than social networking because you have to factor in the time to attend events, and associated costs, including travel expenses.

It also helps to be a good communicator as you prepare to introduce yourself to new people. And this is the part that worries many people – knowing how to effectively mingle. Here are a few tips that will teach you how to “schmoose” and work a room with the best of them:

- **Leave the negative roadblocks at the door.** These are the self-destructive thoughts you may have about yourself like, “Why would they want to meet me? There must be a 100 more interesting people for them to talk to.” Or, “I don’t think I’m qualified enough to go over there and introduce myself.” Just do it!
- **Take the lead.** People enjoy talking about themselves so ask non-invasive questions to get them started. Show an interest in their field or industry, or mention a mutual contact. If possible, find something to compliment them on.
- **Practice makes perfect.** Write out several lines of introduction or conversation starters so that you will always be prepared when meeting someone new. This would also be a good time to brush up on your USP, as discussed in Chapter 4.
- **Be prepared.** Whenever possible, do some advance preparation to find out who else will be attending the event/meeting so that you can do a little background research. This will definitely help you gain an edge so that you can approach and talk to your new contacts with ease.
- **Be yourself.** Don’t try to act like someone you are not when meeting someone new. Sure, you’ll make an impression, but probably not the best one. You don’t have to be the most

outgoing person in the room. Sometimes the humble, quiet-spoken individual merits the most notice if he or she has something of value to say.

- **Ask for introductions.** Hopefully there will be someone at the meeting/event that you know and can have an easy conversation with. However, don't try to shadow them throughout the evening. Instead, ask them to introduce you to several people and take it from there. And if you don't know anyone, introduce yourself to someone and let them know you're new to the area, organisation, or meeting, and ask if they would mind introducing you to some other people.
- **Hand out business cards.** Never leave home without these little gems. These mini-billboards are powerful marketing tools that tell people who you are, what you do and how they can contact you. As a matter of fact, hand out two or more at a time so the recipient will have one to keep, and another one to pass on to another contact.
- **Follow-up.** Within a day or two after the meeting, send an email or handwritten note to the people who crossed your path, letting them know how much you enjoyed meeting them. Reference something specific that you talked about so they will remember you. Or send them that report or article you discussed. Likewise, if someone contacts you with a note or phone call, be sure to follow up and respond accordingly.
- **Stay organised.** Keep all of your contacts organised in a system that is convenient for you to use. This could be a desktop rolodex, address book, smartphone app, online software or any other system that is practical and easy to retrieve.
- **Fear of rejection.** Unfortunately, there is the risk of rejection in all types of social situations but try not to take it personally. It's possible the person you are trying to strike up a conversation

with is also feeling awkward and doesn't know how to carry on a conversation, or can't be bothered. Just know that this type of behaviour is not the norm and you should take it all with a grain of salt. Simply keep moving around the room and strike up a conversation with the next person. Success does not stand still!

Expanding your network

There's no question how effective networking is. Expanding your network is often likened to watering plants – the more you nurture them, the bigger they grow. Even if you aren't currently looking for a job, you should always maintain and nurture your network.

It's important to realise that everyone you know is part of your network. Your friends, family, clients, neighbours, vendors, colleagues, customers – they're all part of your network and can help you generate job leads. The bigger your network and the more people each member of your network knows, the more success you'll have with your job search.

- Discreetly network with your personal connections, and let them know you are searching for a new position. It is quite possible that some of these people are aware of positions that have recently become available or have heard about one that will be created. Keep in mind that people in top management positions are not the only ones who may have information about professional level positions. If possible, make subtle enquiries of junior staff and prior co-workers.
- If you know any company board members, this is a good time to contact them and let them know you are available. Board members often have extensive contacts in the community, and elsewhere, and can provide invaluable assistance and leads.
- Join online and local professional organisations and associations. For example, international organisations such as the

International Facility Management Association (IFMA) and the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) have branches around the world, as do many other associations geared to specific industries or professional groups.

- Join online groups such as LinkedIn that are specifically designed to enable professionals to network. It's important to create a detailed professional profile and then invite all of your contacts to link with you. No matter what level position you are hoping to find, the fact is that we live in the information age, and social media is a tool used by advertisers and job seekers alike. I will cover how to utilise professional and social networking in more depth in Chapter 7.

SMART TIP

As mentioned previously, more job leads are discovered via networking than through any other method.

- Don't forget to take advantage of connections you know through other groups like alumni and special interest associations.
- Attend local professional and business group meetings open to the public, like the forums and workshops held by universities, the Chamber of Commerce and the small business associations. It's necessary to ferret out these sessions with online searches and phone calls. Since they are specialty meetings, the announcements are not usually widespread and are targeted to those who may have an interest. Naturally, no matter what type of meeting you attend, it's important to have business cards on hand and ready to distribute.

How to effectively develop job leads

When going through the job search process, one of the vital elements in your search is to properly develop job leads. How is it possible to find a reliable source for job openings in your specific career field?

In truth, there is no one reliable source for available jobs. There are, however, methods that you can use to find job leads. Utilise as many job lead sources as you can. Some valuable sources are listed below:

- **Join a professional or trade organisation.** Almost every industry has a professional organisation associated with it – and most offer some type of job advertisement or resume exchange facility. Find out what process the organisation(s) associated with your industry utilise for distributing the latest job advertisements and use it to find a job. Of course, such organisations are also great places to network, so join up if you aren't already a member.
- **Your university alumni/career associations.** Your university alumni association or career office is another great place to look for leads. Here you will find many like-minded people in your shoes, and they'll probably be willing to give you assistance in landing a job. Contact your university alumni office or career services office and see what they have to offer. You can also use the same service if you're a current student.
- **Go to a job fair.** On any given day there is probably a job fair being held somewhere in your community. Companies send people in charge of hiring to these fairs to find those most qualified for certain jobs. Before going to a job fair, make sure you prepare ahead of time, identify any employers that you are interested in, and come up with a strategy for getting yourself noticed. If you make a good enough impression, you may be offered an interview even if that employer isn't currently looking for someone with your skill set and experience.
- **Browse job websites.** The current trend in job hunting is to use the internet. While there are plenty of jobs to be found on recruitment sites, and many people have indeed been hired as a result of job advertisements from these sites, searching online should be just one small facet of your search for job leads.

There are essentially three types of job sites: general recruitment sites, industry-specific job sites, and geographic-specific job sites. They're pretty self-explanatory. General career sites have job advertisements from many career fields from hundreds of employers, industry-specific job sites obviously have job advertisements within a certain industry, and geographic-specific job sites only have job openings in a certain region.

- **Human Resource Centres.** Online human resource (corporate career) centres have become quite popular. A lot of companies, including many Fortune 500 companies, use human resource centres. Such centres are great sources for job openings, finding guidelines for resume submissions, and often contain a lot of information about the company, such as career paths, corporate culture, benefits, etc.
- **Executive Search Consultants.** Talent scouts aren't just for athletics. On the contrary, many companies use them to find the most qualified candidates for specific job positions. Unlike recruiters in sports, they generally won't come and find you. You have to find them, but always remember that most search consultants work for the potential employer and not for you. If you don't meet the specifications the employer is looking for, they won't be much help.

Executive search consultants are often geographic-specific or industry-specific, and I'll talk more about how to effectively use them in Chapter 8.

- **Browse display ads.** Display ads from the newspaper were at one time the chief source of executive job leads. With the emergence of the internet, however, the importance of display ads has significantly declined. Despite this, browsing display ads can be helpful for finding positions. You can also find display ads online and these often prove more fruitful.

- **Hitting the streets.** The oldest way to find jobs is to literally go door-to-door and fill out job applications and hand out resumes. This method can be very useful if you are in the process of relocating because you can make a special trip before you move and spend the entire time handing out resumes, filling out applications, and talking to prospective employers. If you do this, make sure you always dress professionally just in case you get an on-the-spot interview.
- **Acting on your leads.** Following up on leads is every bit as important as developing leads. Once you submit a cover letter and resume to a potential employer make sure you follow up to confirm that your application was received. If your potential employer is open to speaking to you about the job, ask about the hiring timetable and even ask for an interview. It simply makes no sense to invest all that time and effort in putting together a good list of job leads if you don't follow up. Be professional in your follow-up; you don't want to be overbearing, but you do want to be persistent.

Assembling your professional toolbox

Every professional needs a “toolbox” with worksheets and templates to guide them through the process, many of which you will find throughout this book. Put together a follow-up log to help you keep track of your job leads and the dates on which you followed up each one, including the name of the person you talked to. You can easily set up a spreadsheet in Excel or use the template provided at the end of this chapter.

Below is your Job Search Action Plan. It is designed to help you schedule your job campaign activities on a week-by-week basis. When establishing a realistic activity schedule, consider all your present obligations, including your current position and family

responsibilities. Keep in mind that job search activities, such as telephone follow-up, interviewing, travel, computer work, and research require both time and commitment.

Start by estimating your schedule for the first two weeks, the percentage of time you will commit and/or the number of contacts you believe you can make during this period. Remember, this is a tentative schedule based on the goals you have currently set. Nothing is set in stone and anything can be amended at any time.

Job search action plan

Date:

Action channels	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Ad Responses												
Direct Mail: Targeted Firms (or Mass Mailing)												
Networking Opportunities (Business Events)												
Search Consultants												
Telemarketing												
Emailing												

Next, you will find a job interview tracking sheet and a weekly action plan designed to help you stay on target.

Job interview tracking sheet

Company name

Position

Contact name

Title

Mailing address

Website

Telephone

Email

Resume sent (date)

Method

Phone follow-up

Outcome

Reply received

Interview scheduled

Comments

Weekly action plan

Week of

Decide how you want to record your information: percentage of time spent, total hours or numbers. Complete the “Anticipated” at the beginning of the week and compare with your “Actual” results at week’s end.

Anticipated	Actual
..... Advertisements: time looking for and applying
..... Letters sent to target companies (Cold Calls)
..... Follow-up phone calls to advertised jobs and cold call letters
..... Networking phone calls
..... Network meetings
..... Informational interviews
..... New contacts from network meetings and informational interviews
..... Job interviews
..... Time collecting information at the Library
..... Time online conducting research
..... Social meetings (breakfasts, lunches, association meetings, etc.)
..... Thank you note sent via email
..... Thank you cards and letters (Networking/Info. Meetings and Job Interviews)

Successes:

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.....

.....

Setbacks:

.....

.....

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Plan for next week:

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7

Leveraging the power of business and social media

Networking has always been an important tool in the arsenal of a professional during a job search, but now networking has been completely revamped for the modern business world. The internet, and business and social media websites have updated and broadened networking. Traditional networking methods such as teleconferencing and face-to-face meetings are still used, and are still highly effective, but including professional and social media in a job search can increase your effectiveness.

Without a doubt today, the internet is a vital resource when looking for a job. While it used to be as simple as submitting your resume via “snail mail” or filling out an application at the company’s physical location, job candidates now have to follow a different set of rules. Many companies are now focusing on their online presence and use electronic job search resources, in lieu of traditional methods. Instead of just display advertisements in the paper, we have job websites and internal computerised HR systems.

This can be an advantage or a disadvantage, depending on how professional and socially connected you are online. Business and social networking as well as career networking websites (and your own personal Web page to a smaller degree) provide you with new

SMART TIP

Increase your online visibility by creating and uploading a digital online resume at sites such as MyCareer (<http://mycareer.com.au/>) and SEEK (<http://www.seek.com.au/>). While LinkedIn listings do have influence with search consultants and hiring managers, an additional online resume can offer further options and versatility.

ways to establish a relationship with a company's HR Department before you even begin a job search. This can become a vital tool for landing that dream career.

You rarely get a second chance to make a first impression, and in this day and age that first impression often begins online. While you should already know to wear the proper outfit for a face-to-face interview, your online identity can make an even bigger first impression.

It's therefore imperative that you consider what kind of message your online identity is sending to potential employers, partners, or clients.

Let's take a look at how you can make your online identity work for you.

Get LinkedIn

There's no excuse today for not using business or social networking sites when you are looking for a job. It's not like the old pen-and-paper days when you could only cold-call companies on the phone, or talk to people you knew through your various contacts to get your foot in the door for an interview. Now everyone is online, including the companies that you are applying. In fact, many of them have taken their entire hiring process online.

The leading professional business networking site is LinkedIn. Unlike some of the other networking websites, LinkedIn is focused on building business relationships. As such, it is one of the most useful tools on the internet if you are searching for a job.

While LinkedIn hosts your profile for free, a nominal monthly fee allows you to search for other companies in your industry and contact other LinkedIn members. Locating people who might be able to help with your job search, in companies that you are interested in working with, can be highly valuable.

LinkedIn allows you to keep in touch with other professionals you know, who are in careers that are similar to your own. They may be able to give you information on jobs that are not yet posted and put in a good word for you. LinkedIn also permits employers to post jobs, so when you sign up you gain access to their postings. The more relevant information you provide on your profile, the more likely you are to make more contacts.

How to use LinkedIn

Many of the large companies consistently use LinkedIn to find candidates to fill positions in their organisations. Everyone from online companies such as eBay to companies like Myers and David Jones use LinkedIn to find new employees. Experts say that such companies go to LinkedIn to look for quality passive job candidates.

A passive job candidate is essentially someone who is not necessarily looking for a job, but if the right offer were on the table they might consider taking it. These are people who may be looking to “trade up” and move into better, higher-paying jobs like the ones found at Wesfarmers or Telstra.

