



career hub

insider's guide to job search



Insider's Guide to Job Search

Introduction



Hi!

My name is Louise Fletcher and I am the Managing Editor and Co-founder of the Career Hub blog.

I founded Career Hub to provide job seekers with the best advice from experts in career counseling, resume writing, personal branding and recruiting.

The nature of blogging means that our experts can't always get into depth about their favorite subjects, and that's why I decided to ask them to contribute to this eBook.

Each writer has contributed an article on their individual area of expertise, and they're all pretty great!

From determining career direction, through resume writing, to networking and interview skills, each of our experts provide real-world strategies for success.

We hope you enjoy.

Please feel free to share this eBook freely and visit us at the Career Hub blog (www.careerhub.typepad.com). You can check in daily, subscribe to our RSS feed, or request daily email updates.

We'll see you there,

Louise Fletcher

Managing Editor
[Career Hub](http://www.careerhub.typepad.com)



Insider's Guide to Job Search

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Known as the "Career Assessment Goddess", Susan is an expert in using personal branding and career assessments to reveal exciting career and business choices. She is the only National Certified Career Counselor in the world with certifications as a personal branding strategist, career management coach, distance career counselor, and expert resume writer. These multiple credentials and her 21 years of experience represent the "cream-of-the-crop" for the careers industry. Her web sites include www.assessmentgoddess.com and www.resume-magic.com

Looking for That "Dream Job"?

By Susan Guarneri

The Components of a "Dream Job"

In a career-related article for CNN.com entitled "Is Your Dream Job Really Out There?" the author proposes that a dream job "embodies one or more elements that makes doing your job easier or better and can mean different things to different people."

Doing your job easier or better is totally in sync with the concept of finding a career (or job) that "fits" you, rather than the other way around. For example, using your **motivated skills** (skills that you are good at and really get invigorated about using) in a field that **interests** you (or that you are even passionate about), can contribute to a high-quality work experience.

If your career (or job) also allows you to function using the strengths and preferences of our **personality type**, that will not only make the job feel "easy" – natural and enjoyable – but, in all likelihood, will also produce a significantly better outcome. In this way YOUR dream job can also be beneficial for your employer who values results, productivity, innovation, sales, and the bottom line.

The final piece to a "dream job" is one that matches your **values**, your **goals** (the vision and purpose of your career and personal life), and your **non-negotiable needs**. This often is a more difficult match to make. For instance, while you may really enjoy your job (skills, interests, and personal style are all in sync with what you do day-to-day), it may be too demanding in terms of travel, so that you have little time to spend with your family.



Career Assessments Can Lead the Way

Career confusion and indecision, often resulting in career apathy, seem to be common – so common that the idea of a “dream job” may seem impossible to some. Yet, finding a career direction or focus is remarkably simple...it’s really all about YOU.

What makes you unique – what’s your “brand” (your authentic, differentiating characteristics)? What are your motivated skills, interests and passions, values and goals, personality type, and rock-bottom needs? All of these are components in exploring what YOU are about and how that can “sync up” with some exciting possible career choices.

Career assessments are one tool to assist in uncovering these clues about ourselves. They can be formal, standardized assessments (such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator or Strong Interest Inventory), informal (such as subjective self-reports and homework questions, or creative writing, journaling, or art), and even 360-degree feedback assessments (such as the 360 Reach personal branding assessment) that allow us to glimpse how others “see” us and our unique characteristics.

Career assessments (both standardized and informal types) can help to uncover the “dream job” elements and, along with on-target career coaching/counseling, can facilitate producing a benchmark against which job seekers can measure job possibilities. Getting clear on what exactly makes for a “dream job” allows you then to know what you are pursuing – and also when you get close (so close, in fact, that you may jump at the job opportunity). Remember the saying, “When you aim for the moon and fall short, you’re still among the stars!”

Assessments for Insight, Action + Attitude for Results

What are the elements of YOUR “dream job”? How will you know you have found it? Do the characteristics of your dream job change and grow as you do – or are they static? In a world where many say dreams are impossible, have you found your dream job?

Knowing all the elements of what makes you unique is the first step in leveraging you into the career of your dreams. With the right career assessments and the assistance of a well-qualified career counselor/coach,



you can "cut through the clutter" in your mind and gain career focus – insight into the career that meshes seamlessly with who you REALLY are.

Establishing your brand identity through your actions is the second step. Transforming insight into results requires communicating your differentiating factors to others clearly and consistently as you pursue your new career focus, living according to your stated values and needs, and integrating the meaningful goals in your life (both career and personal) into daily actions.

The attitude of success - facing down the skepticism within yourself and others, and meeting the fear of change with commitment, courage, and humor – is the final step in finding and keeping your "dream job".

Orison Swett Marden, founder of the modern success movement in America, and forerunner of "success authors" such as Napoleon Hill, Dale Carnegie, Norman Vincent Peale, Stephen R. Covey, Anthony Robbins, and Brian Tracy had this to say about the impossible: "All who have accomplished great things have had a great aim, have fixed their gaze on a goal which was high, one which sometimes seemed impossible."

He also said, "The golden opportunity you are seeking is in yourself. It is not in your environment; it is not in luck or chance, or the help of others; it is in yourself alone."

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Career Fear: Friend or Foe?

By Billie Sucher

Lately, I've heard the word "fear" creep into several client conversations -- "fear of getting fired; fear of the new supervisor; fear of the revised commission structure; fear of not finding a job; fear of relocating family; fear of starting a business." Many, many fears. The thing about fear, as it pertains to career transition, is that it serves in a dual role of ally and enemy; only you can discern which role prevails. Listed below are a few pointers to help you deal with fear, as friend or foe, in your career journey:

Face the fear. Name it. Claim it. Make it specific. I am afraid of this or I have a fear of that. Then, ask yourself this question -- is this fear helping me or hindering me in my career transition? Be honest. If your fear is supporting your efforts to move ahead, consider it your friend. If, on the other hand, your fear is hampering your ability to take needed steps, think about what you can do, starting today, to face your fear and make some needed changes. As one of my executive clients remarked, "you can't hold on and let go at the same time."

Envision. See yourself doing the very thing that you fear. Explore the gap between where you are now and where you would like to be. If a goal in your job search is to speak with 50 key decision-makers of manufacturing firms in the Midwest, and your fear precludes you from doing so, focus on a few easy, non-threatening steps you can take, starting today, to reach your target goal. Start small. Pick *one* name to contact. Call that one person and proceed from there. Continue to build on your small successes and gradually, you'll see yourself changing -- slowly, steadily, deliberately -- replacing fear with increased confidence while moving closer to your target goal.



Action. Take action to address, manage, and/or conquer your fear. For example, if your fear is public speaking and your recent promotion calls for group presentations, consider taking a class to help you improve. Act, don't react. Ask others for help, support, and guidance. Reach out. You'll be amazed at what you can learn and discover to help you better manage your fear and move forward.

Reward. Recognize your successes and reward yourself. Make your reward meaningful and simple; something you know you can do and will do to celebrate better management of your career fear. You **can** do it!

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Paul Copcutt is the successful personal brand coach for professionals who are struggling with an action plan and the confidence to land the six figure job they deserve. His clients become "Square Pegs" who stand out above the competition by getting noticed for the right reasons to be hired for the jobs they've always wanted. A Certified Personal Brand Strategist and specialist for Higher Bracket.ca, Canada's only \$100k+ job board, also top global Career & Training contributor to the Knowledge Forum at Marketing Profs.com and an active member of the Career Professionals of Canada.

Often quoted in The Globe & Mail he is an invited national speaker on the subject of personal branding and has appeared on Report on Business TV. Web site: www.personalbrandstrategist.com

The 7 P's of Personal Branding

by Paul Copcutt

".....or consider the notion, made popular in this magazine, of the Brand Called You. This signature story in 1997 argued that we should imagine ourselves as brands and manage our professional lives accordingly.

