

Downsized...Now What?

A guide to prepping for a job search in 2009



Strategic Talent Acquisition

March 2009

So you now find yourself out of a job and you need one. It happens to the best of us so “Now What”???

As you might imagine, recruiters hear from a great many job seekers, and the sad truth is that they respond to very few of these. This is because most of their work is for clients who retain them to fill very specific and key positions; therefore recruiters provide very limited value to the majority of candidates who **contact them**. There is a very important distinction between placement agencies and executive search firms, search firms are looking for that one specific needle in the haystack defined by their clients. In our office, less than 2% of all of our successful placements have been with candidates who were unemployed. In all cases, it’s about timing. One final comment on recruiters, our policy is to never accept any compensation from candidates. Our only fiduciary responsibility is to our client and we won’t compromise that with a potential conflict of interest. However, in times like these, we’ve noticed recruiting firms offering ‘candidate services’ on a for-fee basis. Be very careful if you’re approached by a recruiting firm who promises to market you for a fee; it’s unethical.

Mindset Changes:

The first thing is to realize that, albeit temporarily, finding your next job is your current full time job. Landing a new position is a 40-hour a week job. You should set a personal goal to get one face to face interview every week. And remember, you WILL get hired again, it’s timing and diligence, but it’ll happen. Look at this time as a rare opportunity to actually find what YOU want to do, not simply ‘get a job’.

Reading will help you prepare in many ways for the process. Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body and reading will keep your mind sharp during your job search. So, either get to a library or bookstore or Amazon, but here’s a list of great reads to help you in the process.

Suggested reading list:

Job Hunting for Dummies® Max Messmer
Never Eat Alone by Keith Ferrazzi
Hire me! Secrets of Job Interviewing by Patricia Noel Drain
Dress for Success by John T. Malloy
Knock ‘em Dead by Martin Yate
How to Win Friends and Influence People by Dale Carnegie
Think & Grow Rich by Napoleon Hill
Your Outplacement Handbook: Redesigning Your Career
How to Turn an Interview into a Job by Jeffery D. Allen
Subscribe to all of “**your industry related journals**” you can (many of them are free or get them from an industry contact)

Fourth, check out your interviewing suit and yes it should be a suit. Even if you think your old suit is fine, it probably isn’t. At minimum get the old one cleaned and pressed.

Join Your Local Toastmasters Organization

<http://www.toastmasters.org>

If you haven't interviewed for a job in a while and/or don't speak in front of groups very often, it would be worth your while to investigate the Toastmasters organization. Once you have broken the ice by speaking to a group in public, interviewing one-on-one should become easier. Many famous individuals state that their respective careers didn't take off until they had taken a public speaking class.

From the Toastmasters site:

Toastmasters International has grown to become a world leader in helping people become more competent and comfortable in front of an audience. The nonprofit organization now has nearly 235,000 members in 11,700 clubs in 92 countries, offering a proven – and enjoyable! – way to practice and hone communication and leadership skills.

Most Toastmasters meetings are comprised of approximately 20 people who meet weekly for an hour or two. Participants practice and learn skills by filling a meeting role, ranging from giving a prepared speech or an impromptu one to serving as timer, evaluator or grammarian.

Update your Resume:

Please stay away from those well meaning individuals that would encourage you to embellish your accomplishments, omit short stints of employment or lie about your education. If you don't have a degree, don't say you do. If you are in an educational program say so and indicate the number of hours earned or expected graduation date.

Customize every cover letter you submit to reflect how your skills and accomplishments would benefit your targeted position within that company. Yes a cover letter is a need when sending blind resumes into either targeted companies or replies to job postings. Take copies of your resume, cover letter and list of references to every interview and be prepared to present a copy to your interviewer, even if he/she already has one.

According to a poll of executives, 78% of hiring managers prefer to see a candidate's resume organized chronologically from the most recent position, backwards.

