

SEARCHING FOR A JOB

By Don Skipper, MS, MMAS, CCM, CECC, CEIC
CEO/President – Career Beginnings, Inc.

There is no avoiding the obvious...at some point in our careers we must search for a new position. When we do, most of us expect to start a second career doing something that will be productive and interesting. Yet, when we have to look for a job, we dread the job search before it begins.

There are many reasons for fear. We are most comfortable with the environment we have worked in and have little or no experience with the today's job market. And, of course, we all fear rejection.

According to Dave Griswold, Senior Consultant for Career Beginnings, Inc., an International Outplacement and Career Management company, "you can minimize rejection and greatly improve your chances of landing a good position by approaching your impending transition and job search as if it were a military campaign." That contrasts with what most people actually do, he added. The usual job-hunting process includes blasting out hundreds of non-targeted resumes, responding to classified ads and surfing the Internet to find openings and that Dave says, "is no system at all." The result of all that effort can be lots of rejection and a loss of critical self-confidence.

If the transition and job search were a military campaign, it would be carefully planned and skillfully executed. Supported by extensive military intelligence, a military campaign would have specific targets and strategic goals. Using the appropriate mix of forces, it would result in winning the campaign with minimum losses. Why can't a job search be more like a military campaign? It can.

KNOW YOUR PRODUCT-YOURSELF

The transition job search should embrace a well-defined process that begins with an assessment of your skills and strengths, as well as the interests and talents you can bring to the marketplace. You have a product to sell in this market: yourself. Know your product well. To land the career position you really want you must first determine what you really want. While you can do (and probably have done) many different things, there is probably not enough time left in your working life to try doing them all. Some things will be more rewarding than others, some will provide greater job satisfaction or more money or more opportunity. Other jobs will offer more travel, or less, while others will suggest greater job security. You must determine what mix of these considerations will give you the greatest satisfaction. In other words, you must determine what is going to be a "best fit for you", as well as determining the places you want to work. This may require you to do research into the marketplace to see what kinds of jobs meet your criteria, what kind of organizations have them and where they are located. It is far better to start the job search by knowing what you are looking for as opposed to taking something just because it is available.

Focus on what you want to do and what you can offer to an employer. Research what your counterparts make in similar positions. There are many salary surveys available on the World Wide Web. Professional associations, societies, Chambers of Commerce, and career planning associations can also be helpful in determining what is a good target compensation level.

RESEARCH THE MARKETPLACE

The next step is to develop a list of target companies. Again, research is crucial in assessing the job market. Research the jobs and organizations that interest you and learn how they are affected by economic conditions. The Internet can be a powerful tool in your research. Visit company homepages and request they provide you with a company report. Read publications that pertain to the job market. Subscribe to the professional or association journals to gather intelligence on what is happening in your target industry. Don't overlook smaller companies because that is where most of the economic growth

takes place. Note who the decision-makers are because these are the key individuals you will want to positively influence during your job search.

NETWORK TO UNCOVER OPPORTUNITIES

The next step in this process is to do some networking to uncover opportunities. Networking includes not just professionals already working in your target industry or organization, but also family, friends and even casual acquaintances. Don't overlook other contacts such as alumni associations or charitable groups.

One of our clients, a resort property manager named Ted, told us he had no network. He had been for the resort his entire adult life and didn't know any other property management organizations! So we asked him if he knew anyone who did know other property managers. As it turned out, both his wife, who was already working in Ted's target market, and his uncle both knew key decision-makers in firms in which Ted had interest. Ted began networking with his own family members and was quickly referred to others that led to discussions with key decision-makers in the very firms he had targeted for his search. Your networking may have to go three or four levels deep before you find the appropriate executives that would be useful in assisting you by providing referrals or information on their opportunities.

One key to successful interviewing is to always provide a positive attitude to your network contacts. Even if things are taking longer than you thought they would, you must mask your discouragement. A negative attitude will show up in an interview or telephone call. A positive attitude can help land a position.

A FEW WAYS NOT TO DO IT

According to Richard Nelson Bolles, author of the book series "What Color is Your Parachute?" the five least effective methods for finding a new career or job are:

- Mailing out resumes to employers at random (93 % of job hunters will not find the jobs that are out there – if they use only this method)
- Answering ads in professional or trade journals (a mere 7% success rate).
Answering non-local newspaper ads in other parts of the state or country (failure rate of over 90%)
- Answering the local classified ads (80% to 95% failure rate).
Going to private employment agencies for help (76% to 95% failure rate depending on salary level sought).

A FINAL THOUGHT

Financial planners and career advisors emphasize that those who have had the most success in switching career gears have been able to successfully transfer their skills and talents and launch a second career. It has been done thousands of times each year – but it isn't easy. Successful transition takes a lot of energy, planning and research, as well as good old fashioned hard work. But the rewards are worth it!



Donald B. Skipper has been associated with the executive transition process as a senior consultant for 22 years and is currently the CEO of Career Beginnings, Inc. He is a Credentialed Career Master, Certified Employment Interview Consultant, and Certified Electronic Career Coach. Don is an active member of the Professional Resume Writing and Research Association, the Association of Job Search Trainers, and the Career Master's Institute. He has just been nominated as Honorary State Chairman for the NRCC's Business Advisory Council. You may contact him via email at dskipper@nofeartransitions.us or by phone at 866-657-8466 / 770-922-6161.