Companies also use LinkedIn because it can function as a sort of referral system, and referrals generally have a higher rate of success. This is why many companies have employee referral bonuses. LinkedIn essentially lets companies access their employees’ networks for the benefit of all.

The employers-LinkedIn partnership

Some LinkedIn members have reported receiving job enquiries less than 24 hours after posting their profiles. Quite often this is because a former co-worker will browse through LinkedIn and perhaps find another member's name in the same career field. If the two of them previously had a good relationship, the job seeker can often get bumped to the top of the potential candidates list.

For example there is a story of a software professional who obtained his current position via LinkedIn. Headhunters working with a top software company searched the LinkedIn database for members with relevant skill sets, and the experience they were looking for. Having read his work history, they shared it with other managers, and made contact. After two long phone calls, the software company scheduled a face-to-face interview. Soon enough, he was hired.

This software professional has since stated that he would often be contacted through LinkedIn by various executive search consultants for small companies, but it was this large company with their great offer that piqued his interest. The fact that other companies repeatedly contacted him reveals that LinkedIn can actually help with your job search, if you have a good, strong profile.

“If you can imagine it, you can achieve it. If you can dream it, you can become it.”

William Arthur Ward

Today if you are applying for executive-level jobs you are expected to have a LinkedIn profile; especially when one considers that LinkedIn is the largest networking site for professionals in Australia with over 3 million members. To give you a better perspective of

the power of business networking, Australia is one of LinkedIn's top 10 performing countries, which is quite impressive when you take into account this country's relatively small population.

The all-important job search on LinkedIn

There is a Jobs section on LinkedIn that you can search using a specific location and keyword, or you can use the Advanced Search function if you want to be more targeted. Most important, however, is knowing how to set up your profile so that a new job finds you.

First, create your profile. Be as specific as possible, detailing your employment history, achievements, education, and industry. It's just like a resume. You should also consider a photo, as it puts a face to your name, shows everyone that you're a real person, and that you're serious about business networking. Use a headshot if you have one or edit another photo.

When setting up your profile, pay attention to your expertise and relevant keywords so that employers can find your profile. After all, it won't do you any good if they can't find you to get in contact.

Since this is business networking we're talking about, make sure you use LinkedIn to further build your network. Get recommendations from former co-workers, managers, or even clients, as potential employers tend to pay attention to such things. Having good recommendations appear on your LinkedIn profile is so important in today's world of online recruitment. Endorsements from your former colleagues are an extremely effective selling tool, particularly if you are job hunting.

Asking for a recommendation from a relevant colleague or business manager is considered the norm on LinkedIn, so there's no need to feel awkward. The main objective of a LinkedIn recommendation is that someone feels strongly enough about you to provide you with a written testimonial.

RECOMMENDING OTHERS ON LINKEDIN ...

On the flipside of receiving recommendations is, in turn, providing endorsements for your colleagues. While it is essential that you gather the best testimonials for your own profile, it is equally important that you give honest recommendations about others. Remember that your profile and reputation will be associated with the recommendations you make.

It is always a good idea to think long and hard before committing to a recommendation, however nothing is written in stone, and you can always change your mind at a later time. A colleague whom you once well-respected may now have a different perspective on work, and your positive recommendation may no longer be applicable. The good news is that removing your recommendation is possible – and transparent. The recipient will not be notified if you withdraw your recommendation. It is simple to remove from their profile.

Get connected

Research identifies that one of the best ways to find a new job is to target companies where friends and acquaintances are employed. While you don't need a thousand connections to make this strategy work, you do need more than 25. Preferably more than 100.

However, before attempting to build a network you will first need to have a good, strong LinkedIn profile that provides readers with a clear idea of who you are and what you do, as discussed in the previous section.

So how can you build your network? Connect with everyone you know now and knew 'way back when'. Start with current professional contacts. Then follow up with colleagues from previous companies. Even former school mates can often provide strong connections.

Once you have built up your contacts, go to LinkedIn and click your list of “connections.” From there click “companies” to see where two or more of your connections work. Visit the company websites and look for potential job openings that you may be qualified for. If you find something suitable, call your contact and let them know of your interest in that position. Hopefully they will be able to provide more insight and help you get your resume in front of the hiring manager. Also, ask your connections about jobs that haven’t been made public yet.

If you have questions, use the site to your advantage

LinkedIn has an “Answers” section that is there to help you if you have a question. It’s also a good place to answer other professionals’ questions and get involved in the community. This increases your visibility, and could pique someone’s interest, and possibly land you an interview. All they have to do is click the link on any of your posts to find your profile. It’s that simple, and it may just be what gets the attention of your future employer.

Get with the times

It’s the internet age, and companies are more efficient than ever. So if you don’t have time for networking on sites like LinkedIn, those companies may not have time for you. It sounds harsh, but you need to mould yourself to the modern job market, and being involved in LinkedIn is one huge facet of that market. So log on right now and start working on your profile. There are employers

SMART TIP

Go to LinkedIn and search around. Chances are you’ll find people you worked for or with, former classmates, vendors, and clients. All these people can possibly help you find a job. If nothing else, LinkedIn can be a good source of references for your potential employer(s).

SMART TIP

We're all on the go these days and being away from your computer is no excuse to not be connected. LinkedIn Mobile is an app that lets you make new connections, look at profiles, and view LinkedIn's Answers section from your mobile device.

out there looking for you – they just don't know it yet.

Connecting through Facebook

At one time, Facebook was a social networking site that was mainly for college students. It was an Ivy League social network. You needed an invite to register and it was fairly exclusive. Even after it opened up to

everyone with an email address, it was still mostly younger people using it.

Soon enough, however, many saw the value in social networking and turned Facebook into the juggernaut it is today. There has been a 181 percent increase in 25–34 year-old users and a 98 percent increase in those 35 years and older. These are people involved in careers, not college students. Many of these people are using Facebook as much more than just a social networking site; they're using it to find jobs.

It's all grown up

Once upon a time Facebook was considered a personal “play tool” to keep people up-to-date with friends and their activities. It was initially viewed by many as a huge distraction, and a big time waster. Taking a closer look at the world of internet popularity, Facebook now comes in at second place to Google. With over 800 million users, Facebook is no longer just a social utility that connects people with friends, it is also about connecting people at work.

Today's generation sees less of a boundary between their lives at home and their lives at work. They've grown up with Facebook and

see no reason to change the way it has become part of their lives. Their professional and personal lives are essentially one. Using social network sites like Facebook to find a job seems to be a natural progression.

Experienced individuals who have been in the job market for a long time usually find LinkedIn to be a better source for finding jobs because it is completely focused on professional networking. This has some merit, however both websites are extremely useful. Some of the biggest companies and recruitment agencies now use Facebook to tap into the job market and engage new talent. Millions of people are also using Facebook as part of their job search strategy to follow companies they are interested in working for.

Professional vs. Social Networking

The thin line between professional and social can get blurred when you're using Facebook. Sometimes, it's hard to figure out when and where to draw it. The main thing to remember is to be careful. In other words, be aware of the type and amount of information you are sharing on Facebook.

On the other hand, a lot of young professionals prefer to use Facebook specifically for professional networking because it showcases them as a complete person. Conversely, never forget that one way or another (no matter how private you think your profile is), people may be able to see your images and read anything posted on your Wall. You have to think of it like it's there forever – because, in effect, it is.

Whether or not you should use Facebook for professional/business networking depends on the industry

SMART TIP

Join Facebook groups related to your career. This will enable you to network with other like-minded people, share information and look for job search resources.

with which you are involved. Here are some tips for using it effectively:

- First, figure out if you want your Facebook page to be a social tool or if you want to expand its use beyond merely keeping in

SMART TIP

Utilise Facebook's privacy features by selecting relevant privacy levels for wall posts and pictures. You can also group friends together into specific lists and apply privacy settings to each list.

touch with friends and family. If you do want to use it for professional networking, review your profile and think about what you want your professional contacts and potential employers to see. Of course, this involves determining what you don't want them to see as well. Perhaps you should consider making a new

profile for your professional use.

- Whichever path you take; make sure it's a minimalist professional profile with no silly game apps or other distracting widgets. Also, only post professional photos, such as headshots. Only post content on your Wall or in your Information section that pertains to your career or job search. Complete your education details and work history on your profile page, and add your value statement to the 'About Me' section.
- Choose whom you "Friend" on Facebook wisely. Remember, the more Facebook friends you have, the more chances are that others will see your profile by following links and tagged photos. It can be a double-edged sword, so don't take any chances if someone doesn't feel right. If they don't follow similar professional guidelines to yours on Facebook, it's probably a good idea to not add them. Guilt by association can be powerful.
- You do want to use your Facebook friends to your advantage, however. Use the messaging system to email your contacts, and

let them know that you are in the market or need to stay abreast of what is going on in their company as far as hiring goes. You don't want to be a nuisance, but you don't want to be out of sight and out of mind. By keeping yourself at the forefront of a few peoples' minds, you increase your chances of being approached for an interview.

Using Facebook Job Apps

There are a number of Facebook applications specifically designed for professional networking for international users including In The Door (www.inthedor.com). This is an interesting job opportunity search resource that cross references your Facebook connections with relevant job listings in Australia (or other country of choice) on the Indeed site (<http://au.indeed.com/>). Of course, you can access the Indeed site for job listings without implementing Facebook.

Recently, Monster Worldwide and CareerOne.com.au launched BeKnown™ (<http://apps.facebook.com/beknown>), a professional networking app designed to enable Facebook users to integrate connections from multiple social networking platforms. “BeKnown allows people to build their professional networks on Facebook, and then keep those work-related contacts and updates separate from their personal profile,” said Michael Harvey, CEO of CareerOne.com.au, in a company press release. “More than 600 million people use Facebook globally, including an estimated 10 million plus users in Australia, and BeKnown allows them to do everything they want to on one platform.”

A dash of common sense

Using Facebook to find a job isn't that tough a nut to crack. All you have to do is use a little common sense. Think about when you first meet someone; do you immediately divulge every last embarrassing

detail about yourself right off the bat? Do you do that at a job interview? Of course not.

The same applies to your Facebook profile. If you are going to use Facebook professionally, it should be just that: professional. Another way to look at it is like a resume, i.e. you only include things in your resume that you want potential employers to consider. Sure, it may make for a boring Facebook page, but it may make potential employers take a second look and spark interest, rather than being immediately dismissed.

Manoeuvring the Twittersphere

As I have previously mentioned, more and more people are turning to professional and social networks to find jobs. While most will turn to the professional networking site LinkedIn, and others to the popular Facebook, many have also begun using Twitter to find jobs. “Twitter?” you might ask. “Isn’t that the one that limits you to 140 characters?”

Indeed it is. However, there are stories surfacing about how people have found jobs using Twitter. For example, one professional marketer left his industry determined to make the move to another career field he was interested in. He tweeted (posted on Twitter) his decision and posted a link in the tweet to his blog, where he went into more detail. After a few days, it was retweeted (posted again by another Twitter user) by an acquaintance to another person – the one that would eventually go on to hire him.

In other words, a colleague on Twitter saw the job seeker’s post and thought he would be a good fit at his company. Knowing that the hiring manager was on Twitter as well, he passed the information along. And the job seeker got hired. It does work!

How Twitter works

Twitter lets you send the equivalent of a status update (in Facebook terminology) of 140 characters or less to everyone who “follows” you. In other words, they read your posts, which are called tweets. All you need to do to get started is sign up for Twitter online, and then you can send and view yours and others’ tweets on your mobile device or computer. On Facebook, you need an invite or have to “friend” someone to actively engage them, but on Twitter no invites are required – you can follow whomever you like (and vice versa) and read their tweets at your leisure.

When you follow someone tweets, Twitter lets them know that you are following them. In general, they will in turn follow you with a simple click on a link that Twitter provides to facilitate the process. This is the core of Twitter, and helps you get noticed by other professionals that may otherwise never know about you.

SMART TIP

Having a Twitter account raises your visibility in Google searches, while reinforcing your personal brand.

Of course, not everyone will land a job by simply tweeting that they’re looking for one. But Twitter, like other social networking sites, lets you make yourself accessible to people that may be able to help you get a job.

Use it wisely

The first thing you’ll notice is that a lot of people waste their “tweets” posting about what they had for lunch or what they’re watching on TV. Don’t do that if you are searching for a job! Use your Twitter account to talk about what is going on in your industry. Find the leaders in your industry and follow their tweets. They may follow you in turn and you may just build a relationship.

If you're just getting started on Twitter (or just starting to use it to search for a job), don't immediately put out a capitalised post shouting that you need a job. Subtlety is key. If you don't already have a username, put something about your field in it. Since users can search Twitter by topic, this will make your tweets much more visible. In your Twitter profile, make sure you include your profession – this also helps people find you in searches.

Before you even start sending out tweets, search for industry leaders, potential employers, and other contacts you think could help you in your job search, and follow them. A lot of companies, especially

SMART TIP

As with LinkedIn and Facebook, use a professional headshot or photo in your profile. This helps you to keep your personal brand consistent, while preventing the “egg” icon from being displayed. No one wants to be an egghead.

those in the technology, public relations, and marketing industries, use Twitter to advertise positions. Many hiring managers also use Twitter to gauge interest and get the word out about job openings.

Now you're ready to tweet. Your tweets can say anything (as long as it's under 140 characters), but limit yourself to opinions on things going

on in the news or in your particular industry. If an industry leader you follow, for instance, says something interesting or insightful, go ahead and retweet it. You can even send them a response directly to get a one-on-one dialogue started.