Resume basics should summarize each position by your title, the specific responsibilities you held and the specific achievements you accomplished for each responsibility. And don't forget the basics: put your email address and preferred phone number on the resume. Add the geographic location for each place of employment and add a 1-2 sentence definition of your previous employer. (\$45M manufacturer of widgets, etc)

Web boards report that 60 percent of job candidates lie or intentionally omit significant information on their resumes. More than 30% of resumes posted on job boards are

fraudulent. Keep that in mind; as these are your 'competitors'. This should represent a chance to do you what you want to do, so don't start a new relationship on a lie.

Finally, proof read your resume until it is perfect. The number one error: Manger, not manager!

Web 2.0 and your job search

Post your Resume

Post your resume on line and make sure to refresh/update your resume every 30 days so that it will come to the top of a prospective employer's search.

The top three:

[Monster.com](http://www.monster.com)
[hotjobs.com](http://www.hotjobs.com)
[careerbuilder.com](http://www.careerbuilder.com)

Also make an effort to find a job board that is specifically related to your industry. For example, techies should post on <http://www.DICE.com>.

Some additional resume posting resources:

www.Simplyhired.com
www.flipdog.com
www.craigslist.com

Clean up any persona you might already have online. If you have a My Space or a Facebook page take stock of them and ask "what do they really say about you from a prospective employer's point of view". Some prospective employers' Google their candidates. Check out any pictures you or others may have posted online and forgotten about, for example go to Google Images page (<http://images.google.com>), enter your name and hit "Google Search".

Don't forget to take a look at the email address you intend to use for your job search; what does it say about you? If need be, register for a new free Hotmail, Yahoo or Gmail address with which to conduct your job search. In short, if your email address is [thestudmaster@aol](mailto:thestudmaster@aol.com); change it!

Do use LinkedIn. It is the social networking site for professionals. Complete your profile, network within, search job postings and join any LinkedIn group that is specific to your career and educational background.

References

Make sure to call all of your references first and ask them if they wouldn't mind giving a reference for you. This is also a networking strategy, as you will be letting them know you actively seeking a new job. Try to get 8-10 good references. References should be professional only; former supervisors, peers, direct reports and perhaps a customer or two.

As indicated earlier take a list of references to every interview and when you are asked for references present your interviewer with your list. It is a nice touch and shows that you are organized.

If you have been getting to the reference check phase of the interview process and have not gotten an offer, you may have gotten a bad reference. Make sure your references actually know you, have observed your performance, your management style and your achievements. Ask each reference if they'd feel comfortable providing a positive reference for you. If they hesitate for a second; don't use them.

Network, Network, Network

Let all of your professional contacts and network know that you are looking for work, especially the ones that are currently working. This is because working individuals tend to get calls from recruiters and can refer you to any opportunities they may hear of. Also, it is estimated that two thirds (70 – 80%) of all jobs are filled by individuals who learned of them by word of mouth.

Don't forget that all industries have professional networking organizations, if not currently involved, get involved and volunteer for them.

Remember that the most important things to others are the fundamentals; health, wealth and children. Start networking with the philosophy that every human being is an opportunity to help or be helped. (Never Eat Alone by Keith Ferrazzi)

Try reaching out to your local chamber of commerce for job leads.

The Interview

To access an expanded list of general interviewing tips please visit our website (http://www.egretconsulting.com/website/interviewing_tips.htm) or reference the books listed above.

Practice your hand shake.

Get a good night's sleep.

Give yourself a pep talk and stay positive. Be on time to all interviews, turn off your cell phone and don't have any beverages on the way that could potentially spill and soil your suit. Remember to bring a copy of your resume and reference list.

Research the company's website and use online search engines such as Yahoo, Google and www.bizjournals.com to prepare 20 questions that are specific to that company. You may not need all 20 questions but this will prepare you and give you confidence.

Stalk the company not the interviewer. Don't tell an interviewer you "google'd" them, however, do practice M.O.P.F.I. - Taught by Dale Carnegie stands for Make Other People Feel Important. Here's a great interview question using MOPFI. See how many more you can think of and write them down! "You seem like the kind of person who could work anywhere you want. Why did you choose to work for ____ company. Let your interviewer tell you about themselves.