Often discredited, if not ridiculed, as unemployment climbed higher, that idea turns out to be every bit as relevant now as it was then. The difference, as author Tom Peters points out, is that in good times, the Brand Called You was a luxury.

Now as companies continue to discard employees like used Kleenex, you have no choice but to actively market your personal brand. No one else will do it for you."

John A Byrne – Editor – Fast Company, March 2004

The World of Careers & Job Searching

Less than 30 years ago we were told that our career would be spent with one company from leaving school to retirement now our career is spent with numerous companies in more than one industry.

Less than 20 years ago we were told that the biggest challenge in the 21st century would be what to do with our leisure time ... now our challenge is maintaining a successful career and a work life balance.



Less than 10 years ago we were told that we were entering a long period of prosperity and unlimited opportunity ... now our economies are recovering, but people have not made the career moves that they have wanted to.

Less than 5 years ago we were told due to the retiring boomer generation the shortage for talent would be so great that we could name our price ... now the big job news is off-shoring and delayed retirement for many.

There is one thing that we can all be certain of over the next 5, 10, 20 and 30 years - the job market and how our careers are defined will be in constant change.

We cannot necessarily predict where the world will be, but we can take greater control of our careers and position our success through personal branding.

Branding

We are exposed more and more to the power of branding, it is estimated that the average Canadian is bombarded with over 3,000 different advertising messages everyday! Companies spend millions on that very advertising because in the past it has been proven to;

- Support premium pricing
- Extend product lines
- Increase company valuations
- Enable survival in downturns better
- Even attract better talent to organizations

Celebrities are now also heavily involved in the branding process through the products they endorse and their own 'persona's' that are presented to us as brands - you just need to look at Martha Stewart, Jack Welch or Tiger Woods to see the power of celebrity branding.

So Why Not Personally Brand?

William Arruda, the personal branding guru, best sums up personal branding as "Clearly communicating the unique promise of value that you have to offer"



It helps you to clarify and communicate differences and specialties and use those qualities to guide your career. Also in understanding your strengths, skills, passions and values and using to separate yourself from your competitors.

What to Consider- The 7 P's of Personal Branding

1. Personal

Your values and passions, what values impact you and what drives you?

2. Perception

What are your attributes? Develop a focus group, ask for input, collate response and consolidate.

3. Potential

What else can you uncover? What other hidden talents do you possess?

4. Positioning

Who are your target audience? What segments? Who are your competitors in the job market?

5. Performance

Can you and have you delivered? Develop a Personal Brand Statement

6. Packaging

How does your resume look? cover letter? portfolio? How do you present yourself? How are you priced?

7. Planning

Plan your professional path. Promote you and re-brand where necessary.

What Can You Do Right Now As You Job Search?

One of the strongest and most effective personal brand tools is your portfolio. If you do not have one you are missing a fantastic opportunity in every meeting and interview to showcase your brand.



Start to put one together including all relevant documentation that are good examples of your brand. Invest in a presentation folder that keeps all the documents together in either chronological or project order.

Include examples that will highlight:

- Your unique skills – what have people said about you in reviews or letters/e-mails of praise. Or alternatively look to use specific tools to gather external feedback on your attributes and strengths, such as the 360 personal branding tool.
- Your achievements – certificates, letters of praise and thanks, actual sales figures or other specifics make for great show and tell in an interview.
- Your involvement in influential projects - show examples of where you have been utilized in or led a project or job and made a difference. If you have specifics through measurable results - \$ or %'s include these as they are really golden.

Bottom line is that as the quote says “..... ***you have no choice but to actively market your personal brand. No one else will do it for you.***” You cannot afford to rely on others to control or direct your career anymore, and you have to look at developing and nurturing your brand for job search and career success.

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Deb Dib, America's Power Coach for Corporate Leaders, empowers CEOs and very senior executives to build great careers, mold great companies, have some fun, and even change the world a bit! A career professional since 1989 and a pioneer in executive branding and branded resumes, Deb holds eight certifications, is a contributor to 30 career books, and serves on the BOD of Career Masters Institute. Visit www.executivepowercoach.com; www.executivepowerbrand.com, or www.advantageresumes.com.

Executive Branding Once a Novelty, It's Now a Necessity in the Fight for Top Executive Jobs

*By Deb Dib, CCM, CCMC, NCRW, CPRW, CEIP, JCTC
Certified Personal Brand Strategist*

People have been talking about personal brands since Tom Peter's ground breaking article "The Brand Called You" appeared in Fast Company magazine in 1997 (<http://www.fastcompany.com/magazine/10/brandyou.html>). Since then the world of branding has exploded, with experts and novices alike extolling the virtues of personal branding.

Human branding has become a force in personal and career development because the process and outcome of personal branding works. It authenticates and clarifies the value of an individual and empowers that individual to be more, to achieve more, and to contribute more—with an empowered enthusiasm and vigor that attracts success, satisfaction, and happiness.

In fact, in the changing world of work, the power of branding may be most visible in today's most successful executives.

What is the difference between a personal brand and an executive brand?

A personal brand is formed by your authentic worth and attributes—in many ways it is timeless and unchanging. Like a personal brand, an executive brand projects an authentic and unique promise of value. However an executive brand extends beyond the personal. An executive brand is born of a personal brand, but is specifically tied to unique business value.



An executive brand projects a clear and *marketable* value proposition, one that is often coupled with a history of change management, innovation, turnarounds, corporate contribution, thought leadership, and social responsibility as well as profit generation and delivery of shareholder and stakeholder value.

An executive brand is your face in the business world, your differentiator, your voice when you are not there, and your advertisement of absolute authentic value. It is your entree to top jobs and top compensation. It is what powers your career.

Your executive brand combines your personal and business attributes with how you use them in the marketplace. Your executive brand is driven by market reality and market need. Consumer brands change to meet the changing trends and requirements of consumers, and so must your executive brand, remaining flexible—in pro-action or re-action to critical changes in the marketplace.

Why identify and leverage an executive brand?

Branded executives are valuable commodities—recognized, coveted, and courted by the corporate world—much like the way unique products are known, desired, and purchased in the consumer marketplace. Branded executives are visible and respected leaders who project clear and distinctive executive brands—recognizable and unique promises of the value they bring to their companies, their stakeholders, and their world.

Today's successful and innovative leaders understand the power of branding and its ability to help them out-compete for the best jobs and best compensation. They know that branding is no longer an option in high-stakes executive careers where branded leadership, branded communications, and branded career management are critical tools for career growth and career control.

What can executive brand management do for executive careers?

The most successful executives are adept and consistent brand managers—they continually define their brand, and then communicate their brand in all



they write, speak, and do. And they surround themselves with environments and items that reflect that brand in their work lives and personal lives.

Your well-managed executive brand prepares you to out-compete at every level, stay visible, and keep career momentum going. An executive brand diminishes confusion and uncertainty and maximizes freedom and control—all based on your authentic value.

As a successful executive, you will have experienced times when you needed to jump-start an unexpected job search, dig into career management, or differentiate yourself as a top contender for a promotion. And you likely felt uneasy and unprepared.

You are not alone. Most executives are exactly like you—superb at what they do, but confused by the intricacies of high-stakes executive career management. This is where executive branding can be immensely helpful in keeping you constantly prepared for whatever the economy and executive arena throws at you!

Can executive branding help in resumes and job search?

Branded executives know that their career communications must be branded, refined, and reworked to attract and maximize every individual opportunity—one size fits all does not exist in successful executive career management.