Tailor your tweets

If you are following the tweets of a hiring manager working for a potential employer, read what they have to say, and tailor your posts to be more in line with theirs. It's like how you tailor your resume to match the job description of a position to which you are applying.

That's what a marketing professional from Sydney did when he decided to move to a city where the cost of living was not quite so

high. He started following marketing professionals in a few smaller cities that he was considering. Whenever one of them tweeted something of interest, he would respond with a public comment, called an @ message. These public comments helped him form relationships with the people he was targeting in those smaller cities. In turn, they led him to other invaluable Twitter users.

SMART TIP

Twitter is a great way to talk with people who share your interests. It also enables you to find a company URL in bios, and connect with people at your target companies. You can then leverage those connections in an attempt to obtain a new job.

He kept doing research on all these various Twitter users, and when he found a business that interested him, he would search for their employees on Twitter. Eventually, he found a hiring manager for a company in which he was interested. They eventually asked him for his resume and soon enough he was hired.

It's an icebreaker

Twitter can be a real icebreaker. It lets you show others that you are more than a faceless profile on the internet, and you can see who they are as well. Potential employers can see how you conduct yourself in a public arena and perhaps get to know you. This helps you form connections, and eventually professional relationships can blossom from these small connections.

Twitter offers you a subtle, non-irritating way to get in contact with hiring managers. They're on Twitter for a reason: to find potential candidates. It's not the same as cold calling their office because they are inviting interaction by being on Twitter in the first place.

The natural evolution of the job search

Using social networking sites like Twitter to find jobs is just the next natural step in the job-searching evolution. People used to send out their resumes to every company they could think of. Just a few short years ago everything was handled via email. Then blogs became part of the search process. Now Twitter has been added to the mix, so you can be networking constantly.

Take advantage of this networking channel and sign up for a Twitter account today. Use the guidelines outlined here to search for a job by using your tweets to your advantage. Tailor your tweets to suit your needs, find the right people to follow (and hopefully be followed by), but use common sense. Twitter can be a valuable tool in a job search – one you can't afford to ignore.

THE TWITTER GLOSSARY

The Twitter Help Center (<https://support.twitter.com/entries/166337-the-twitter-glossary>) has an extensive glossary to help users with terminology and jargon. Here are some of the most frequently used terms:

Direct Message (DM): To send or receive a private message to or from an individual you are following.

Follower: Someone who is following your tweets on Twitter.

Friend: Someone who you follow on Twitter.

Hashtag (#): This is a subject or thread indicator used to clarify tweets and make them stand out in searches. For example, using the tags #executive #brisbane will pull up tweets about executive positions in the Brisbane area.

Reply (@): An @reply is where you publically mention someone on Twitter. This brings your tweet to their attention and should be used judiciously. For example, you may want to thank a search consultant or CEO for posting a link by saying: @CEOname: thanks for the helpful link to your informative blog post on industry standards.

Retweet (RT): To repost another user's tweet. This is one of the highest compliments that you can pay to someone or that they can pay to you.

Shortened links (URLs): Since tweets are limited by characters and some links take up a lot of those characters, it helps to use a URL shortening service such as Bit.ly (www.bit.ly). You can also post your tweets through a service like Social Oomph (www.socialoomph.com) or Tweet Deck (www.tweetdeck.com) that will automatically shorten your links.

Tweep: An individual Twitter user.

Tweeple: Multiple Twitter users.

Tweet: A short 140-character (or less) message that is sent out to your followers from a computer or mobile app.

Using smaller niche job sites

To achieve the maximum results in a job search, it's imperative to cast the widest net possible. While LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter are the big gorillas when using business and social media, they are not the only game in town. To increase your visibility in the job market, you should expand your resources by joining smaller niche networks within your industry or area of expertise. So, what are the right networks to join? It really depends on what your strategy is and what you hope to achieve. A handful of recommended networking sites are:

- **BNI Australia** (<http://www.bni.com.au/>): This is a business referral organisation that primarily assists its members to find and exchange qualified business referrals and develop word-of-mouth marketing techniques.
- **Advance** (<http://advance.org/>): This leading global network connects Australians and alumni around the world by opening doors and presenting opportunities in many high profile industries.
- **JobServe** (www.jobserve.com): Headquartered in the UK, this global recruitment service has primary locations in the United States, Australia, Canada, and Thailand, and features opportunities in most industry sectors.
- **Viadeo** (www.viadeo.com): This is an international networking site, with more than 40 million registered professionals, that is widely used by top executive search consultants.

A big concern with many professionals is spending an inordinate amount of time trying to manage the various networking sites. Some tips to help you are:

- Use the same username and password for each network. This will save you time in looking up that information every time you

want to access one of the sites. Just remember to periodically change your password to prevent access by hackers.

- Set up a daily or weekly schedule to routinely monitor and update your networks. If necessary, set a timer so that you don't get "sucked" into a networking vortex.
- Use third-party tools such as AtomKeep (www.atomkeep.com) to help manage and streamline different networks from one platform. Some of these tools can also be set up to automate specific tasks.

Managing your online reputation

In the online world today, there's almost no such thing as a truly private profile. Whether you use LinkedIn, Facebook, or Twitter, nowadays employers are better equipped than ever before to find their applicants' personal professional and social networking profiles, even if they are set up to be private. What this means is your personal and professional information, and personas are often integrated. Your CV and resume will be supplemented by your Twitter feed, Facebook comments, tagged pictures, and status updates.

For this reason, it's always a good idea to never post anything on any professional or social networking website that might reflect poorly on you if (and more likely, when) a potential employer should see it. Remember that the picture on your profile should be professional, i.e. not a picture of you drinking at a wild party or otherwise doing something silly. This doesn't mean that your profile shouldn't still be personal and show your social side, but tailoring your online presence often gives you a leg up on other applicants.

SMART TIP

Sign up for Google Alerts (www.google.com/alerts) to find out who is talking about you online. This handy service also helps you keep tabs on a specific company you are interested in, or get the latest news and events on a particular industry.

Google yourself

“Googling” yourself became a common thing for people to do a few years ago as search engines became more advanced. With a little work, just about anyone can be found online. Googling can turn up a lot of stuff about you, and you may find information about you in some pretty strange places.

There is an old saying that says, “You are judged by the company you keep.” This same adage holds true on the internet. For example, even if you have set your Facebook profile settings to “private,” if someone you are connected with has their profile viewable by the public at large, some of your information and/or photos may also be visible. What this means is that your personal information on Facebook is only as private as your friends’ personal information. One of the best ways to protect yourself is to Google your name often to make sure there are no surprises.

Keeping track of things

In a recent conversation with Joshua Waldman, MBA, author of *Job Searching with Social Media for Dummies*, he said his framework for online reputation management is:

1. Assess where you’re at.
2. Build up your content.
3. Monitor your progress for course correction.

“Find ways to repurpose your old content like slide presentations, and professional videos. Then, put them online for Google to index,” Waldman advises. “The new search algorithms have sped

things up, which is a good and a bad thing. It's good because you can rank faster; it's bad because other people with your name can rank faster too.”

Don't assume just because you're a respectable person offline, that you will project that same image online. The internet does not have a statute of limitations, and once something has been put out there – it tends to remain out there. This includes uncomplimentary pictures, quotes and reviews.

If you discover your online reputation is in need of repair, kick things off with a burial service. What that means is bury the bad stuff with good stuff. Lots of good stuff! In addition to repurposing existing content, create new material that will showcase your expertise. Regularly comment on relevant blogs and discussion forums, present an online workshop, or introduce a short report or e-book featuring a relevant topic. If necessary, contact an online reputation management service to assist with repairing a severely damaged online image.

Go over your online profile and your friends' networking profiles on a regular basis. Pay attention to any comments, tagged pictures, or references to you that may be found by someone looking around (i.e., a potential employer). If you find something that may hurt you in a job search, don't be afraid to ask your friend to remove it, or just “untag” yourself by removing your name if you can.

Besides reviewing things already posted, continue to keep an eye out for anything else that gets posted concerning your online identity. Most professional and social networking sites will let you know if you are referenced in any posts or pictures. This not only protects your good name, but your privacy as well. However, always assume that nothing is private when interacting online. This includes emails, tweets, media posts, and text messages. This self-monitoring technique will be beneficial and should prevent you from unintentionally making something public.

Utilising the Network

If you don't use your professional and social network online, then it's not doing you any good. In fact, it may be hurting you if it's out of date. So there are a few things you can do to manage it:

- Keep your networking profile updated with your current career goals, training, and interests, so hiring managers are seeing who you are today, not the “you” from two years ago.
- Keep in contact with any associates, even when you aren't hunting for a job, to keep these relationships strong – they may assist you in the future when you are actually looking.
- Practice caution when posting your resume online, and make sure you only share information you want made public.

As you may now have realised, managing your online identity does require a fair amount of work. By paying attention to what potential employers find when they Google you, you can make sure you make a great first impression online.

The more communication methods you use, the more likely you are to find a job. Social and professional media sites are just additional tools. Don't stop pursuing traditional job search methods, but definitely include online media in the list of resources.



WEB SITE

MARKETING

SC

NE

8

Working with executive search consultants

Executive search consultants, who are often also referred to as ‘headhunters’ or ‘executive recruiters,’ are excellent resources for job seekers because they have a broad or holistic view of the marketplace. While you may be looking at specific types of jobs in specific industries, most consultants have developed a network of associations and contacts across industries. In addition, search consultants are knowledgeable about trends and can back that knowledge up with hard information gleaned from employers.

How they can work for you

Can an executive search consultant work for you during your job search? That may sound like an odd question considering most of them work for, or are under contract with an employer, and not those looking for jobs. However, you have plenty of opportunity to forge a good relationship with a search consultant who could put you in an advantageous position in terms of possible job openings and interview possibilities.

Following are some additional benefits a working relationship with an executive search consultant can give you:

- Learn about job opportunities before they are publicised.
- Get “insider” information about the qualities a company is looking for in an executive.
- Find out which companies and industries are expected to grow.
- Get coaching on job search strategies.
- Establish a long-term relationship that can benefit you in the future should you choose to change jobs.
- Get leads on the cream-of-the-crop jobs that are available.
- Get a direct line to company Human Resource staff who decide which applicants will be considered for employment.

If you believe a executive search consultant is a one-time resource for finding a job, then you are underestimating their role. The successful consultant spends a lot of time networking and building relationships with company executives, managers, human resource professionals and industry specialists. In turn, networking supplies them with information that enables them to thoroughly understand the intricacies of the employment marketplace, which is never static.

Many people looking for jobs today have lost touch with current hiring practices because this is the first time they have been unemployed for years. It’s a surprise when they begin looking for available positions in trade magazines and there aren’t any advertised. In a tight job market it’s simply no longer necessary for employers to advertise positions in industry journals. For one thing, online listings are cheaper. In addition, there are so many qualified people looking for jobs, that companies need help culling the best candidates from possibly hundreds of job seekers, so they rely heavily on search consultants. This is true even for the highest level positions.

Forging a good relationship

So you want to establish a working relationship with one or more executive search consultants, but how do you go about reaching that goal? Obviously, it's important to start the process as soon as possible because relationships take time to develop and grow. The search consultant must first become aware you exist and then you must stay in contact in a productive way. It's amazing how many people are cut from job candidacies simply because they are annoying. You don't hear about that often, but it's true. There's a difference between being informative, and being pushy to the point of being offensive.

One thing you'll discover right away is that executive search consultants keep information they have about positions very confidential. They don't share a lot of details, so pushing for them isn't going to increase your chances of getting an interview. However, it could get you eliminated from consideration. It's important to understand this, because the consultant knows what the position requires, which means the ball is in your court in terms of finding an effective and convincing way to get discovered. The information you provide and the networking you do, must showcase your qualifications so they are able to determine you are an excellent candidate for one or more positions.

As a result of having already established a relationship, you may be contacted when a new position becomes available. In fact, if you have exceptional qualifications, in some cases your resume may be forwarded to a company that doesn't currently have a position available. That's one of the major benefits of establishing a good relationship with an executive search consultant. There have been many cases where companies have created positions to take advantage of highly qualified job seekers.

A consultant also may contact you after learning of your qualifications. Once again, the networking you do can lead to

referrals being made. Perhaps, based on your research, you sent in your resume and an introductory cover letter. Even if a job doesn't pan out, you now have the first, and extremely important opening, to establish ongoing contact with the search consultant.

There are a number of ways to make initial contact with an executive search consultant:

- Send a cover letter and resume via mail and/or email, and follow up with a phone call.
- Attend local professional groups and workshops where they are likely to attend.
- Determine whom you know who can introduce you to an outstanding consultant.

Should you “cold call”? There is no right or wrong answer to this question, but the chances of getting past the search consultant's receptionist are slim. Even an unsolicited email with an attached resume may be ignored. The ideal way to develop a working relationship is through personal contact, a mutual associate, or at a business seminar. This is particularly true for executive and managerial level positions.

Executive search consultants don't sit at their desks waiting for the right email to come along. They are out circulating in the community, establishing contacts with businesses, learning all they can about the job market, and selling their services. Knowing this, it's clear you will have to circulate too if you want to meet these people.

Getting past the gatekeeper

Once contact is made with a search consultant, it's up to you to cultivate the working relationship. This may be one of the most important relationships you ever develop because it might lead to your ideal position. The ultimate goal of this relationship is to get past this 'gatekeeper' to the potential employer. Beyond

the gatekeeper lies Human Resources, and their willingness or unwillingness, based on criteria the company establishes, to pass your resume on to their decision-makers.