Some experts say that a first impression is 80% of the interview and you only have one chance to make that first impression. Also, keep the following statistic in mind:

According to a recent survey, over 90% of executives consider their assistants' opinions important when making hiring decisions; this is up from 60% five years ago. This means it's essential to be professional and friendly to everyone you encounter when on an interview. Make sure to get contact information for **everyone** you meet on an interview and send a **hand written** thank you to all of them. Gatekeepers don't often receive such thank you cards and this collateral could go a long way for you.

When asked for the qualities apart from ability that impress executives most during an interview; first was honesty, second was enthusiasm, and third verbal skills. (poll results from Job Hunting for Dummies®).

Be prepared to answer the tough questions "Tell me about your self?" and/or "What are your strengths/weaknesses?" Practice your short personal short story at a Toastmasters meeting, with your spouse or a friend until you are comfortable with the delivery.

Be sure to have the quantifiable details and stories of your best accomplishments fresh in your mind and be prepared to answer the question why did you leave your last position. For example, you can explain being downsized by saying "I was part of a 20% RIF (reduction in force.)"

Don't say anything negative about your previous employer and don't divulge any company secrets.

Remember to keep track of your job hunting expenses and check with your tax preparer.

From the Kiplinger site:

As long as you're searching for a new job in the same line of work, employment and outplacement agency fees are deductible, as are travel expenses if the trip is primarily to look for a new job. It doesn't matter whether you get that job. Even if you just need to drive across town for a job interview, you can deduct your mileage -- 58.5 cents a mile for travel on July 1 or later; 50.5 cents per mile for the first half of 2008. You can also deduct the cost of printing and mailing résumés.

<http://www.kiplinger.com/columns/ask/archive/2008/q0904.htm>
<http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p4128.pdf> (Tax Impact of Job Loss)

Salary Negotiation

In salary negotiation, often he who speaks first loses. Try to get the employer to give you the first number. ALWAYS act as if salary is the last thing you are interested in even if it's first. If pressed, give a salary range not a number.

Napoleon Hill expressed it the best in his book Think and Grow Rich:

I bargained with life for a penny,
And life would pay no more,
However I begged at evening,
When I counted my scanty score,

For Life is a just employer,
He gives you what you ask,
But once you have set the wages,
Why, you must bear the task.

I worked for a menial's hire,
Only to learn dismayed,
That any wage I had asked of Life,
Life would have willingly paid. **Anonymous**

Some Odds and Ends

- **Above all find a way to stay positive.**
- **Eat well**
- **Exercise**

- **Read**
- **Surround yourself with those you love and who love you**
- **Keep a to do list of errands and chores and stick to it**
- **Dream: Make a list of 100 of things you would love to do or accomplish (Many of these things can be simple things intended to do but never got around to it, like read a classic or try a new recipe.)**
- **Volunteer. Teach someone to read, give someone a ride to the doctor or take some can goods to the local food pantry.**

Take advantage of the Helper's High / Helper's Calm

http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/96047/an_examination_of_the_impact_volunteer.html

Helper's "High" was first described many years ago and has been also known as the Helper's "Calm". Described in psychology when psychologists found that volunteer service provides for a combination approach to health; encompassing both a physical benefit as well as an emotional or spiritual benefit to the volunteer. Volunteers often describe this euphoric feeling as being similar to the feeling one may feel following a strenuous physical work out. For those who feel a sense of stress, volunteer service may provide an avenue for relaxation, instilling the Helper's "High", while giving back to the community at the same time.

Final Thoughts:

Enjoy the ride. Interviewing can be exhilarating but can also be frustrating. It's a skill, so it requires practice.

Be strategic. Target the top 10-20 companies you'd like to work for and then carefully, and as broadly as possible market yourself into the top executives of those companies. Build a powerful presentation of your experience and desire to work for that company. Be thankful. This is a rare chance to learn and grow. Carpe diem!

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