They know that just as in executive branding, their resume, career collaterals, networking pitches, and interview content must show leadership, tell a marketing story about vision and innovation blended with practical solutions and bottom-line / profit-building performance, demonstrate personality and management style, and prove a management team and corporate culture fit.

When preparing to write your resume and launch your job search ask yourself the following questions. Then use your answers as the foundation for branded career development activities.

- What parts of my job do I love? Do my best accomplishments reflect that enjoyment?
- What parts of my job do I do well, but not enjoy? Do I wish to be hired to do those again?



- What is my management style? How do I interact with my team, core management group, or BOD?
- What do my peers and staff routinely say about me?
- Do I have visibility in the marketplace, press, media, etc?
- What are my top-five business skills and my top-five leadership skills?
- What have I done that best demonstrates each of those skills with bottom-line, strategic, profit-building, or profit-enhancing performance?
- Can I compose “challenge-action-result” success studies of each of these and then speak of them in a concise, enthusiastic, and compelling manner?
- Do my accomplishments and skills have value in my target market?
- Can I answer the question “Why should I hire you?” with a compelling value proposition that makes me irresistible?

What is a value proposition?

A value proposition is the “what happens” when you do what you do. It is the result that you deliver to your company when you use the skills and strengths that form your brand. A brand’s strength is determined by the marketplace—and so is the strength of your value proposition. Be sure that your value proposition is one that is relevant, even critical, to your target market.

When you think about your value, don’t think in generalities. Put a number to your outcomes whenever possible. Numbers speak louder than words. They create credibility and desire.

A value proposition that says, “I revitalize aging brands, recapture marketshare, and typically deliver 50+% revenue gains.” will likely attract an interview. A brand statement that says, “I revitalize aging brands.” is too vague.



Review your answers to the above questions, identify themes, and construct your overriding and unique value proposition and sub-sets of “value-adds.” It may help you to imagine an organizational chart with you at the top (value proposition / presidential message) heading a core group of direct reports with distinct supportive rolls (value-adds).

Developing a branded resume with a strong value proposition is tough (the better you are at what you do, the tougher it is!) and it may help you to work with a team of supportive personal and professional resources—your team might include mentors, family, trusted colleagues, a brand strategist, an executive coach, and a resume consultant.

Many successful executives routinely assemble such a team—a personal board of directors—a dream team of trusted professionals who help guide them, support their efforts, and give them the listening environment and honest feedback that is critical to branding and career management.

What are key strategies for branded executive career planning?

Even while you are engaged in a job search, you must also be engaged in long-range planning so that your new position “fits” your brand and your ultimate career goal.

Once in your new executive position, focus on strategic contributions that will support your long-term goals and radar-screen activities. Document your contributions so that you have compelling success studies for compensation reviews, resume updates, media kits, bios, and interviews.

Include these strategies for branded career planning in your executive brand toolbox:

- Continuous visibility-building activities and “give to get” networking.
- Resume and portfolio updates with new, branded success stories.
- Personal performance review / promotion planning.
- Strategic entry, situation-specific, and career planning coaching.
- Personal fulfillment activities for on-brand work-life balance and



happiness.

- Continuous refining of your executive brand and value proposition.
- On-going market research on the key companies and players in your industry.
- Continual practicing of your branded 30-second elevator speech.

How do you discover *your* executive brand?

Every executive has a brand, but not every executive *knows* he has a brand. Knowledge is power and discovering, defining, and refining your brand is a critical step towards reaching the success you crave and deserve.

Start thinking about the ways you are unique and valuable. Then decide if you will benefit from the expertise of a certified personal brand strategist, if you'd like on-line training, or if you prefer to read one of the many books on personal branding and begin the process yourself.

The executive who knows his value, actively manages his brand, and is clear about his value is an executive who is poised for accomplishment, success, and fulfillment—for himself, and for his company. At Career Hub we want that executive to be you!

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The “What’s In It For Me” Resume

By Louise Fletcher

Are you frustrated by the response to your resume? Do you sometimes feel as though you’re sending it into a black hole? If your resume isn’t generating interviews, I have good news. It’s not you, it’s your resume!

Companies only hire a new executive when they have a compelling business need, so when recruiters, C-Level executives, or board members review your resume, they want to know whether you can address that need. Will you solve their brand awareness problems? Will you gain the media exposure they need? Can you revamp their trade show presence? Can you resuscitate their flagging advertising efforts? In other words, they are asking: *what’s in it for us?* They are usually disappointed, however, because most marketing executive resumes do not answer that all-important question.

This presents you with an outstanding opportunity to gain a competitive advantage – if you rework your resume so that it clearly shows your ability to meet the needs of potential employers, your phone will start to ring. If you’d like to know how your resume stacks up, check it against my five rules of resume writing: if it’s missing even one of these elements, you have work to do:

1. Tell them what they want to know

Don’t begin your resume with an objective statement that describes your desires and career goals. Even the most caring CEO simply doesn’t care what you are looking for. (Hopefully) he’ll care about your needs once you work for him, but for now, it’s all about him! So, replace the objective statement with a powerful summary that shows how you will add value to his company. Show him that there is a clear fit between your skills and his needs by describing your value to his business.



2. Focus, Focus, Focus

It's critical to communicate a clear and succinct message about the value you bring – and to target that message to your target positions/companies. This may mean that you need more than one resume. For example, if you have strong knowledge of more than one industry, you should consider writing different resumes for each one. This allows you to clearly demonstrate your value by emphasizing the aspects of your expertise and experience that match the employer's needs, and minimizing those that don't. Your resume focus should be consistent throughout. If you state in your summary that a key strength is your ability to launch successful new products, then give examples throughout your resume. Eliminate any information that doesn't support your clear and compelling message.

3. Show Them the Money!

You must present evidence that you add value. Too many job seekers focus on job responsibilities, but describing achievements is much more powerful. Job responsibilities are simply those things we are *supposed* to do. Achievements show what we actually *did* and they are a powerful way to show your ability to make a difference. If your resume shows that you have increased brand awareness, boosted lead generation, or developed effective campaigns, people will want to meet you. Consider these real examples from recent resume clients:

- ▶ Developed brand and marketing strategy that propelled a 500% sales increase in only six years - established the company's first marketing department, developed product positioning and led all strategic planning.
- ▶ Boosted brand awareness after corporate merger and name change - increased press coverage 500% in one year by partnering with PR agencies to aggressively target broadcast markets in the US and Europe.
- ▶ Doubled the sales of a flagship brand from \$1.5 billion to \$3.0 billion in three years on a product that already had 51% market share - spearheaded cross-functional effort to identify new customer segments and penetrate managed-care markets.



Note how specific these accomplishments are and how impressive they sound. Anyone reading these descriptions would be excited to meet these candidates ... but none of these accomplishments were mentioned on the clients' original resumes. Go back now and make sure that you have included the significant and impressive things you've done, so that your readers know about the value you bring.

When possible, quantify your accomplishments. If you mention that your integrated marketing campaign boosted sales, be sure to say what the improvement was. If the information is confidential, use percentages or say "approximately.." to avoid giving away company secrets. If you can't quantify, try to describe the business impact – for example:

- Increased sales and market share for XYZ company despite fierce competition from market-leader by creating an innovative web-based marketing campaign.

4. It's not what you did, it's why you did it!

In order to really appreciate your achievements, the reader needs context. If you tell the reader that you "increased brand awareness by 12%," he may be quite impressed, but if you tell him that you "reversed a four-year decline and increased brand awareness 12% in the first year," he can now truly appreciate your accomplishment. Try to provide context in each position description instead of just describing your responsibilities. For example, your position description may begin with:

Recruited by CEO to help the company adapt to explosive growth. Charged with improving troubled partner relations and initiating proactive business development practices

Or:

Promoted within 10 months of joining the company and challenged to revitalize this stagnant product line.