If you can't get past the executive search consultant, then your resume will simply lie around in a dead file. To cultivate the relationship, make the effort to:

- Attend seminars and workshops these consultants are likely to attend.
- Take advantage of any seminars, webinars or other employment related activities that the consultant's business or industry offers, whether they are offline or online (remember to register your name and contact information!).
- Make contact with professional organisations in industries of interest.
- Send an updated resume periodically to the search consultant.
- Subscribe to the executive search consultant's RSS feed.
- Call the search consultant periodically, and particularly when you have new information to share (but don't call every week).
- Take advantage of industry or company news you research, by sharing it with the consultant and using it as an opportunity to open a dialogue.
- If you know of quality job seekers the search consultant will appreciate getting a lead on, and you are not interested in the job, then share their information – you can network from your end too.
- Make entries on forums or blogs that the consultant is known to frequent and share high quality information that establishes your expert brand.
- Develop a professional online presence that gives you an opportunity to showcase your expertise and credentials for the benefit of executive search consultants.

Myth vs. Reality

There seems to be a lot of confusion about working with an executive search consultant and what their perceived role in an executive's job search is. In an effort to clear things up, here are a few common misconceptions:

MYTH: Executive search consultants will carefully read through each and every resume, and cover letter they receive to determine the best fit.

REALITY: Because they receive hundreds of resumes, search consultants quickly scan and screen resumes just like an HR department. You have just a few seconds to grab their attention, so make it count.

MYTH: To find the best possible match, executive search consultants often look outside the box for candidates who may not precisely fit the mould the company is looking for.

REALITY: Most executive search consultants do not see it as their place to advise employers about the type of person who would be best for the position, and rarely suggest people who do not fit the typical mould. This is because it isn't their role. It's not what they get paid for. It's much easier to earn a commission by suggesting candidates who precisely meet the requirements and specifications set out by their clients.

MYTH: Candidates can be more relaxed and open when conducting an interview with an executive search consultant because it's not the same as having an interview with the actual company CEO. Therefore, candidates can be more forthright and say things they wouldn't ordinarily.

REALITY: The search consultant is essentially the 'gatekeeper' and you have to get past them to get to the CEO. Therefore, this could be the most important interview you'll ever have. They have

the power to determine whether or not you will be a good fit with this particular company, or any other client they may be working with. So, put your best foot forward.

MYTH: If the consultant is blocking my access to the hiring manager at the company and I believe that I'm a good match, I should find a way to go around them.

REALITY: An executive search consultant spends a great deal of time and energy looking for candidates who they feel would qualify for a more in-depth interview. If you try to circumvent this process, neither the consultant nor the hiring manager will be impressed.

MYTH: The search consultant I've been working with hasn't returned any of my calls this week. This must mean they (a) don't think I'm a good fit, (b) are lazy, (c) don't have any good jobs available, (d) fill in the blank: _____.

REALITY: Most consultants are overwhelmed and inundated with qualified candidates and are working with dozens of people. It's simply not possible to return each and every phone call, especially if they don't have anything to report. Don't worry – they will get back to you. In the meantime, don't keep pestering them with unproductive follow-up calls. This will just annoy them and perhaps move your name to the bottom of their list.

MYTH: Executive search consultants are just the “middle-men.” They don't know whether or not I'm telling the truth about my salary or credentials, so I can “fudge” a little.

REALITY: Executive search consultants are incredibly savvy and will definitely carefully check your background. If you are less than truthful with them, they will never recommend you to one of their clients. So, don't exaggerate your contributions to your last employer's bottom line or pad your salary requirements.

A good search consultant will gladly work with qualified candidates to help them maximise their leverage, assisting them to tweak their resumes, and create a distinctive brand. Knowing how to make the best use of this win-win relationship will help you land essential interviews that could potentially lead to a great job offer with a great company. Don't hesitate to work with these experienced professionals who have already established their credibility in the marketplace.

WORK THE MARKET AND KNOW THE EXECUTIVE SEARCH CONSULTANTS

You should you develop working relationships with more than one executive search consultants who truly can help you find the type of position you are hoping to land. The ones you choose to work with should be able to help you in some way, whether it's by actually finding available positions or putting you in contact with people who can.

Work the market by doing your research and you'll soon know which search consultants to cultivate a working relationship with. Once you know, it's time to get busy.



9

Interviews, interviews, interviews

When it's time for an interview, the preparation should be far behind you. The time to be thinking about your personal and professional vision and goals, is not when you are sitting in the reception area waiting to be called into the office for the face-to-face interview.

It sounds a bit cliché to say you have to sell yourself in an interview, but sales people who are the most successful achievers know their products inside and out. They know every detail and can answer questions about the product without hesitation. As a job candidate, you are the salesperson, and the product is your ability to bring value to a company through the position. The question then to ask yourself is: Do you know your product inside and out?

If you want to sell yourself, the first step is to anticipate the questions the interviewer will ask. Make sure you understand your vision or goals so you can answer those questions with confidence. Candidates who enter a job interview still practising how to answer these questions have not bothered to learn the “product” before trying to sell it.

In many respects, the job interview is the last step in the search for a job. By the time you get to the interview, you should have spent

considerable time gaining self-knowledge. The jobs you apply for, should appear to be perfect additions to your success strategies.

GET A RECOMMENDATION

If you haven't already, see if there is someone within your network who knows someone in the company. If this contact is able to put a good word in for you, it may make all the difference. Referrals are one of the top ways that people get hired today. Companies prefer to bring in people that fit with their current employees. If you are on even footing with one or more candidates, an internal recommendation may be what gets you the job. Having a referral shows that you already "fit" socially within the company culture.

Preparing for the interview

Preparing for an important job interview is the key to securing the job of your dreams. "Practice makes perfect," and you must practice rigorously. Don't leave things to chance when there is so much at stake.

I have put together some pointers to help you prepare for important interviews. Some of these may seem very basic and common sense, but you would be surprised how many candidates make simple mistakes that can mean the difference between a job offer and a rejection letter.

If at all possible, try to get an interview in the morning rather than later in the day. Everyone will be fresher and more alert in the morning, and interviews are more likely to be running on time earlier in the day. You should also be able to make a better impression in the morning. In addition, it has been shown that interviews held mid to late week are often more successful, so keep this in mind if you are able to influence the day of your interview.

Do your homework

Before attending a job interview, it is imperative that you have completed your research about the company. You need to learn as much as possible about the organisation and the people who will interview you.

- **The company:** Spend some time researching the company. You can do this by browsing their website to find out important information, reading their annual reports, shareholders' reports, checking press coverage and leveraging your contacts.
- **Interview panel:** The more you know about who will interview you, the more comfortable you will be. Always confirm the names and job titles of the people who will interview you. It is relatively easy to find out background information about these people via a Google search and a quick check on LinkedIn, or you could also simply ask the executive search consultant for more information about whom you will be meeting.
- **Job description:** I also recommend to candidates, when they apply for roles via other search consultants, to always ask for a job description to assist with their interview preparation. If this is not available, it can make preparing for the interview considerably harder.

Preparing for the questions

Interviews are predominantly framed on 'competency-based' interview principles. This means

SMART TIP

Preparing for an interview means considering the many different questions you may be asked so you can rehearse your answers. Don't get caught out – make sure you know what you will answer. We have provided a list of sample interview questions, grouped by skill, and mostly focused on your behaviour in specific situations, later in this chapter. Use these questions to rehearse for your upcoming interview so you are well prepared.

that the interview questions are designed to assess whether the candidate can do the job, whether you would be able to hit the ground running once on the job, and whether you fit with the company's culture and management team. To judge this, the employer will want to assess your competencies, expertise, capabilities and past experience.

As you prepare for your interview, anticipate what questions you may be asked and rehearse quality responses. Preparing for the main questions is relatively easy – I can almost guarantee that the questions you will be asked will broadly cover five key areas as follows.

5 Key areas the employer will want to address in an interview:

(although you may not always be asked direct questions about these issues!)

1. Why are you here and why do you want to work for us?
2. What can you do for us?
3. What kind of person are you? Can you fit in with our organisation and do you have the same values as us?
4. What distinguishes you from other applicants? For example, will you go the extra mile; do you have better work habits?
5. Can we afford you? Where do you fit into our organisation chart?

Get off to a good start!

If you have prepared adequately for the interview, you will find that you shouldn't be overly nervous or anxious about the meeting. Here are a few more pointers to ensure you won't arrive stressed out or get off to a bad start.

- **Time:** Always get clear instructions (preferably in writing or via email) from the search consultant or employer as to the exact time of the interview. Arrive early, if possible at least 10-15 minutes before the appointed time. I cannot stress this enough! Being late for an interview is rarely acceptable, and it creates a dreadful first impression that is almost impossible to recover from.
- **Location:** Also check that you have written confirmation as to the exact location of the interview. Make sure you know exactly where the interview is being held and how best to get there. If you are driving, factor in extra time for traffic and parking problems. Find out in advance where you will be able to park your car. If you are taking public transport, find out exactly where to get off and how to walk to your destination from the train station or bus stop.
- **Cancellations:** If you decide at the last minute that you are no longer interested in pursuing this interview, do everyone the courtesy of attending the meeting. Last minute cancellations create a very poor impression with the search consultant who has set up the meeting for you, as well as the employer who is looking forward to meeting you, and has allocated the time for the interview. Cancelling the interview without adequate notice or simply not showing up is bad form. Plus, it implies that you were never really serious about the opportunity in the first place, which is a waste of everyone's time and efforts.

SMART TIP

If you are going to an unfamiliar location, do a trial run a few days prior to your interview. This will give you the opportunity to gauge how much time you will need to get there early.

Dress to impress

There's been a lot of research over the years about the hiring and interview process, and what's been found is that many employers often decide whether or not they will hire you within the first few minutes of meeting you. While this might not always lead to them hiring the most qualified applicant, it does mean that you have to present yourself properly to be successful in any interview. Your clothing, body language, demeanour, and even your handshake, all have a say in shaping your preliminary impression.

Your initial appearance enables a potential employer to know what to expect you to look like day in and day out when you are working for them. This is your first impression and how you look needs to work within their organisation.

I always stress the importance of appropriate corporate dress for interviews and paying attention to all the details such as clean shoes, a clean shirt, wearing a tie, etc. First impressions can make a significant impact on your overall success in the interview, so wear clothing that makes you feel comfortable, confident and well-groomed.

It's also important not to overdo your appearance. For example, don't go out and radically change your appearance the day before the interview. Be natural. You'll feel most confident when you've simply "dressed up" your natural look. You want to be dressed appropriately for the job, and obviously you should not do anything distracting during the interview like chew gum or answer your mobile phone.

So what's the best thing to wear? Today's job interview in a professional environment demands a classic dark grey or black suit with a white shirt for men, and a somber tie. For women, dress conservatively, avoid clothes that are revealing, and wear simple black shoes and fresh stockings. You may even want to "mirror" the

company colours in your scarf (women) or tie (men). For women, never bring an oversized handbag that might get in the way. Simple is always better.

INTERVIEW APPEARANCE CHECKLIST

1. Wear a dark suit – conservative corporate style dress is usually recommended
2. Be freshly showered
3. Wear freshly laundered clothes
4. Ensure your trousers have sharp creases
5. Wear shoes that have been polished
6. Have clean finger nails
7. Make sure you have fresh breath (absolutely essential for smokers!)
8. Don't wear too much cologne/aftershave/perfume
9. Avoid smoking before your interview
10. Ladies: avoid clothes that are revealing or too short – dress conservatively

Avoiding common interview blunders

As mentioned previously, make sure you arrive for your interview at least ten to fifteen minutes early. Turn off your mobile phone – not even on vibrate, as a vibrating phone still makes a distracting noise, and most interviewers would perceive this as disrespectful.

Always put your best face forward, as employers are not only looking for applicants who are personable, but also courteous, enthusiastic, and professional. Be polite and show consideration to the receptionist or secretary. If you move to a coffee shop, show courtesy to the waitress at the coffee shop. It's the little things that count, and you are on display from the moment you arrive, until the moment you leave.

During the interview

Be positive going into your interview, and think of the discussion as a peer-to-peer meeting instead of you having to hard-sell yourself. Use the meeting to demonstrate to the interviewer that you are the solution to their company's needs and problems.

