

Self Assessment, Prioritization and Presentation

Take inventory of your most important skills. By applying each of those core skills, what have you *accomplished* in your current and/or previous roles? What have those accomplishments been worth to your employer? What awards, promotions, recognition and/or accolades have you received as a result?

On your resume and during interviews, state your accomplishments (vs. duties/responsibilities) in terms of \$, %, #, etc. - e.g., revenue increases, cost improvements, productivity gains, etc., delivered over “x” amount of time. This is the overall *impact* you made...the *value* you delivered. Be ready to discuss how you delivered it.

A long, successful career tends to offer many opportunities for achievement. Choose the *most* relevant, important and impressive **action** → **impact** → **value** statements for your resume – supported by metrics, awards and/or acknowledgments. Avoid superlatives, generalities and embellishments. Concise, bulleted lists are a good format.

Think about what you want to do, or can do. What criteria, prioritized in order of importance, will you use to evaluate and compare opportunities? If you look for jobs that align with your skills, experience and industry expertise, the process is more efficient and effective.

Based on your experience and interests, try to define and identify your *ideal* job. Then, make a prioritized list of *acceptable* jobs, followed by a prioritized list of *possibly acceptable* jobs. Being too “picky” yields far fewer options. The more flexible you are, the more options you’ll see. Options are good. So, be as flexible as possible as early as possible.

Marketing - Targeting and Planning

What are your Target markets and strategies? These would likely include direct competitors and/or alliances, indirect and peripheral competitors, those in similar markets, etc., in concentric circles. Who have recruiters called you about in the past? What other industries/companies might employ someone with your specific or general skills? In priority order, these are your most likely hot targets. List them, research them. Align your resume with these targets – individually. Selectively contact or seek referrals into these organizations. Keep trying via varying channels (Industry conferences, phone calls, e-mails, etc.). Prioritize these and keep following up.

Lights, Action, Sell! – Finding and Opening Doors

Contact senior executives, business unit decision-makers, etc...those who own the problems and challenges within their organizations. HR and Recruiting departments may not know of a business problem, challenge or upcoming need if it has not yet surfaced as a position requisition.

List and approach everyone you know or have known from previous jobs, your colleagues, customers, vendors, competitors, consultants, agents, etc. Include personal friends and acquaintances from college, church, neighborhood, kids’ network, lawyers, bankers, CPA’s, etc. Someone on this list may know your next boss. Telephone and follow up in writing with each of them. Request their help, ask for referrals...and ask them to keep their eyes/ears open on your behalf. Send a follow-up note to thank them for their help.

Think of yourself as a consultant and a salesperson, rather than a jobseeker. You must make a lot of calls, send a lot of follow-up emails, mingle at professional our services and professional value Look and listen for problems you can solve. As sure as the world turns, more than one person in your target field is worrying about a problem – right now...today – and it is one that you can solve. You must get yourself in front of the person with the problem and put on your “consultative sales” hat.

Call, e-mail, write, ask for introductions, etc. Sometimes executives will be logged-in on Sunday nights to prepare for the upcoming week. A timely and provocative e-mail might get their attention. Similarly, calls before/after normal business hours might result in a live “Hello,” instead of voice mail.

Ask for a meeting...not a job. It’s too easy to respond with “No, we don’t have any openings at your level,” or “Let me connect you with HR.” Conversely, no honest executive will deny having a few problems needing to be solved.

Exploratory Discussions

JFK urged citizens to “Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country.” The same applies to job interviews. Ask not about a job, but for an opportunity to talk about the industry/company trends, issues, opportunities. Ask about problems similar to those you’ve tackled in the past and/or feel qualified to address now. Discuss possible solutions.

This approach, in turn, sets you up for potential short or long term contract/project work. Obvious benefits of interim work include cash flow; firsthand auditions for longer term assignments and, perhaps, fulltime employment; longer runway to seek and find that more-perfect job; additional leverageable experience; expanded contact network; fill-in for employment gaps on resume, etc. You’ll get more meetings by seeking problems to solve than by asking for a job.

Consider volunteer positions to accomplish the same as above.

Approach every person you meet with a big picture view and a long-term attitude. While your need may be immediate, you are building your network for the long term. The person who turns you down today may be the one who calls with a promotion opportunity next year (or next week), if you make a great impression and demonstrate genuine interest in getting to know them. Try to help people as much or more than you want to be helped. Make deposits into their ‘emotional bank accounts’. Create good Karma. Follow-up, find a way to stay connected with everyone you meet or try to meet and avoid burning bridges. You will never regret this approach.

When speaking with an executive, ensure that you know what s/he wants to accomplish. It’s a fact that you will be judged by the quality of questions you ask, and how you respond to the answers.

Make sure you’re ‘selling’ what they need...and speak their language. CEOs speak of growth, EBIDTA, share price, etc. CFOs, Sales VPs and COOs each have their own focus areas, language and hot buttons.

Look in the mirror before entering an executive’s office. Ensure that your conservative suit, accessories and hair are in place, etc. Use some breath spray.

Engage in a few practice interviews. Go on a few live interviews for positions that, perhaps, are not quite as appealing to you. This will do wonders for your confidence and executive presence when the best interview opportunities arise. Demonstrate passion for the role and ensure that they know you want the job.

Conclusion – Some Parting Words

Have fun! Learn from everyone with whom you speak. Work it hard (make it a full-time job). Get a little better every day. And *never* give up. This is the beginning of the next chapter in your life. Make the best of every minute. Make this career transition one of the best things that has ever happened to you!

Once you find the right project/job, ensure that your success by understanding and exceeding expectations and delivering great value. Stay in touch with and continue to help your expanded network. Positive and enduring relationships are the heart and soul of any successful career.

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