This opening gives the reader an understanding of the challenges you faced when you came into the position – and he or she can now appreciate



the significance of the fact that you improved partner relations or boosted sales.

5. They will judge the book by its cover, so make sure it's a good one.

We'd all like to think that people will carefully read and evaluate our resumes – giving careful consideration to the words we spent so long writing ... but mostly, they won't. Instead, they'll skim quickly. You know this because you have done it yourself. And, in the same way that you quickly form an impression about an interview candidate based on the way she is dressed, you form impressions about people based on the appearance of their resume. This means you need to dress your resume in a great suit. Think Armani ... stylish, sleek and simple. A strong resume layout will communicate professionalism and seniority even before one word has been read.

Your resume must paint a vivid picture for potential employers. If you establish a clear focus, lead with a powerful summary, describe your accomplishments, provide context, and package it well, potential employers won't have to ask: *what's in it for me?*

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Gretchen Ledgard and Zoë Goldring co-own [JobSyntax](#), a recruitment and job search strategy firm specializing in guiding software engineers through their career search and assisting employers in hiring software engineers. Gretchen and Zoë are alumni of the Microsoft Corporation where they recruited software engineers for the company's international, college, and industry recruiting teams and managed the marketing programs that attracted the software industry's best technical talent to the company. You can

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An Alternative to the Objective Statement

By Gretchen Ledgard and Zoë Goldring

Resumes are still the common currency used by jobseekers and reviewed by employers to open doors to various career opportunities. Regrettably, many professionals are given advice to build their resumes around standard elements which may not always be right for every jobseeker. One such element, which is often outdated and problematic, is leading off the resume with an objective statement. In this brief article, we provide you with an alternative to the traditional objective statement which can help your resume, and your accomplishments, stand out in a crowd.

Typically, the objective statement is meant to provide a brief summary of the position you seek and the main skills you can offer an employer; the provided information forms a first impression with the reader. Invariably, jobseekers find this section to be most the difficult to master when drafting a resume, and unfortunately, most objective statements fail to catch the attention of a recruiter or future employer.

How can you craft a winning objective statement? One potential option is to forgo it altogether.

As experienced recruiters, we have reviewed thousands of resumes and have rarely seen an objective statement worth its space on the page. The problem is that most jobseekers give their objective statements a personal angle by discussing professional desires but omit reasons as to why employers should hire them. In these cases, the objective statement does not achieve its intended goal.



Instead, consider using this area for a “professional summary,” a synopsis of your career highlights and the key skills you bring to the job. A professional summary is similar to an objective statement, but it focuses more on what you offer a potential employer versus what you seek in a position. The summary also provides an opportunity to highlight your most employer-friendly skills upfront.

To ensure your professional summary achieves its goal:

- **Distill your highlights.** A professional summary is, in essence, an executive review of your career. If a recruiter or hiring manager reviewed your resume, what are the top three or four points you’d want to stand out? These highlights should serve as the basis of your statement.
- **Expand beyond one sentence.** Most jobseekers think that an introduction should only be one sentence long; however, it’s important to showcase your highlights. Instead, you may find more success in crafting two to four sentences which utilize action verbs and describe the qualifications you can offer an employer.
- **Discuss your “soft skills.”** We work in the software engineering industry in which jobseekers mistakenly believe if they can write code, they can easily find a new job. The same belief holds true for other highly skilled industries. In fact, more and more employers desire candidates who can do more than just apply their trained skills to a job. Qualities such as teamwork, leadership, and interpersonal and critical thinking skills can be just as important. Make use of the professional summary area on your resume to highlight these less technical or taught attributes.
- **Customize your experience.** A professional summary does not have to be “one size fits all.” If you plan to post your resume online via your website or a job board, create a general professional summary that will be attractive to many types of employers. If you plan to target your search to a particular employer or position, create a customized summary that specifically addresses what you have to offer and how those qualities match what the company seeks in a new employee.



As an example, below are two fictitious versions of an objective statement and a professional summary, written for a software engineer. Note the impact that the professional summary makes in providing information about the candidate's accomplishments and how these statements might be seen as benefits to a potential employer. In contrast, the objective statement falls flat in describing the jobseeker's attributes and future contributions to the organization.

Objective Statement

To obtain a full time .NET developer position for a company where opportunities for advancement to senior management are available.

Professional Summary

- Recognized pioneer in the development of .NET-based, social networking software
- Accomplished technical presenter and communicator with demonstrated experience winning over tough audiences
- Established technology manager with a background in leading organizations of 100 or more employees

The key to winning your dream job often starts with your resume: a first impression of your skills and accomplishments to a future employer. The important take-away is that you don't always have to follow staid practices in formatting a resume. Being creative in your approach to introducing your value to a new employer will often win you more call backs than sticking to an old-fashioned template. In this case, instead of limiting yourself to vague and often times ignored objective statements, ensure your resume stands out and provides a future employer a rich and clear view of your experience by using a professional summary.

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Liz Benuscak, CPRW, JCTC is Executive Director of [Bi-Coastal](#), a full service firm specializing in career marketing for Sales, Marketing and Operations Executives. A designated Expert for [TheLadders.com](#), Benuscak has been quoted in *The LA Times*, *The Chicago Tribune* and *The Miami Sun Times* and has appeared on national television as Career Expert for *Better Homes and Gardens Magazine*. A contributor to *Mc Graw Hill's 101 Best Resume Series*, she is distinguished among the top career experts in the US.

Action-Pack Your Resume

By Liz Benuscak

When you prepare using the C-A-R formula (Challenge-Action-Result) you action-pack your resume, cover letter, and interview, filling them with accomplishments designed and refined to impress your target audience.

Including these in your resume and emphasizing them in your interview will be among the most critical components of a successful job search.

To create this type of content for your resume, you need to focus on accomplishments, **not** attributes or strengths. We're looking for the tangible results of your work. What did you **face**?

What did you **do**? Use as much quantifiable information — figures, percentages, etc., as possible.

For Example: Reached annual sales goal in five months, ultimately achieving 230% of \$6 million annual quota.

For the purposes of exploring these scenarios present each accomplishment or project like so...

C-A-R Format for a Strong Accomplishment or Project

Situation: Job seeker is an IT Management Consultant skilled in process improvements and producing rapid and sustained business growth.

Challenge: The subsystem was in dire straits since it had a budget of \$600K, actuals of \$400K, was estimated at 20% complete, and the leader quit. The subsystem provided the communications for the entire network of 66 VAX computers. It was a critical path for the project.



Action taken: Gathered the team together, reviewed the requirements, and re-engineered the partition of subroutines (design) and assignments. Undertook the design and code for 3 CSCs out of 8. Revised the schedule, got overtime approved for all staff, and released revised delivery dates.

Result: Wrote 12,000 lines of assembly code, and conducted a week-long design review (CDR) with customer. The CDR was a complete success, with no critical defects, and very satisfactory marks from the customer (US Air Force and Aerospace Corporation). The project completed with actuals of \$800K, but in time for the dependent subsystems to use it. The completed system was delivered successfully at Offutt AFB. Harris received follow-on contracts for the subsystem which carried on for another four years.

Importance: This system was the cornerstone for years of maintenance sales and enhancement contracts and was of enormous importance to US Air Force.

How this was presented in the resume:

- Successfully wrote 12,000 lines of assembly code for a subsystem which provided communications for an entire network of 66 VAX computers which resulted in no critical defects, and very satisfactory marks from the US Air Force allowing company to procure four years of contracts for the subsystem.

See how powerful accomplishments can be when you give the reader the challenge, action and result all in one bullet point?

Now it's your turn... develop 3-5 C-A-R stories for each of the positions you've held in the last 6 years. Develop 2-3 stories for positions held between 6 and 10 years ago. It's not necessary to go further back unless you held positions that are more relevant to your career goals than your most recent positions.