- **What to bring:** Don't walk into the interview empty-handed. Even if the interviewer never asks for a copy of your resume or a list of your referees, it's a good idea to have them in your briefcase. Also, have a notepad or paper and pen so you can take notes based on your discussions.
- **Introductions:** During the initial introductions and formalities, walk in with a smile on your face, your head up and your shoulders back. Shake the interviewer's hand firmly. A weak handshake is often perceived as a sign of weakness or nervousness. Repeat the interviewer's name with a smile when you're introduced. Also address the interviewer(s) by name at appropriate opportunities throughout the interview.
- **Seating arrangements:** Demonstrate good manners and do not sit down until you are asked to do so. If you are given a choice of seats, avoid the sofa, as you may sink into it like quicksand. Instead, choose a hardback chair and sit upright. Don't cross your legs or your arms as this can signal defensiveness.
- **Your demeanour:** Display a positive attitude by being enthusiastic and looking alert and interested at all times. Maintain eye contact with the interviewer(s) – but don't overdo it, you don't want to make anyone uncomfortable by staring at them. Be responsive. While the interviewer speaks, show you're listening carefully by nodding your head and thoughtfully rephrasing sentences.
- **Behaviours to avoid:** During the interview, the employer will assess you not just on your looks, your expertise and your

answers to their questions, but also by your conduct and the way you interact with other people. They will try to get a handle on who you are and what your key values are. You are highly UNLIKELY to get the job if you demonstrate any of the following values in your behaviour:

- » Arrogance
 - » Aggression
 - » Tardiness (late for appointment)
 - » Complaining or blaming, especially about previous employer
 - » Any sign of dishonesty or lying
 - » Irresponsibility
 - » Inappropriate humour
 - » Not following instructions
 - » Lack of enthusiasm
 - » Any sign of instability
- **Speaking:** Use proper English pronunciations and avoid using slang. Never, ever, use profanity. Speak slowly and distinctly, and don't rush your answers. Don't speak too softly or too loudly. Avoid using the words "okay" or "yeah" or "like." Prepare and plan what you are going to say before starting to speak, to ensure you articulate your thoughts well.
 - **Length of answers:** If you're not sure how much you should speak versus the interviewer, use the 50/50 rule. Talk for at least 20 seconds but make sure you answer each question within two minutes. Practice this timing beforehand to make sure that you provide thoughtful answers without rambling.
 - **Stay on topic:** Answer questions in a direct and concise manner, and do not stray off the subject at hand. When you are under pressure during an interview, it is easy to dive in and answer a question without fully understanding what you have

been asked.

- **Topics to avoid:** Do not discuss salary, benefits, religion, politics, or spousal issues unless the topics are initiated by the interviewer. I will provide more information about how to deal with salary negotiations in Chapter 10. In the meantime, it's also worth reiterating that you should always avoid speaking negatively about your current or previous employers, supervisors or colleagues.

Equal parts competence and showmanship

The interview process is part aptitude and part presentation. You are there to showcase your abilities and experience, but you also have to do a little performance as well. Being comfortable in business settings is a highly sought after skill. During an interview you are on stage and the spotlight is on you, so it's very easy to be nervous. Just remember to keep everything in focus and let the interviewer know why they need to hire you. And if you find that you're not the top contender for the position, don't let it drag you down. Remember, all you need is one successful interview for job-hunting success!

Handling tricky interviewers

A lot of people roll their eyes when they hear a lot of the common questions asked during an interview. Many of them have almost become jokes and are treated with much derision because they seem mundane or designed to trip up the interviewee. Well, here's the secret: they are, in fact, designed to trip you up. They are designed to test you: to find out who you really are and get past the "face" you put on for the interview.

Remember, before the interview, you are essentially just a faceless resume to the hiring manager. They are using this opportunity to

get to know you. If getting to know you didn't matter, we'd get offered jobs simply by submitting our resumes or an application. Not that that doesn't occasionally happen, but for most of us we have to go through the interview process and answer those tricky questions. Let's look at the most common questions and how to answer them.

Tell me about yourself

When an interviewer asks you this question, they are looking for information about how you'll fit into the company and the position for which you are applying. They're not looking for your life story so don't go into a diatribe about things that have no bearing on your work ethic. Focus on those things that qualify you for the job and what you bring to the table. Focus on the skill sets needed in the job description, and how your career has developed and implemented those skills.

What is something bad you've heard about this company?

This is a really tricky one. What's the interviewer looking for? Perhaps there is some gossip you've heard, but try to avoid getting into it. Instead, let the interviewer know that you'd never apply to work at a company that you did not hold in high regard. Most often this question is a test of your propensity to gossip. Respectfully take the high road and reiterate why you want to work at the company.

Why should we hire you?

The answer to this question is all about research. Before you go into the interview, make sure you reread the position description and requirements. All you have to do then is look at how your expertise, attributes, and experience match up to these requirements.

Where do you see yourself in five years?

This is one of the more laughable questions on the list, but you should take it seriously. Whatever you do, don't laugh or say that

you don't know. Instead, talk about how your specific skills and abilities will allow you to advance yourself within the company. Focus on your real goals too. If you want to take on positions of leadership, make that known up front.

What would you say if I told you that you are giving a bad interview?

This is a whopper and it's really just a test. Recognise it, and ask them "Why?" and what you should do differently. Whatever you do, don't let it get you flustered. The keyword in the question is "if." Don't forget that and don't take it personally. Asking why shows that you are open to honest feedback and willing to improve.

What is the title of the most recent book you read?

This is one of those questions that you don't want to answer with a lie. It could really backfire, especially if the interviewer has read that book and engages you in further conversation about it. Instead of taking such a risk, answer the question with the title of a popular book by a popular author. You want it to be a book that says good things about you simply because you read it. If it was the second-to-last book you read, it's all right to claim it as the last book you read. Better yet, read a book about leadership and use that for all your interviews.

Do you work well under pressure?

Don't give a simple, short answer for this one. Instead, elaborate and tell the interviewer about a time when you performed well under pressure. If you perform better under pressure, go ahead and offer up that fact as well.

Who is your greatest hero?

This is really a softball question, so don't get caught off-guard by it. We all have idols and people who inspire us, so let the interviewer know who that person is, how he or she inspires you, and how that relates to your work ethic.

Have you ever thought about starting a business of your own?

It may be all right to show a little initiative by saying that you have considered it, but don't go into details. Simply say that you want to work at a company like the one to which you are applying and that you work best as part of a team, but aren't afraid to be a leader if needed.

Would you still work if you won the lottery?

This is another tough one because you have no idea what the expectation is as far as the answer goes. On one hand, you can actually be too honest and say you'd never work again. On the other, you can overdo it and say that you would gladly work for free. The answer you want to give lies somewhere in the middle. Tell the interviewer that you enjoy working and that you would seek out a job that you would find satisfying.

It's not what you answer, but how you answer

That's really what it's all about. These questions are designed to find out how well you think on your feet. As such, try not to be too nervous, don't babble or give short, clipped answers, or project intense and inappropriate emotions. It's just another part of the presentation we adopt when being interviewed for a job. Being confident and calm is a great way to impress your interviewer. In short, look over these questions before you go into an interview and come up with your own unique variations on suitable answers for them. When you go into an interview prepared, it shows. And your interviewer will take notice and may just offer you the job.

Sample interview questions

Practising for your interview and rehearsing answers to questions you may expect to be asked is crucial to your success. Many of the questions will focus on your behaviour in certain workplace situations, in order for the interviewer to assess your proficiency in different skills that may be essential for the position you are applying for.

Below is a list of commonly asked questions for executive positions. The questions are grouped by the type of skill they are related to, and often revolve around how you handled a workplace situation in one of your previous jobs.

Adaptability

- Tell me about a situation when you had to adjust to changes over which you had no control. How did you handle it?
- Tell me about a time when you had to adjust to a colleague's working style in order to complete a project or achieve your objectives. What challenges did you have?

Analytical skills/problem solving

- Describe a project or situation that best demonstrates your analytical abilities. What was your role?
- Tell me about a time when you had to analyse information and make a recommendation. To whom did you make the recommendation? Was the recommendation accepted? If not, what was the reason?
- Tell me about a situation where you had to solve a difficult problem. What was the problem and what did you do? What was the outcome? Was there anything you wish you had done differently?

Communication

- Tell me about a recent successful experience in making a speech or presentation. How did you prepare? What obstacles did you face? How did you handle them?
- Have you ever had to “sell” an idea to your co-workers or supervisor? How did you do it? Was your idea accepted?
- Give me an example of a time when you were able to successfully communicate with another person even when that individual may not have personally liked you (or vice versa).
- Tell me about a time in which you had to use your written communication skills in order to get an important point across.
- Are you more comfortable with communicating in writing or face-to-face?

Creativity

- When was the last time you thought “outside the box” and how did you do it?
- Tell me about a problem that you solved in a unique or unusual way. What was the outcome? Were you happy or satisfied with it?
- Give me an example of when someone brought you a new idea that was odd or unusual. How did you handle it?

Decision making

- Tell me about a time when you had to make a decision without having all of the information you needed. How did you handle it? Were you satisfied with the outcome?
- Give me an example of a time when you had to be quick in coming to a decision. What obstacles did you face?
- What is the most difficult decision you’ve had to make? How did you arrive at your decision?

Goal setting

- Give me an example of an important goal that you have set and tell me how you reached it. What steps did you take? What obstacles did you encounter? How did you overcome them?
- Tell me about a goal that you set that you did not reach. What steps did you take? What obstacles did you encounter? How did it make you feel?

Initiative

- Describe a project or idea (not necessarily your own) that was implemented primarily because of your efforts. What was your role? What was the outcome?
- Describe a situation in which you recognised a potential problem as an opportunity. What did you do? What was the result?
- Tell me about a project you initiated. What did you do? What was the outcome?
- What was the best idea you have come up with during your professional career? How did you apply it?

Integrity/honesty

- Discuss a time when your integrity was challenged. How did you handle it?
- Tell me about a time when you experienced a loss for doing what was right. How did you react?
- Tell me about a business situation when you felt honesty was inappropriate. Why? What did you do?
- Give a specific example of a policy you conformed to, with which you did not agree. Why was that?

Interpersonal skills

- Describe a situation where you had a conflict with another individual, and how you dealt with it. What was the outcome? How did you feel about it?
- Describe a recent unpopular decision you made. How was it received? How did you handle it?
- What, in your opinion, are the key ingredients in guiding and maintaining successful business relationships? Give me examples of how you have made this work for you.

Leadership

- Tell me about a team project when you had to take the lead or take charge of the project. What did you do? How did you do it? What was the result?
- What is the toughest group that you have had to get cooperation from? What were the obstacles? How did you handle the situation? What were the reactions of the group members? What was the end result?

Planning and organisation/time management

- Describe a situation that required you to do a number of things at the same time. How did you handle it? What was the result?
- How do you prioritise projects and tasks when scheduling your time? Give me some examples.
- Tell me about a project that you planned. How did you organise and schedule the tasks?

Teamwork

- Describe a situation where others you were working with on a project disagreed with your ideas. What did you do?
- Tell me about a time when you worked with a colleague who was not doing their share of the work. How did you handle it?
- Describe a situation in which you had to arrive at a compromise or help others to compromise. What was your role? What steps did you take? What was the result?
- Tell me about a time when you had to work on a team that did not get along. What happened? What role did you take? What was the result?

Closing interview questions

At the end of the interview, you should have several prepared questions, as you are very likely to be asked if you have any questions. Only ask questions that you could not research easily yourself, and don't ask any questions about employment terms or conditions. These types of questions can be asked at a more appropriate time, and in some cases they should only be directed to the search consultant or HR department when an offer is made.

I recommend asking thoughtful questions that demonstrate that you are genuinely interested in the role and the opportunity. Examples include:

- Why is this position vacant?
- How will you measure success in this role?
- What are you looking for in candidates for this position?
- What challenges would I have to tackle first?

At the end of an interview, it is also common and acceptable to ask questions about your chances and what will happen next (if that hasn't been explained to you already).

Closing interview questions to ask could be phrased as follows:

- Given my skills and experience, is there an opportunity for me here?
- When can I expect to hear from you?
- When do you hope to fill this position?

And if things go well during the interview, don't forget to ASK for the job!

At the end of the interview, you should thank the interviewer (or in case of a panel, each of the interviewers) personally with a handshake and a smile.

Post interview follow-up

As soon as the interview is over, debrief yourself and make notes about the meeting to gather your thoughts and impressions, and assess how you performed.

Make a note of whom you talked with, how long the interview took, what questions were asked, and the quality of your answers. Jot down points concerning your thoughts about the company, the people and company culture, and your level of interest and fit to the position.

Put together a list of the questions you were asked to help you prepare for future interviews. Try to figure out what you did right and what you did wrong. If there was an answer you gave that you feel didn't come off well, think of a better response. Take the time to better prepare for the next time you get asked similar questions.

Thank-you note

Follow up the interview with a thank-you email to both the search consultant and the interviewer. Sending a thank-you note is a very important extra effort that will help you get noticed and stand out from the competition.

In addition to thanking the employer and/or consultant for the interview, you can also use the opportunity to reiterate why you are interested in the position, and a few key points on your value proposition to the company.

However, keep it brief. You do not want to appear to be writing another application letter. Send the thank-you note by email within 24 hours of the interview. You can also send one to each of the interviewers if you have their individual email addresses. If not, just send it to the address you have and ask that person to pass on your thanks to the others. If you don't have the employer's email address, send your note to the search consultant asking them to pass on your message.

Keep the ball rolling

While waiting to hear whether your interview was successful, you should continue to submit your resume to other employers so you're not putting all your eggs in one basket. You'll probably only get one callback for every ten resumes you submit, so continue to apply for as many positions as you can.

If you receive a call telling you that the job has been awarded to someone else, ask your interviewer if there are other positions within the company that may fit your skill set. Just realise that sometimes you may never receive a call. If you don't hear back within a week, keep applying for other jobs and be aware that you may still hear from them down the road.



10

Salary negotiation, contracts and reference checks

As you negotiate a salary and employment contract, there are four negotiating principles that should direct your efforts. These same principles apply when you get multiple job offers and are tempted to try and play one offer against another. In this chapter we will discuss how to effectively negotiate the best salary package, the ideal employment contract, and how to manage multiple job offers, with professionalism and to your advantage. Closing the deal with confidence requires knowing the right questions to ask when an offer is made.