Remember to use the format challenge, action, result as you write your stories – **and quantify wherever possible!**

Using Action Words

Once you've developed your stories it's time to change them into bullet points for your resume. For maximum effectiveness, it's important to start each bullet with an action verb. Remember that your resume will initially be



skimmed quickly before the decision-maker determines whether to read more. Your goal is to convey a sense of action, impact and movement – if you do this, your resume will make it onto the “interesting” pile for review in more detail.

Here’s an example of how much more effective bullets can be when you lead with impact and action.

The job seeker originally wrote:

- Handle transfer of copy test from paper//pencil data collection to electronic version and tested 30 advertisements in a side-by-side comparison.

This was rewritten as:

- Cut overhead costs in half by moving copy testing methodology, at the corporate level, from paper/pencil data collection to electronic version. This comprehensive project tested over 30 advertisements in a side-by-side comparison.

Summary

When providing information to a potential employer it’s critical that you tell not only the result of the actions, but also the initial challenge you faced and the means by which you accomplished your goals. Honing these stories into a clear, concise, and compelling message will serve you in both the resume development and interviewing process. Keep these points in mind:

- Focus on accomplishments, **NOT** attributes or strengths (attributes and strengths discovery belongs in the brand development stage)
- Provide tangible results of your work.
- Answer these questions: What did you **FACE**? What did you **DO**? What was the **RESULT**?

So go and answer the questions!

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Heather Mundell is a certified professional coach and founder of [Dream Big Coaching Services](#), a national life and career coaching business specializing in helping professionals to find career happiness and providing interview and job search coaching. Heather blends her extensive individual coaching experience with a background in corporate HR leadership to help her clients reach their full potential. She has published numerous articles online at major career sites such as [Jobbankusa.com](#), [CareerBuilder.com](#) and [AOL.com](#). Email Heather at heather@dreambigcoaching.com

Beyond Google: How To Check Out A Company Online

By Heather Mundell

If you're interviewing for jobs or are just starting to think about other organizations you might want to work for, you'll need to do some research.

Research sounds about as much fun as preparing your taxes, but the good news is that you can do a lot of it from home using your Internet connection and your library card number. Many larger U.S. library systems provide access to its card holders to Internet databases for researching companies. Also, chances are if you're a college or community college student, faculty member or staff, your institution's library offers remote access as well.

Obviously public companies are much easier to find information about than private companies, since they are required to file particular information with the SEC. However, if a private company is large enough, there will be information on it available somewhere.

Databases on business and finance that you can access through your library system include ABI Inform Trace & Industry, Business & Company Resource Center, Business & Industry, Mergent Online (public companies only), and ReferenceUSA.

It's a good idea to read what has been written about the companies you are researching. Two databases of magazine and newspaper articles that can help you do that are Onefile and Proquest. Visit www.bizjournals.com to search the archives and view full-text articles of this group of over 40 regional business journals.

Here's a quick guide to where to go for particular kinds of information:



- To find out basic information on a company, try ReferenceUSA.
- For a quick overview of a company, try Business & Company Resource Center or Mergent.
- For information to prepare for an interview, try Business & Company Resource Center, Mergent, Onefile, or Proquest
- For a company's annual report, try Mergent or that company's website.

If you live in an area whose library doesn't offer access to databases from your Internet connection, you can visit them in person. While you're there, you can conduct even more focused research by looking at Lexis Nexis Corporate Affiliations, International Directory of Company Histories, Standard & Poor's Industry Surveys or Ward's Business Directory of U.S. Private and Public Companies. Ask a business librarian to walk you through these resources.

There are many different ways you can find out about a company - through its own website, through Google or another search engine, talking with your friends who work there, and using the databases listed above. The information you bother to collect and sort through will help you enormously when you prepare for job interviews and when you decide whether a company deserves your talent. And I promise it will be a far more interesting process than preparing your taxes!

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Jan Melnik, MRW, CCM, CPRW, is president of Absolute Advantage, a resume-writing and job-search coaching practice in Connecticut, which she has operated for 23 years. She assists clients coast-to-coast with career strategies and resume services. Jan is the careers expert on Money Matters radio, syndicated nationwide. The author of five entrepreneurial books, she has been featured on television and in numerous periodicals. Her newest book is Executive's Pocket Guide to ROI Resumes and Job Search, co-authored with Louise Kursmark. Learn more at www.janmelnik.com

Exceptional Strategies for Executive Networking SUCCESS

By Jan Melnik, MRW, CCM, CPRW

Most experts agree that networking remains the absolutely best way for executives to make the right connection for their next gig. Statistically, networking can account for 70%, 80%, or even higher levels of job-search success for professionals. I've boiled down the keys to effective executive networking to **7 SUCCESS Strategies**:

Strategically position yourself. Make sure your accomplishment-oriented resume is polished, action-powered, and ready to support your active job search and candidacy. Create a personal networking card (in addition to all contact information, include salient keywords) and a single-page networking (or abbreviated) resume—plus a single-page bio. These will serve you effectively in different scenarios.

Unlock the proverbial hidden job market. Effective networking taps into this and creates opportunities for employment that may only be on the preliminary drawing board. Consider using formal job-search networking groups to augment your 24/7 informal networking plans. Typically meetings are held weekly and opportunities are afforded for senior executives to network, share job leads, and develop friendships and contacts with peers in a given community.

A networking group provides a forum for regularly meeting with as many people as possible outside your *known* networking group. Invest your time in networking groups and reap the benefits of additional leads, opportunities to refine your networking message and interview skills, and the support of other



executives. Contacts you make through these groups can very effectively complement the connections you'll make through all other job-search efforts.

Create interest and excitement; capture attention, referrals, and leads. Be sure to have a dynamic 60-second "elevator speech" ready to go that communicates in clear, memorable language who you are. Determine the best approach for you. For most, a brief phone call followed by an e-mailed resume (and possibly bio or abbreviated resume) works best—then a follow-up call to establish an in-person meeting.

Capitalize on each networked connection by providing half a dozen or so key "value-add" statements for what you offer and can deliver ... make it easy for someone to advance you as a candidate. The key question to answer: "Tell us a little about yourself."

1. Who are you professionally?
2. What type of job are you seeking?
3. What is your current or past relevant work experience?
4. What one or two skills distinguish your performance?

Mention specific companies and industries/disciplines in which you're interested ... remember, the more specific you are about what you want, the more opportunity others have to help you. This means doing your homework before any planned networking opportunity and making a list of companies where you would like a contact.

Energize the networking process by developing strategic search lists. Develop a contact list of at least 125 individuals to whom you'll reach out. Focus first on your primary contacts (your "A" list)—people involved in the industries you're interested in, key vendor/supplier relationships, trusted professionals (i.e., your financial planner, CPA, attorney). Then build a "B" list that expands beyond the initial sphere of professionals to include friends, alumni contacts, friends-of-friends, and the like. Your "C" list would include everyone else who comes to mind—people you don't know as well (less-known parents of your kids' friends, your mechanic, connections you make in the airport).

Systematically target each and every contact, do appropriate follow-up, and manage the process methodically and tenaciously. An accelerated search means making at least 25 networking calls/appointments a week



(hence five weeks to work through that initial list of 125 contacts).

Prepare a hit list of key questions to use in opening the networking door: What are the best professional associations you belong to? Who do you know in aerospace manufacturing in the Mid-Atlantic region? Tell me a little about the business culture in San Diego. You have so many contacts in your industry—I'd value your suggestions about the best companies to approach. You're respected in New York's financial community—what are your thoughts about the proposed merger of A and B? Who do you know at DEF Manufacturing? Ask direct questions that will produce key information—not yes/no responses.

Remember the goal of networking: Generate hotter leads, inside information, and strategic contacts (not necessarily an actual opportunity). Conclude every meeting and phone appointment with an attempt to gain additional contacts and new introductions. If someone offers a direction or lead (even if it yields nothing immediately), write or e-mail a professional thank-you note. Report back to your referring contact with your success stories.

Synchronize your efforts with diligent effort and keen attention to detail. Track all your data in an organized fashion. As the weeks unfold, it's easy to forget who you were to follow up with without a system. Stay on top of your search and networking efforts by committing 40 hours a week (if unemployed). Make sure you're not spending too much time in conducting due diligence (eight hours a day on your PC is not a productive use of your time: Making phone calls for four or five hours a day—and meeting with leads the balance of each day is!). Remember that the more contacts you make, the more quickly you'll achieve the best results. My clients have proven to me that there's a direct correlation between job-search success and executives who develop (and use!) strong networking skills. **Prepare to be successful!**

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[George Blomgren](#) has more experience as a job seeker than he likes to think about. He's also been responsible for recruiting, interviewing and hiring. He's a widely published author on career development and job seeking. He works for a national network of employment Web sites, where every day he gets to see what works and what doesn't. George likes motorcycling, the band Yes and vegetables that start with the letter "a".

You Got Chocolate In My Peanut Butter: Combining Networking & Online Job Hunting For Better Results

By George Blomgren

Peanut butter and chocolate. This combination was almost unthinkable before Reese's put the two together. And the world has never been the same since. (OK, that's a bit of an exaggeration.)

Most job seekers are aware that networking is a powerful technique for finding work. And, of course, almost all job seekers today use the internet to find and browse opportunities. But, consider: if you have used these techniques, you are probably well aware that each has a major weakness...

Networking. For all the great qualities that make networking the number one choice of many career coaches and mentors, most forms of networking have one serious flaw: nothing about the process "pre-qualifies" the people you're talking to or meeting with to ensure they have job openings.

Employment Web Sites. An awesome tool for seeing who's hiring (and what specific opportunities that may have open) but an unfortunately impersonal way to approach them.

If you stop and think about these two powerful but flawed job seeking tools, you may see where I'm going with this. Consider using employment Web sites to focus your efforts where opportunities exist, while tapping into the power of networking — that's right: chocolate and peanut butter in harmony, creating a powerful new synergy.

Granted, this isn't always as easy as I make it sound. Let's consider two scenarios. The easy scenario, and the typical scenario.



Easy — You hop onto your favorite local employment Web site, such as MilwaukeeJobs.com. Searching by category for the sales job of your dreams, you find it — at the respected Acme Dynamite company. “Excellent!” you exclaim, knowing that your uncle is a senior marketing executive at Acme, and he knows that you are an excellent sales woman.

Typical — Same circumstances, but your uncle drives an ice cream truck and you don't know anybody at Acme. A show stopper? Sure, if you let it be one. Granted, this will be challenging, but here are two ideas for using networking techniques to approach this opportunity you identified via the web.

1. Work your network. Send an email to everyone you know asking them if they know anyone at Acme. If you haven't been working your network all along, you may need to position yourself. Before they go to bat for you with someone they know who works at Acme, you may need to remind some individuals on the “fringe” of your personal network (old neighbors, church members, the bowling team from your bachelor days) that you are a proven salesman with impeccable credentials.
2. Figure out who the hiring executive is and target him or her. No, I don't mean stalking. Not in the conventional sense. Let's consider an example. If you are persistent and creative, a few telephone calls get you the name of the manager who is hiring. Once you have that, let's say that some creative Googling determines that the individual is speaking to a local Shriners group next week. You attend, and stay after to ask a few good questions. You then introduce yourself, tell them that you heard that they are hiring, and hand off a nice copy of your resume. You tell them you will call three days later to follow up ... and then you do so.

You may be thinking “wow, that sounds complicated!” (Or time consuming.) Well, you're right: networking is challenging and it does require sustained effort. The degree to which it pays off generally reflects the time you invest and the creativity you apply to it. If you are a hard working, exceptionally intelligent job seeker, advanced networking techniques are the best way to demonstrate that!



I'll be the first to admit that the "chocolate/peanut butter" approach is pretty obvious. But, oddly, it's rarely used. When I talk to job seekers who network, they often make comments like "I had 5 great networking interviews last month, and nobody I talked to even had any job openings!" And many job seekers who rely on the internet complain that they rarely hear back when they submit a resume — most of them realize it's because 400 other job seekers also applied for the same position.

Simply enough, the "chocolate/peanut butter" solution is probably the most direct answer to either problem.

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Are you ready for your next big gig? Wendy Terwelp, President of Opportunity Knocks™ (www.knocks.com), partners with entrepreneurial executives and business owners in transition. In addition to personal branding and career marketing tools, her innovative Rock Your Network® program helps execs network effectively – without begging. To date nearly every person attending her live events has landed a new gig. In career management since 1989, Wendy also possesses a degree in Journalism along with 4 career management certifications. Email Wendy at wendyterwelp@knocks.com.

Rock Your Network®: Create a Branded Sound Bite

By Wendy Terwelp

Who are you? What makes you unique among all other job seekers? What transferable skills do you bring to the table that no one else offers? What makes you a star?

Answering these and similar questions can help you identify your personal brand. By knowing who you are, what you want, and what makes you unique, you can clearly communicate your goals and unique value to people in your network *and* to potential employers.

Your personal brand helps you network without begging. How? Here's an example:

Sheila* is a star programmer/analyst. She is so top notch, she runs all the IT projects for her company, including coordinating with other departments and providing staff training on the new systems.

Unfortunately, Sheila was downsized when her company was purchased and had been out of work for more than a year before coming to me for help. "I asked everyone for a job," she claimed. "I sent out an email to everyone and everything."

The email she sent read something like this, "Hi Everyone, I just got downsized and need a job. Know anyone who's hiring?"

Even if her friends wanted to help her, they could not. She did not tell them what type of position she was looking for, what companies she was targeting or what skills / achievements she could bring to the table.



In addition to revamping Sheila's resume to focus on her personal brand, transferable skills, and achievements, we broadened her network (it's not just who you know, but who they know, and who knows you!), and revamped her verbal sound bites and written communications (including emails) as well.

Her new email:

Subject: News Update from Sheila!

Hi Everyone,

I've been working with a career coach to help me get to the next level in my job search - i.e. employment!

I am looking for a project management position with any of the following five companies: Digital Gurus, AMCO, Giant Software, Internet Global, or SoftwareXpress. Do any of you know anyone at these companies who can provide me with more information on the companies' management style, software systems or other relevant information? I have done some research on my own through *The Business Journal* and the Internet, but would love the inside scoop. Lunch is on me, by the way, if we can set up a meeting.

For those of you who only know my bowling average, I'd like to share a little information about my most recent project. This will help you better understand what I have to offer a potential employer:

I directed and performed the installation of OS/390 releases and CICS releases, consistently under IBM's end-of-service due dates. Projects included researching and ordering software/hardware and installing, testing, and implementing software releases, with zero downtime to production. I also trained a staff of 20 in release changes and new procedures.

Because of my efforts on this project (and others), my IT Director said in a recent review: "On all system software products, Sheila keeps versions current and is in complete control of testing and implementing new updates. Her thorough testing process has made her implementation record very successful. She is an extremely productive employee who is prompt in completing assignments."



I'm really excited about getting back out there and would love to talk with anyone you know who might have some ideas for me.

Thanks so much for your help! If you or any of your contacts need a copy of my resume forwarded, please let me know. I will do so immediately upon request.