There is an art to negotiation, and the four principles that should be vigorously applied throughout the process are:

- Preparation
- Leveraging
- Using strengths to advantage
- Personal integrity

Whether you are negotiating base salary or a complex employment contract, these principles can serve as a guide.

Negotiating the deal with confidence

Salary package negotiation can be one of the trickier aspects of the job search process and the area where many candidates can slip up even before they get to first base. Here are some tips for dealing with the salary package issue at different stages of the recruitment process – when applying for the job, during the interview, and when you are offered the job. The main message to take away from this is to try never to discuss salary until the end of the interview process when the employer has definitely said that they want to hire you.

Stage 1: During the job application process

The first stumbling block many people encounter is an online job application that expressly states that you must include your current salary package information. The inference of this being compulsory is that your application won't be reviewed without including this information.

My advice is to skip over this question unless you have no option but to enter something in that field. If that is the case, you should state a salary range rather than your actual fixed salary.

Many recruitment ads may also ask for information about your current salary package as part of their preliminary screening process. However, by stating a figure that is too high or too low, you may eliminate yourself from the recruitment process altogether. The reality is that if you are a qualified candidate, the employer or recruitment firm is unlikely to ignore your application because you have not supplied any salary information.

Risks of revealing salary expectations too soon

In the employment world there is often substantial room to move when it comes to salary packages – especially if you are the best candidate for the job. However, many candidates make the mistake of revealing their salary expectations too early in the discussions.

I have seen substantial salary offers increase dramatically once a company realises that they might miss out on a candidate who is just right for them, so your bargaining power increases significantly when you get down to serious business.

The bottom line is that most employers can always make exceptions to salary arrangements if they feel you are the best candidate and you will not take the proposed offer as it stands. Most salaries are negotiable. Even if the employer can't increase your salary, you may be able to negotiate benefits or bonuses to sweeten your entire compensation package. Cash is not always the most important thing. Think about quality of life? Does the job offer you the opportunity to do what you want to do, and still have a life after hours?

Stage 2: During the job interview

As mentioned before, you should try to avoid any discussion of salary until you have proven your worth and the company has decided they really want to hire you.

Never bring up the issue of salary yourself during an interview. It is however possible that your interviewer will ask you about your salary expectations – particularly if they have requested this information in the job application form and you have left the field blank.

How to answer salary questions

Don't let questions about salary catch you off guard. You should have rehearsed for your interview, and have an answer ready so you can confidently ward off such questions. Or be able to frame your answer in a way that you're not pinning yourself down to any particular figure at this point. If at all possible, try to avoid being the one to bring up a number. Here are some suggested ways to answer questions about your salary expectations:

“Until you have decided that I am the preferred candidate and I can demonstrate that I can help you, a salary discussion is probably premature.”

“I’ll gladly come to that, but first could you help me to understand more fully what the role involves?”

Or, if the above two options fail:

“I’m looking for a salary package in the range of X to Y.”

Remember, if you’re applying for a position at executive level, many employers will expect you to be skilled at handling this part of the discussion, and may even use this process to assess your negotiation skills and ability.

The best time to discuss money

If you are left with no option but to discuss salary, remember that your bargaining power for your salary package increases after:

1. The employer knows who you are.
2. They decide that they like you.
3. They decide that they love you.
4. They decide that they **MUST** have you.

Obviously, if you have arrived at point 4 this is the best time to negotiate your salary package. And this point usually doesn’t come until after the interview stage when the employer has had a chance to consider and compare all candidates.

Stage 3: At the job offer stage

This is the preferred stage at which salary negotiations should take place. The purpose of negotiating your salary package is to work out the highest figure the employer is willing to pay, and to secure the best possible overall remuneration package.

The initial offer

Many interviewers will use the employment offer stage as a way to see how well you sell yourself and negotiate your own salary package. Very few candidates actually accept what is offered in the first instance, and you should always negotiate the initial offer because it is just a starting point. Once you have the offer in writing, this is a strong indication that they want you to join the company.

Knowing your position

In order to feel confident when negotiating your salary package, you need to know not only what you want but also what the industry trends are. Do some research into salaries paid by various companies in your field for positions at a similar level of responsibility. Also take into account how much experience you have and the value you are bringing to the company. As a general rule, big name companies will pay lower salaries than smaller, less well-known organisations.

Your response and counter position

My preferred negotiation technique is: Take at least 24 hours to think any offer over, but try to avoid any horse-trading, i.e. going back and forth several times negotiating various points. I recommend trying to go back once only with a counter position and to use this opportunity to address any legal issues within the contract.

I also put strong emphasis on being very positive and professional in all communications regarding salary. We need to keep in mind that this is a sensitive issue and the wrong approach can bring about fairly dramatic results.

Salary negotiation techniques

My advice is to call the person in the company responsible for issuing the offer and to say two things:

“First, I would like to thank you very much for the offer of employment. I am very excited about the prospect of joining XYZ Company.”

“I have read through the offer of employment and I am happy with the majority of the terms and conditions, however I would like to ask you if there is any room to move on the base salary” (or whatever the major issue is from your point of view). At this point you could say something to the effect that it was lower than what you were expecting and wanted to discuss if there is any room to move.

By approaching it this way, you are not putting a hard and fast figure on the table, such as ‘the offer needs to be XXX for me to accept’. However, it does give you an indication if the company is willing to negotiate on this point and help you confirm your negotiation strategy moving forward. At the same time, you are confirming to the company that you really want to join them, and that you are serious about finalising the offer process.

Room to move

When handled this way, the company will often respond with ‘what do you have in mind?’ This is when you need to give an indication of where the offer needs to be for you to accept. Remember my comment about horse-trading. There is nothing worse than someone going to bat for you to get a \$10,000 increase, only to find out that you really needed \$15,000 to accept the offer. Be very clear and specific. A good way to get the offer to where it needs to be is to say something along the lines of: ‘if you can increase the base salary to XXX, I would be willing to accept the offer.’

No room to move/alternatives

Alternatively, if the company says that there is no room to move on the base salary (for example), you could ask whether the company would consider some alternatives, such as a starting bonus, a pay review in 3 months time or some other mechanism to address the shortfall.

I always advise my candidates to try not to give a strong ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer until they are 100 percent happy with the offer.

Negotiating other employment conditions

The economy and the condition of the job market can influence contract negotiations. You need to keep these points in mind because they set boundaries for your negotiations. Factors include:

- Your experience and skills.
- How your competencies fit the position and the company.
- Size of the business you will be managing.
- Condition of the job market.
- Condition of the economy.
- Industry standards and norms for the type of position you are negotiating.
- Your career stage.

Negotiating involves developing a situation in which you get the best offer possible. Your interests will probably lie primarily in compensation, benefits and employment security. The company's interests in terms of the contract negotiations will be to ensure you are offered just enough to convince you to accept the position while also minimising the financial impact on the business.

Being prepared to discuss benefits as well as salary is a critical step to successful contract negotiations. It's important to find areas of agreement first because this sets a positive tone for negotiations. If you agree on the salary first, for example, making it likely you'll be accepting the position, you're in a solid position for negotiating the add-ons. As mentioned earlier, preparation includes doing research on industry executive compensation and relating total packages to job functions and responsibility. In addition, you must develop a prioritised list of benefits to make up your final compensation package.

This prioritised list of executive benefits is critical. There are so many different types of benefits that knowing, which ones you can't live without and which ones fall under the nice-to-have category,

can help you determine if an offer is acceptable as it stands, or if you need further negotiation.

The following are the types of questions you will want to ask yourself and your potential employer concerning benefits:

1. What are the joining arrangements, i.e. signing bonuses, start date, etc.?
2. What standard benefits are covered by the employer?
3. What type of compensation is offered – base compensation, bonuses, equity, insurance, level of superannuation, etc., and does it meet minimum personal requirements?
4. How do the salary and benefits match up against industry standards?
5. If the minimum salary, benefits or bonuses desired are not offered, can you negotiate a compromise?
6. How are future salary increases to be handled, i.e. by the Board of Directors, through negotiation with the CEO, etc?
7. Did the salary offer take into consideration your special talents, abilities and competencies that set you apart within the industry, and thus deserving of additional compensation?

Once you get an offer and receive a copy of the contract, but before you sign it, in addition to the above you will need to check that the following have also been covered:

- What compensation guarantees are in place in the event the business was to fail or be sold?
- How are the termination arrangements structured?
- What economic exposure do you have to sudden termination, i.e. severance pay, golden parachutes, continuation of benefits, etc.?
- What is considered cause for termination?
- What intellectual property rights are defined in the contract?

- How will disputes be resolved?
- What restrictive covenants are placed on the position through the contract?
- What is the term of the contract?

Thought it's an unpleasant thought, the fact is that executive employment contracts are put into place for two primary reasons. First, the agreement ensures you will get the compensation and benefits negotiated. Second, the agreement outlines the grounds for employment termination and exactly what happens should you be terminated. You can negotiate guaranteed salary increases, rights to participate in public forums and events, relocation expenses, retirement options, expense accounts, what is considered to be 'good' cause for termination, and anything else of importance to you.

Engaging outside counsel

The letter of offer and the employment contract can contain many legal terms of reference. Many candidates simply read through these and blindly sign the documents without even a second thought to negotiation, and without proper legal advice.

If you are not fully confident about your contract negotiation skills, it's a good idea to hire a lawyer/solicitor, or a career and salary negotiation coach, like myself. For the small financial investment required, you can receive potentially high returns, as these experts can provide legal and salary benchmarking information while working with you confidentially and discreetly throughout the negotiation process. Everything is negotiable, and if there are legal terms in the contract that are not acceptable, this is your one and only chance to address them.

Key things to watch for are, probation periods, and notice periods during and after probation.

Also watch for non-compete clauses and make sure you understand exactly what they mean. Recently there has been an increase in employment contracts that stipulate very lengthy notice periods, i.e. 3-6 months. While this may sound great at the outset, it can be a major issue when you want to leave the company, as it can reduce your ability to accept roles that can come up with immediate and quick start dates.

Commission structures or bonus plans should always be reviewed, especially if a large component of your income is derived from commissions. If this is a major source of your income, don't accept an offer that says commissions are paid at the company's discretion – it needs to be written into the employment contract what your potential remuneration is

including commission and bonuses.

When considering your employment terms, keep in mind that in Australia most basic contract provisions such as sick leave and annual leave, are protected under Fair Work legislation.

Handling multiple job offers

Highly qualified people seeking executive and managerial level jobs often find themselves in the unique position of having to handle multiple job offers. If appropriately managed, multiple offers can be an ideal position to be in, and can be used to negotiate the best salary and contract possible.

However, that doesn't mean you play a cat-and-mouse game that makes you appear to be manipulative. If you have multiple job offers then you can leverage these offers as a negotiating strategy taking a prioritised list into consideration. If your list reads 1) base pay of \$250,000, 2) annual incentive pay, 3) stock options and 4) golden parachute provisions; but the company offers 1) base pay

of \$250,000, 2) use of company car, and 3) school fees for children, there may be a lot of negotiating needed.

A lot depends on the lifecycle of your career. If you are a seasoned executive with unique competencies and special skills ideal for a business, the other job offers are going to be more valuable in the negotiation process than if you are a mid-career executive. There are several possible scenarios that can unfold:

- You haven't accepted a position yet, but one firm has offered more than another for a similar position. In that case, you can respectfully and honestly inform the lower paying company, which may or may not raise their offer.
- You accept a position and before you begin working, another firm comes through with a better offer and wants to negotiate.

This is a difficult situation because burning bridges is never a good idea. However, there is no guarantee that negotiations will be successful with the new offer either. In this case, if you have signed an employment contract, it's better to keep the position you already accepted rather than risk legal complications. If you are still negotiating the contract,

then you will have to rely on your personal integrity and career goals to guide you. If you truly want to accept the second offer then you will have to negotiate quickly to see if your needs can be met. If it appears they will be, then you can diplomatically let the first company know you are refusing their offer, while assuring them of how much you appreciate their efforts.

SMART TIP

Knowledge is power, and knowing that you have room to negotiate will help you to ask for and get, the salary you deserve. Remember that the first offer from an employer is usually not the final offer. There is always room for negotiation.

- You receive multiple job offers all at once. Though this sounds like a dream situation, it can present difficulties. It's important to not keep businesses waiting too long for your answer. The best strategy is to find a way to gain more time so you can continue to negotiate the employment contracts while deciding which position best suits you. However you can't do this for a long period of time because it will create ill-will that may harm your reputation in the industry.

In general, it is best to be honest with a company that is negotiating with you in good faith. The potential employer is going to be much more understanding of multiple job offers than of a situation in which you appear to stall, waste their time or play games. However, if you do inform a potential employer of other offers it will be necessary to present the information in an appropriate way. By informing the company you are negotiating with, that others are interested in you also, it's quite possible the negotiation process will be accelerated.

Crossing the finish line

When you negotiate an employment contract including salary, it should be from a position of strength. That strength comes from the advance preparation you do before applying for a job. If you apply only for positions that match your career goals, and only after doing thorough research, then the chances are an offer will be made and negotiations will be successful. In other words, always negotiate in good faith.

Keys to selecting the best referees

There is no hard and fast rule as to whether referees should be provided in resumes.

Unless an employer specifically requests candidates to provide referee details, there is no real obligation for you to do so. I have not heard of someone not getting an interview because they did not provide referee information. That said, there is no harm in providing the names and positions of referees without contact details, because it signals to employers that there are people ready to provide support for you.

Who should be your referees?

Referees should be people who know you well in a work context:

- **Not suitable:** Among the people who are of no value as job referees are friends, relatives, personal accountants and solicitors, your local church minister and other well-meaning people, because they have no knowledge of how you operate in a work environment. Some people argue that personal referees can vouch for your integrity and honesty, though this is debatable. However, work referees can provide support for these attributes effectively, because they have seen you apply your integrity and honesty at work.
- **Also not suitable:** Work colleagues or peers are also not very useful as referees unless they are responsible for managing your work or performance. Your colleagues usually have no legitimate way of assessing or judging your work, or the value of your contributions because they have no responsibility for your performance on a day-to-day basis.
- **Sometimes suitable:** In some cases, clients and/or customers can be good referees, provided they have dealt with you frequently over a reasonable period of time. But you need to be careful not to rock the boat with your current employer. You don't want clients informing your current boss that you are looking for another job, and you don't want to cause clients to

switch to another supplier because they think you are planning to leave.

- **Very suitable:** The most valuable people to use as referees are current and former managers or employers – people who actually know what you did and how effective you are or were.
- **What if they've changed jobs?** If your referees are no longer in the same organisation as they were when you worked with them, on your resume identify their current position as well as the position they held when you worked with them.

Referees for private sector roles

Some people want to tell the reader of their resume that referees will be provided on request. Of course they will! You certainly are not going to get a job offer unless you have references. As previously stated, there is no harm in providing the names, positions and companies of referees but without contact details, because it signals to employers that there are people ready to provide support for you.

Almost all employers or recruitment consultants will only contact referees once they are fairly certain that the applicant is highly suited to the role. It takes time to contact referees and it imposes on your referees' time. Therefore, usually only the referees of applicants on the final shortlist are contacted.

Referees for public sector roles

Applicants from the public sector

Many public sector employers require candidates to provide complete referee information as part of their application. This is not a problem for candidates already in the public sector because it is an established process. Public sector managers seem to be quite mature and reasonable when faced with the possibility of losing a

valued member of their team. It is an expected part of the career advancement process.

Understand that many public sector organisations also ask candidates to provide written referee reports against the selection criteria for the position, so be prepared to make those references readily available.

Applicants from the private sector

If you are in the private sector applying for a public sector role, providing complete referee information can be a problem. Many people are concerned about their future if their current boss finds out they are applying for a job with another employer.

Remember that you can't be fired for looking outside the company to further your career. Did they offer you a job for life when you joined the company? You are entitled to further your career with anyone of your choosing.

However, some people in the private sector are concerned that once they have identified their intention to leave or even if word gets out that they are looking around, they will be assigned uninteresting work or projects with no meaning. Or perhaps transferred to very inhospitable and undesirable locations, and even overlooked for any upcoming promotions.

Therefore, it may be necessary to explain to public sector employers that for reasons of confidentiality, you are not able to provide referee details at the time of application, but will be happy to do so further down the track.



11

Got the job, now the next steps

Last year statistics reported that sixty-eight percent of jobs lasted less than five years. Workers come and go; so do executives and managers. Despite a struggling economy, nothing has changed in that the quickest path to career advancement or a higher salary is through job transitioning.

Job moves are not easy though, so it may be a bit surprising at first glance that many people change jobs frequently. There is sometimes a bit of resentment that seems to accompany a person who leaves a position to work for another company, as if you are being disloyal, rather than simply looking out for your best interests.

Making a graceful exit

It's a fact that people are often remembered more for how they end a job than for how they handled the job. That is particularly true for executives and managers who often have a lot of staff depending on them, and also have a number of projects on the go. How gracefully you exit your job and how well you tie up loose ends determines your legacy at the company. Graceful exits from current positions means always acting professionally, remaining productive until the

moment you finally walk out of the door, and always remembering that your legacy affects your career long after you leave.

Take a professional final bow

It's amazing how many people have a successful run at a company, and then bungle it when it's time to leave. How do you ruin a perfectly good career by changing jobs? It's easy if you only think about the here and now, and don't think about the future.

- Overestimating your true worth to the company and displaying a lot of ego.
- Talking badly about the organisation (to anyone!).
- Thinking short term and treating your job change as an “escape”.
- Failing to remain enthusiastic about your current work.

SMART TIP

The one thing you should not do is quit your current job too quickly. Even if you are being pursued by an executive search firm, it's important to not let anyone pressure you into making a speedy decision. Take your time and collect all the facts. There is always time to make a good decision.

The job you currently hold is an important part of your career. It is included on your resume, serves as a reference for future endeavours, and contributed to the experience and knowledge you now possess. Treating your old job with respect through the last days of employment can serve you well down the road when you are looking at yet another career move.

Following are some ways you can leave your job with the knowledge that your final bow is done with dignity and good grace.

- **Tell the appropriate person first** – As an executive or manager, you have a responsibility to the Board of Directors, fellow team members and your staff to make sure your leaving

is not discovered through gossip, whispers or rumours. In other words, you should tell the right person or group first. Then, quickly inform the others, although the Board of Directors or your immediate supervisor may prefer to announce your departure.

- **Give adequate notice** – What is considered adequate notice for a position often depends on the position you hold, and what is stated in your employment contract. If you are at the executive level, giving your employer plenty of advance notice will give the organisation more time to do a management search without the position being left vacant for a long period of time.
- **Develop a transition plan**
 - Developing a transition plan that benefits the organisation ensures that the changeover will not disrupt operations. Demonstrating that you have carefully thought-out how leaving impacts the organisation, proves you are a professional.
- **Identify unfinished projects** – It is disruptive and upsetting for fellow managers to discover there is an unfinished project they know little about. Not only does it take a lot of time to get up to speed on the project's status, but a lot can get overlooked. Clearly identifying the projects and presenting their status in an organised manner will create goodwill.
- **Identify and document major issues** – No one really likes surprises, especially an organisation that is concerned about losing your expertise and experience. To help fellow executives step in and prevent major issues from being neglected, you should clearly identify what they are and then share as much

SMART TIP

Always submit a written letter of resignation to document your final date of employment so there's a record that you have adhered to contract termination requirements.

information as possible to make it easier for them to pick up where you leave off. Be willing to share any thoughts and ideas that may be helpful in resolving these issues.

- **Agree to work with replacement for a period of time** – Depending on the type of position you are vacating, it's quite possible you will need to meet with your replacement several times to ensure a smooth transition. Being co-operative is important, though you will have to set limits on your willingness to be available once you begin a new job.
- **Work until the last minute of the last day** – Don't be tempted to take advantage of the fact you are leaving by lowering productivity. As long as you are being paid to work, that's what you need to do – work.

Tying up loose ends

When you leave a job, there are always going to be a few things you need to take care of to ensure you really do maintain a graceful exit. Obviously, it's important to talk to your staff to say farewell and thank-you. Showing appreciation to staff and fellow managers, is a gracious act.

Some additional things you can do to maintain goodwill include:

- Make sure you leave reliable contact information where you can be reached after leaving.
- Follow Human Resources procedures carefully. This may involve completing relevant forms, turning in items that belong to the company, and making arrangements for collecting your final pay.
- Ensure your office is neat and tidy, and don't leave any unidentified paperwork and files.
- Make sure the secretary or administrative assistant knows where to find keys, files, information on your computer, business contact information, etc.

Also important is maintaining a professional and pleasant attitude at all times. Your staff and co-workers are not interested in hearing about how much better it will be working at the new organisation. The implication is that you are smart to move on, and the ones remaining behind are stuck. This is not the message you want to send, either intentionally or unintentionally.

Sometimes it's the attitude and attention to the small details that make a job exit graceful. The bottom line is that you should treat the people where you now work the same way you would want to be treated if you were the one staying. In other words, do unto your old organisation as you would have your new organisation do unto you.

Prepare to succeed – starting on the right foot

An organisation always has high expectations when a new executive or manager begins a new job. These expectations can be found among:

- Those you work for – the Board of Directors, Chief Executive Officer and Senior Managers.
- Those around you – managers, department heads and team members.
- Those who work for you – staff.

In fact, there may even be expectations coming from outside the organisation. For example, vendors may have expectations that you will be able to finally solve an ongoing problem. All of these expectations together can create a lot of new job stress as you begin to feel like you are expected to work miracles. The pressure is not usually intentionally applied, in most cases the search process has been fairly long and the position vacant in the meantime. Now that you're there, everyone wants you to start producing results as soon as possible.

Starting a job with the right attitude is important to developing a good first impression in the organisation, and keeping the stress level under control. If you are able, it's good to take a little time off between jobs so you can regroup and readjust. It's not always easy to let go of old job worries and behaviours. The new organisation will probably have a completely different way of doing things, and you have to start the job ready to accept and adapt to the new methods.

If there is any one statement you can make that will annoy people, it will begin with the words, "That's not the way we did it in the last place I worked..." The organisation has a culture, policies and procedures, and it may be your responsibility to change all three, but you can't do so overnight.

Bringing up your old job at every turn gives the wrong impression. It implies that what has been successful in the past is now all wrong and that you know better. Maybe you do, but there is a right way and a wrong way to initiate change. Appearing to criticise people before you are familiar with the organisation is not a good way to start.

Not criticising goes hand-in-hand with setting realistic expectations for your ability to learn a new job, make changes and achieve goals. It can be a bit heady going through the interview process and having a lot of people show so much interest in your abilities. When selected for the position there is an underlying assumption that you will be able to follow through on all of the statements made during the interview and on your resume. There's a natural inclination to make changes right away to prove your worth.

The best advice you can take is to resist! Making changes too quickly and before you understand the organisational culture, or have had time to evaluate the organisation's strengths and weaknesses is inadvisable. Though you made it through the interview process and impressed those responsible for candidate selection, there are other

people in the organisation that have not had a chance to appreciate your credibility, competencies or skills.

First impressions

It always comes back to first impressions. When you start a new job, there is a small window of opportunity to make the best possible first impression. If you come highly recommended and are introduced with lots of praise, then employees are going to have high expectations. However, people are annoyed or even offended by someone who comes to a new job acting as if they are a long lost friend or have star quality. Your approach should be professional, and your work will speak for itself over time.

Learning the culture of an organisation is going to be critical to your success. The culture represents the unwritten rules and the personality of the business. It is made up of the fundamental assumptions, values, behavioural norms and symbols that impact patterns of organisational behaviour, and determine what is acceptable and unacceptable. If you don't understand the culture first, approaching the organisation's members or making changes is perilous and can quickly backfire.

Following are some additional ways to start a job the right way:

- Meet with your supervisor and clarify your role in the organisation and position responsibilities.
- Establish short and long term goals.
- Identify the people who are most respected and most influential in the organisation and either rely on them first (if they work for or with you), or quickly get to know them and take advantage of ways to work with them.
- Don't talk about your employment terms, especially your salary.

- Don't take it personally when staff make complimentary remarks about your predecessor.
- Schedule time to talk to your immediate staff to begin team building.

Many managers will schedule interviews with each staff member to learn about their personal expectations, work history, concerns and ideas. This is an excellent way to establish rapport.

There is always a question about whether it's better to ease into a new position or to act quickly and decisively. Though you may not have a lot of time to spare if you were hired to solve problems, to avoid creating resentment you also cannot move too aggressively. It's a fine line during the first few months of employment.

Tips on handling new job stress

Starting a new job is stressful for everyone even without regard for the type of position involved. It's emotional as well as taxing mentally and physically. There is a tendency to set expectations high because you don't want to disappoint the ones who have faith in your abilities. Most people are also often still concerned about whether they made the right decision by accepting the job and anxious about long-term success. This only adds to the stress.

Keeping the stress under control is important because it can affect your ability to function, mentally process information, make decisions and stay healthy. To initially relieve stress you'll want to focus on early job successes and how your competencies can make things happen in the organisation. By focusing on early successes you also prove to others that they made a good decision by hiring you, and that can also relieve stress.

To truly manage new job stress, you must be comfortable in your ability to adapt to new settings and work with new people. Competent and confident people are able to draw upon their strengths, values

and ability to make contributions to achieve excellence. Maintaining emotional and mental equilibrium is critical to job performance. As you start a new job, you want performance to be top notch, so allowing stress to get in the way is unacceptable.

You can and should take advantage of opportunities to relieve new job stress. They include:

- Not making quick decisions that you will soon regret.
- Not trying to do too much too early.
- Getting to know peers within the organisation and enjoying a little socialising time during lunch with co-workers.
- Maintaining a positive attitude and remembering that a “new job” soon becomes a “job”.
- Getting plenty of sleep.
- Spending time getting familiar with the layout of the organisation so you don’t have to ask somebody about every move you make.
- Not trying to be a hero and working seven days a week to impress.

Some of these suggestions may seem obvious or unimportant, but everything you can do to relieve new job stress has value. Everyone experiences anxiety when starting a new job because first impressions do count and your career is depending on success. Just remember that stress is the great equaliser – the new Chief Executive Officer feels it just as much as the new receptionist.

Strategies on advancing

Now that you have aced the new job, don’t think you can sit back and rest on your laurels. Success in any type of career requires a long-term strategy and plan of execution. Here are some tips to help guide you in the right direction:

- **Continue networking.** Cultivate a wide and informative network of people you can turn to when needed. Remember to

thank everyone who helped you achieve your new position, and continue to nurture old and new contacts. Opportunities will always present themselves and even if you don't wish to take advantage of them, you may be able to help someone else.