Sincerely,

Sheila

Within 2.5 weeks of her completing our one-month program, Sheila was hired by one of her top targeted companies. The company employed the son of a friend from her bowling league. Before this new email and communications package, her friend had no idea what Sheila really did -- until now.

** Not her real name, nor the companies' real names to protect confidentiality.*

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Debra Feldman, the JobWhiz, is nationally recognized for her expertise in designing and building connections for clients to Network Purposefully™, enabling senior executives to swiftly identify their next career challenge through warm personal referrals. As a candidate's personal talent agent, Debra introduces leading professionals to hiring managers at pre-screened target companies. Expedite your career ascent with the innovator Forbes Dubbed Part Sleuth, Part Networker, the industry's premier career matchmaker. Contact Debra at www.JobWhiz.com

Cold Calling Your Way Into the Executive Suite

by Debra Feldman

Almost no one jumps at the chance to cold call, especially when the product you're pushing is yourself. Combine the usual discomfort of making an unsolicited contact with the high anxiety associated with job hunting and the result can be a pretty stressful experience. So why would anyone go through the agony? Because cold calling really works!

Cold calling launches a successful search by establishing an immediate personal relationship between you and a real, live employer representative. Instead of waiting for the employer to respond to your resume you skip right to the first and critically necessary step of speaking directly with a hiring manager. This way you have a specific contact person for follow up and can obtain real time feedback on your candidate status. The whole process is expedited; face time from the beginning means a faster campaign.

Not only is cold calling an effective way to jump start your job search - it's proven to be among the top techniques for accessing the hidden market of unadvertised jobs. Even when there isn't a good fit immediately, it's a way to get your name short-listed for the next suitable opening. Then there's an added bonus sweetening your candidacy: your unsolicited inquiry means no expensive recruitment fees for employers, thereby giving you a competitive advantage over other applicants.

The goal is to minimize anxiety and maximize potential for positive results. Here are some tips to streamline your approach and make your cold calls more effective. As always, targeted focus is the key. You need to target. . .

The right company: Choose one your research shows can benefit from your skills and knowledge. Match your background to their industry, your interests



to their apparent strategy, and your talents to a challenge you can identify and achieve. The closer you fit the profile of an ideal candidate, the easier it will be to sell yourself.

The right contact and relationship: Initiate contact with a company representative who is appropriate - usually not the President, CEO, or COO. This means finding someone in a functional or operational role, who'll quickly assess your capabilities and recognize your value to their organization. While you may cold call HR to boost your status in response to an advertised position, HR is not the right place to learn about unadvertised jobs in the hidden job market. To get the early leads and truly be an insider, you want to get in touch and begin to cultivate lasting relationships with the hiring managers who will later propose your name. Remember, a focused inquiry will yield focused results, so make sure you get to the contact's direct extension.

The right circumstances: Everyone is busy, so it's often a challenge to reach someone with time to converse. Try varying the times at which you call, or send an email requesting a callback or telephone appointment. You might also get an assistant to help you arrange the call. If you sense that the person answering the phone is distracted or not cooperating, it's wise to graciously end the call and politely arrange to call back at a more convenient time.

The right goals: Be prepared to say something relevant or provide some information of value based on your research. Have some business small talk ready to share as a warm-up rather than charging ahead with your solicitation of job-hunting help. Try to make this a two-way, mutually gratifying exchange.

The right network: Over 80% of executive placements are made through networking, personal introductions and referrals. Cold calling is a very effective way of expanding your business contacts database and connecting you to people who might share a job lead with you now or in the future. This is not about instant results, scheduling an immediate job interview, or getting your resume read: it's about making connections for the long-term. Don't be discouraged if you don't get immediate results. Think of the time involved as an investment. Rome wasn't built in a day; it takes patience to find the right person with whom you have something in common both professionally and personally.



The right career management strategy: Remembering that you are the one asking for help should keep you polite and respectful. At the same time, approach cold calling activities as an exchange among equals, not as a subordinate. You aren't asking for a job, you're proposing to make a measurable contribution for your mutual success.

If it sounds cliché that's because it's true, but "it's not what you know but whom you know" which most influences how quickly you find that next perfect opportunity. Show your target you're someone their organization needs to be successful.

How do you get in the door to start such a dialogue? Call at a time convenient for your contact; communicate a value-driven message showing how you can address their challenges, provide solutions, save them money, generate new revenues and increase profits. And I think you'll find that cold calling isn't such a "cold" prospect at all.

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Award-winning resume writer, career consultant, and author (18 career books), Louise Kursmark helps executives in transition develop powerful, distinctive, and highly strategic career marketing documents. She is a frequent speaker to corporate, peer, and job-seeker audiences, a regular contributor to top executive sites, and a founding Board member of Career Masters Institute. Among her multiple certifications, she was the first person worldwide to earn Master Resume Writer status. Contact her at LK@yourbestimpression.com or www.yourbestimpression.com.

Interview Strategies for Executives

by Louise Kursmark

Your efforts have finally paid off — you're scheduled to meet with an executive recruiter or hiring manager to discuss a job that's a good fit for your experience, expertise, and career interests. Congratulations! But don't relax yet. You can increase your chances of earning a second interview and, ultimately, a job offer by spending some time preparing for that interview.

Don't spend your preparation time memorizing answers to questions you think you'll hear—that approach will make you sound less than genuine and will leave you flat-footed when, inevitably, you're asked a question for which you haven't practiced an answer. Instead, invest your time working on six key areas of interview study that will leave you prepared for any question you're asked and give you an edge over your competition.

Elucidate your Core values.

What is the greatest value you offer? What makes you unique? What sets you apart from others? Spend some time thinking about these questions, then jot down five or ten core value statements — phrased in terms of value to the company. For instance:

If your greatest strength is leadership, rather than stating "I have great leadership skills," expand on that in a meaningful way: "I am able to deliver exceptional results — such as double-digit profit increases and 10% revenue growth in a down market — by inspiring and leading people to put forth extraordinary effort and do it with joy and passion."

If your technical expertise is a great asset, bear in mind that knowledge and expertise in and of themselves are not valuable; it's what you do with those



assets that counts: "I've repeatedly gained competitive advantage for the company by introducing industry-leading technology that works right the first time and is consistently months or even years ahead of competitors."

When choosing your core value statements, consider either of these simple formats to be sure you're including both pieces — the skill or expertise and the benefit:

- 1) "I am able to [do something for the company] through [ability / expertise / knowledge / experience / talent]."
- 2) "I have [ability / expertise / knowledge / experience / talent] that results in [benefit to the company]."

These core value statements collectively paint the picture of "who you are," so for the most part they will be consistent from interview to interview. But you can emphasize some over others, depending on the situation. For instance, if you're a senior financial executive seeking either a CFO or CEO role, in interviews for financial positions you'd stress those core capabilities, while your big-picture executive talents will be more important in a CEO interview.

By crystallizing your value into half a dozen areas of strength, you create a template of the key points to make during an interview — to be sure you're clearly communicating the total picture of what you have to offer.

Develop CAR stories.

The CAR (Challenge-Action-Result) story-telling format is highly effective in communicating concrete examples to support general statements. Rather than simply telling the interviewer that you have excellent communications skills, tell a CAR story that illustrates the point. When asked how you "would" handle a situation, present your theory, then back it up with a CAR story that drives home the point.

CAR stories provide insight into your leadership and problem-solving style and often elucidate the "how" behind the "what" that's on your resume. Using this format, you'll find that you can tell your story naturally, without sounding rehearsed, and will often be able to quickly call to mind a story that illustrates a key point in the interview, even if you haven't prepared it in advance.



Bone up on "standard" questions.

Don't talk yourself out of the position before you're five minutes into the interview! There's no excuse for "fluffing" such common interview questions as "tell me about yourself," "why are you leaving your current position," "why do you want to work here," "what is your greatest weakness," and so on. Bookstores and libraries abound with interviewing guides that present a long list of common questions and offer advice on how to answer them. When possible, incorporate one of your core value statements into your answer.