- **Be the hero.** Look for opportunities where you can shine. In other words, show initiative by addressing needs or tackling problems within the department or company before being asked. Undertake challenges that others may be reluctant to, so that you can showcase your abilities.
- **Be an effective leader.** If you are in a position of authority, demonstrate your leadership skills by firmly taking the reins. On the other hand, you don't want to abuse your power either and alienate everyone around you. You will gain your staff's respect much faster by being confident in your abilities and positive in your outlook.
- **Choose your battles wisely.** What this means is not every issue is worth going to the mat for. If you're constantly embroiled in some type of battle, you will lose your effectiveness and perhaps be labelled as "difficult." This can be a career-killer. However, when you do feel the need to get involved in a situation, make sure you understand the consequences of taking on that fight. Ultimately, your superiors and peers will hold you in higher regard – even if they may not agree with you.

*“Never tell people how to do things.
Tell them what to do and let them
surprise you with their ingenuity.”*

George S. Patton Jr.

- **Stepping stones.** Each new position should be considered a stepping stone that broadens your horizon. This means you should stay on the alert for new positions within the company, even if you are content in your current position. Ideally you will learn of these new positions before they are even announced so that you can get your foot in the door first.
- **Always practice honesty and integrity.** Do this every single day throughout your career. Be a genuine, sincere person and ensure that you “say what you mean and mean what you say.” Treat everyone with respect and don’t get caught up in office politics, and the inner turmoil that is often prevalent in big companies. If you make a mistake, own up to it. Don’t wait for someone else to find out about it first. And if you’re erroneously credited with something, be quick to rectify the matter, and give credit where credit is due.

Finally, go above and beyond the call of duty. Being a hard, dedicated worker means doing your best and doing it well. Supervisors are constantly on the lookout for employees they can promote, who consistently deliver the desired results that enable the company to achieve its objectives.



12

Tales from the trenches

By now, you should have a pretty good idea of how to get started in your quest for a new job, as well as what not to do. However, nothing teaches as well as the voice of experience. Therefore, I've asked a diverse group of successful executives, career specialists and hiring managers in different industries to share their stories and valuable insight with you. Here is what they had to say ...

You've been quarantined

You'll recall that in Chapter 4, I mentioned that emailing a document containing a virus was a good way to get excluded without really trying. Teresa Blanchard, Senior VP of Business Operations for an IT corporation in Sydney found out how detrimental that can be the hard way.

"I had worked diligently for several days on updating my resume to send to a technology company that I was excited about getting an interview with," says Blanchard. "After hitting the 'submit' button in my email program, I waited in eager anticipation for a response which came a few hours later."

However, the message she received from the hiring manager was unexpectedly a bit terse, stating: “Your emailed resume was delivered with a virus and has been quarantined. We recommend that you install virus protection software without delay.”

Needless to say, Blanchard did not pursue that opportunity as it is hard to recover from this kind of incident when applying to a technology-based company. But, even for those of us who are not technologically advanced, there is still no excuse for not having up-to-date anti-virus software installed and activated at all times.

Not on company time

Once, while interviewing a senior executive in Brisbane, a search consultant asked the candidate what was her greatest achievement. The young woman promptly replied that it was writing a short novel.

“No,” said the consultant. “I meant what was something you accomplished at your last place of employment that you are proud of.”

The candidate then said, “But I wrote the novel while I was at work!” Obviously, she didn’t make the kind of impression she was hoping for and was not given further consideration.

Don’t burn any bridges

In Chapter 11, I talked about how important it is to make a graceful exit from an existing position when preparing to leave and work somewhere else. One corporate executive, who wishes to remain anonymous, recently told me about how excited she had been about a new position she had accepted – so much so that she alienated other staff members who viewed her enthusiasm as egotistical, and started distancing themselves from her.

“I never meant to come across as arrogant or self-important, but I can see how my eagerness to start my new position could have been misinterpreted,” she says. “In hindsight, I wish I had been more reserved about my feelings and more considerate of theirs.”

Unfortunately, about a week after giving notice to her current employer, her new employer contacted her and said they were being forced to reassess their financial situation, and had initiated a hiring freeze. In other words, their offer to her was being rescinded!

With a great deal of trepidation, the executive candidate went to her supervisor to explain the latest development and ask for her old job back. Not surprisingly, her request was denied and she left her current position without having secured new employment.

Open new doors through volunteer work

Whether you are thinking about changing careers, recently made redundant, or transitioning back into the workplace after a long break, starting out as a volunteer worker can be an excellent strategy to advance your career objectives.

When Christi Gilbert, a marketing manager for a commercial real estate company in Queensland, planned and executed her career change, she decided to volunteer in her new field by doing social media work (Twitter, Facebook, Blogs, and LinkedIn) at a time when companies were desperately trying to update their social media presence. “After six months of moonlighting as a social media volunteer, I was offered a full time marketing position,” Gilbert says. “This way, my new bosses and colleagues were able to get a sense of who I was during my six month volunteer process.”

Another important point that Gilbert makes regarding the use of social media was that she was very careful about her posts, affiliations, content, and everything else, to ensure that her public

profile, tweets, Facebook status, and LinkedIn updates matched the culture of the company she was courting.

Keep in mind that volunteering gives you the opportunity to try out new and interesting work environments without a long-term commitment. In addition, you will gain valuable experience and establish important contacts in that particular industry.

From temporary assignment to permanent placement

If jobs in your particular field are somewhat scarce or you haven't discovered the company you would prefer to work for yet, consider working on a temporary contract or as a consultant.

After being made redundant as a pharmaceutical sales representative, Bradley Jamison had a difficult time regaining his footing in the workplace due to the slow economy. In need of remuneration, he went to work for a staffing agency as a "temporary employee" and was sent to a healthcare company to assign nurses to patients who were receiving home healthcare. Because he showed a great deal of initiative and dedication to his low-profile job, within a couple of months he was hired full-time and promoted to hiring manager of the nursing staff.

Jamison has since gone back to university to get his Bachelor of Nursing degree so that he can further his career as the Director of Nursing. This was an unexpected and complete change of career that can be credited to his accepting a temporary assignment.

Add another party to the perspective

When it comes to resumes, the best advice that Jarrod Gold, a marketing and communications director can give is to find ways to add some third party perspective. Gold had much success in accomplishing this by integrating the recommendations he received on LinkedIn directly into his resume.

“My original plan was to intersperse them into the body of the resume as graphical callouts, but since I was largely applying online, I wanted the focus to be on keyword relevance vs. style,” he relates. He figured that style could come later on a more polished version for circulating in an interview. He then created a new section called “Professional References” and simply copied and pasted his recommendations there, and then cleaned up the formatting.

Gold considered the types of positions he was applying for, then elected to include three top-level recommendations from senior executives to show the extent of the impact his work had on the business. He also included recommendations from three former staff members he oversaw to show an ability to lead and manage others.

This new version of his resume garnered more call backs and interviews than ever before, with executive search consultants and hiring managers specifically commenting on it during interviews. The CEO of the company that eventually made him an offer pointed to it as something “impressive and powerful” that made him stand out from other applicants.

When the keys to the gate are lost

When interviewing with an executive search consultant always remember it’s critical to sell yourself to the “gatekeeper.” Because if you don’t ace that interview you won’t get an invitation to go to the next level. Here are a few examples of interesting things search consultants have seen and heard when interviewing candidates:

One executive search consultant explained to the candidate the qualities needed for the job: multi-tasking, hard-working, time management skills, attention to detail, etc. The candidate responded with “I can’t do that. I’m not a robot.” Moral of the story, even executive job-seekers make mistakes.

Another time a search consultant was in the midst of an interview when the candidate asked “Do you mind if I use your kitchen to eat my sandwich?” I just hope the candidate cleaned up after herself before leaving.

Then there was the time an executive search consultant asked the candidate, who was previously an accounting manager, what their ideal job would be. The candidate responded with, “a playboy photographer.” Whoops!

One interviewer said that it was surprising how many candidates showed up late for an interview. When one showed up an hour and a half late and the interviewer enquired as to why, the candidate haughtily said, “Well, I’m here now!” Needless to say, that was a very short interview.

Don’t over do it

Jewellery designer, Bonnie Riconda says one of the things that make her cringe when meeting with a potential new employee is when they try to act like they know as much as she does – if not more. “I know they are trying to impress me, but I can tell it’s superficial and fake,” Riconda says. And that is not impressive.

She also dislikes when people dress inappropriately for the interview such as mesh or see-through clothing, stiletto heels, and lots of viewable piercings. This also includes wearing too much makeup, long fake fingernails, and tons of perfume.

The bottom line

The bottom line is that a successful job search is not a one-size-fits-all. It’s a carefully laid-out plan of action that implements different types of strategies. Besides possessing the appropriate skills and experience, preparation is the key to securing an executive position. This book was developed for executive candidates to help guide

you through the process of applying and interviewing for top-level positions, and negotiating your salary package and contract.

This advice comes from many years of experience in the executive search industry and dealing with a large variety of companies and HR professionals. Armed with this inside knowledge, you will have increased your chances of success in your executive job search.

Let the search begin!



Appendix

You can never be too prepared and you can never have too many resources. Therefore, I have some additional information and helpful sites for you to check out and take advantage of:

Online Resume Services:

Kylie Hammond (www.kyliehammond.com.au)

DoYouBuzz (www.doyoubuzz.com)

Emurse (www.emurse.com)

VisualCV (www.visualcv.com)

Social Networking Sites:

BranchOut (www.branchout.com)

Facebook (www.facebook.com)

InnovateCV (www.innovatecv.com)

In The Door (www.inthedor.com)

Jibe (www.jibe.com)

LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com.au)

SimplyHired (www.simplyhired.com)

Twitter (www.twitter.com)

Australian Job Boards:

SEEK (www.seek.com.au)

My Career (www.mycareer.com.au)

CareerOne (www.careerone.com.au)

Adage (www.adage.com.au) – (Mature Age Job Board)

Ethical Jobs (www.ethicaljobs.com.au) –

NFP and Sustainability Sectors

NGO Recruitment (www.ngorecruitment.com.au) – NFP Sectors

ES Global (www.esglobal.com.au) – Environment and Sustainability Sectors

Pathways Australia (www.pathwaysaustralia.com.au) –

Weekly Email Senior & Middle Management NFP Positions

Fundraising Institute of Australia (www.fia.org.au) –

All Levels – Marketing, Fundraising, Bequest, Membership Roles in NFP Sector

International Job Boards:

Career Builder (www.careerbuilder.com)

Diversity, Inc. (<http://diversityinc.careercast.com/jobs/search>)

Europa (http://europa.eu/index_en.htm)

Guardian Jobs (<http://jobs.guardian.co.uk/>)

Monster (www.monster.com)

The Ladders (www.theladders.com)

Smaller Niche Job Sites:

BrazenCareerist (www.brazencareerist.com)

JobServe (www.jobserve.com)

OnTargetJobs (www.ontargetjobs.com)

Viadeo (www.viadeo.com)

More Internet Resources:

AtomKeep (www.atomkeep.com):

Manages a variety of social networking profiles/platforms

Bit.ly (www.bit.ly): URL shortening service

Bulbstorm (www.bulbstorm.com):

Creates social campaigns and online brands

Google Alerts (www.google.com/alerts)

Social Oomph (www.socialoomph.com):

Schedule tweets or status updates

Tweet Deck (www.tweetdeck.com):

To help manage Twitter accounts

Twitter Help Center (<https://support.twitter.com/entries/166337-the-twitter-glossary>)

Miscellaneous Resources:

Forbes 500 Largest Private Companies

(www.forbes.com/private500/)

Fortune: 100 Best Companies to Work For (http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/fortune_archive/2012/02/06/toc.html)

Hoovers (www.hoovers.com):

Company profiles, up-to-date news and more

Myers-Briggs Foundation (<http://www.myersbriggs.org>):

Identifies personality traits and what type of careers are the most

suitable.

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD)

(<http://www.cipd.co.uk/>): Europe's largest HR and development professional body.

The World Clock (<http://timeanddate.com>)

Recommended Reading:

Job Searching with Social Media for Dummies,
by Joshua Waldman, MBA (Wiley, 2011).

Guerrilla Marketing for Job Hunters 3.0: How to Stand Out from the Crowd and Tap Into the Hidden Job Market using Social Media and 999 other Tactics Today, by Jay Conrad Levinson and David E. Perry (Wiley, 2011).

Alison Doyle's Job Search Guidebook, by Alison Doyle (Doyle, 2011).

Knock'em Dead 2011: The Ultimate Job Search Guide,
by Yate Martin (Adams Media, 2010).



Being prepared and organised for your job search is key to finding a secure executive position in this ever-shifting job seekers' landscape.

In *The Executive Candidate's Survival Guide*, leading Board and Executive Search Consultant and Australia's foremost CEO Business Mentor, Kylie Hammond, will provide you with breakthrough strategies and advice that includes building your professional toolbox and a career portfolio. Learn how to recognise a good opportunity, and walk away from a bad one.

Some of the critical job search elements covered include:

- Identifying your professional goals and analysing your options
- Understanding your value proposition and how to market yourself
- Developing a career portfolio
- Developing a resume for specific opportunities
- Leveraging the power of professional and social media
- Learning how to negotiate the best contract.

The Executive Candidate's Survival Guide contains tips and hints that come from many years of experience in the executive search industry and working with a large variety of companies and HR professionals.

"Inside every successful business person is an even more ambitious one trying to get out. He or she just needs a little help."

Australian Financial Review

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