Prepare for different interview scenarios.

No longer are one-on-one interviews the only way candidates are assessed. Group interviews, role-play scenarios, behavioral interviews, problem-solving tests, and other methods are commonly used to find out as much as possible about you, your work style, how you handle stress, how you prioritize tasks, how you relate to teams, and other insights that are hard to convey on paper or in a simple Q&A interview. Be sure to ask the recruiter, HR person, or senior executive about what you can expect from the interview process. And be sure you're at your physical best—well rested, well fed, well exercised—before a long, grueling day during which you'll want to perform at your peak.

Do some homework.

You'll give yourself a solid advantage in any interview if you take the time to research the company — its challenges, growth opportunities, recent news events, strategic growth plans — and the industry. Then use that information in your interview, relating your achievements and capabilities to the company's current situation rather than simply stating them without context.

Prepare to overcome objections.

Seldom is a candidate a "perfect 10" — an exact match for everything the company's looking for. Inevitably during an interview you'll be asked about areas where your qualifications aren't as strong as others'. Keep in mind, you can't possibly know how important that trait is to the company, so don't assume your honest answer will kill your candidacy. But do try to bring the discussion back to an area of strength, and if at all possible refer to one of your core values in addressing the issue. Here's an example:



"You're right, the largest organization I've headed was about 200 people. But if you look at all the areas where I was involved, I think you'll agree it was kind of a microcosm of your current situation. I repeatedly was able to deliver results through a variety of leadership activities — restructuring the organization, developing leadership talent from within, communicating the vision, and in some cases leading the execution of key initiatives. I feel well prepared to perform in a larger environment, and I'm confident I'll exceed your expectations through similar leadership activities — which really are all about getting the most from the people and resources of the organization, whatever its size."

An interview is a high-stress activity where it's crucial to perform your best. Preparation is key to peak performance in any endeavor. Don't skimp on the preparation, and be sure to practice in the areas that will give you the greatest payoff.

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Barbara Safani, owner of [Career Solvers](#) works with Fortune 100 companies and individuals to deliver targeted programs focusing on resume development, job search, networking, interviewing, and salary negotiation. She is a triple certified resume writer, frequent contributor to numerous career-related publications, and co-creator of a leading resume writer certification exam. Ms. Safani advises members of the NY chapter of the Financial Executives Network Group and chairs a SHRM networking group for HR professionals in career transition.

Nuances of Negotiation

by Barbara Safani, M.A., CERW, CPRW, NCRW, CCM

During my coaching sessions, the topic that generates the most questions and the liveliest discussion is salary negotiation. While most job-seekers are intensely interested in how to negotiate the best package, few realize the importance of creating their own style and developing a set of best practices for their negotiations. The mechanics of the negotiation are the same for men and women, but the strategies often vary between the two sexes. Personality, style, and gender are all contributing factors that influence the outcome of the conversation. Below are four differences I have observed between male and female negotiation styles.

Relationships vs. Outcomes

Women tend to value relationships over outcome and are willing to compromise in an effort to keep the relationship intact. They can be people pleasers who generally do not like conflict and confrontation. Many women associate salary negotiation with conflict. In a 2002 study by Babcock, Gelfund, Small, and Stayn, entitled *Propensity to Initiate Negotiations*, men and women participated in an internet survey to identify if they believed it was appropriate to negotiate in various work-related fictitious situations. Women as a group were less likely than men to choose negotiation as an option, even though they recognized that negotiation was appropriate.

Men tend to leverage relationships to achieve their goals. They ask for a particular salary with less compromise and are concerned with outcomes, worrying less about how negotiations affect the relationship. Their straight-forward approach can work well, especially for short-term financial gain.

Recommendation: Both men and women can be successful negotiators by positioning their needs as part of a collaborative process. By listening to a



potential employer's needs and recommending outcomes that benefit both parties, women and men can get what they want for themselves and preserve the relationship at the same time.

Needs vs. Wants

Many women make decisions about salary based on what they feel they need rather than what the market will bear. They use past salary as their benchmark and may rationalize that a similar or slightly higher salary is what they should ask for. Since employers tend to reward people no more than they require, women are at risk for receiving less competitive packages than their male counterparts. Despite the progress women have made professionally over the past 30 years, our culture often discourages women from asking for more and brands them as aggressive or difficult to work with when they try to negotiate.

Men are more likely to ask for what they want. Again, cultural norms may be at play here, since historically it has been acceptable for men to be assertive in the business world. In a 2003 study by Small, Babcock, and Gelfund participants were asked to play a game and offered \$3.00 as compensation. If participants asked for more, they would receive \$10. Almost nine times as many males asked for more money, suggesting that men ask for what they want more frequently than women.

Recommendation: Both men and women can improve their negotiation skills by knowing their market value. Sites such as www.salary.com help job seekers define a potential range of salaries for a particular job. Professional associations and trusted friends in the industry are other valuable sources of information. By doing your research and presenting the business case for your requested salary, you improve your bargaining power and diffuse potential cultural biases.

External vs. Internal Centers of Influence

Women are more likely to assume that hard work alone will be rewarded with a promotion and/or increased monetary compensation. They often wait for external factors and group consensus to determine their opportunities for advancement.



Men more frequently take matters into their own hands and believe they influence their opportunities. They are less inclined to stay in dead-end jobs and more likely to ask for a raise when they feel they deserve one. In the 2002 survey by Babcock, Gelfund, Small, and Stayn, entitled *Propensity to Initiate Negotiations*, researchers studied people's propensity to see possibility for change in their circumstances and found women were 45% more likely to score low on the scale indicating that women are less likely to see the importance of asking for what they want.

Recommendation: Men and women can increase their opportunities for promotion by taking a proactive approach to their career development that includes reporting accomplishments regularly, taking on high-profile assignments, and developing influential networking relationships.

Low vs. High Goal Setting

Women set more modest goals than men and they generally make concessions earlier in the negotiation process. As a result, women typically have lower salaries than men in similar positions.

A 2003 study by Riley, Babcock, and McGinn revealed that men typically set goals for negotiation conversations 15% higher than women. As a result, men often receive better initial offers and additional leverage in the negotiation process. Men who set high goals for salary negotiations benefit not only from the initial salary conversation, but from all subsequent negotiations as well. Employers often assume that applicants with better compensation records are more capable than those who have been paid less and high goal setting may result in more opportunities for men as they move through their career.

Recommendation: Men and women should adopt a negotiation style that meets their individual needs, but both should incorporate ambitious targets into their negotiation strategy. When you negotiate your compensation package you are not just negotiating your starting salary, but you are directly impacting every salary increase you receive from that point forward. Employers expect you to negotiate. In addition to the financial rewards associated with salary negotiation, you will gain the respect of the hiring manager and increase your credibility within the organization.

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Janice Worthington, known as America's coach of champions, has been advising industry leaders for three decades. A 14-year former executive recruiter, Janice began empowering candidates in 1987. Her insights have garnered offers for C-level candidates in the most competitive arenas. With Master and Bachelor degrees in Journalism and multiple certifications, her career column is currently featured in American City Business Journals; she has been quoted in the Washington Post, Kiplinger's and Business Week. Her presentations appear in numerous career anthologies. She serves as "Your Career Coach" on CareerBoard.com. Web Site: www.worthingtoncareers.com

Baby Boomers – Industry's Best Kept Secrets!

By Janice Worthington

I'm embarrassed to say that recently one of my clients fooled me with a very old joke that many executives seem to be sharing lately. He sheepishly told me that last night he slept like a baby, waking up in tears every three hours. After serving a local telecommunications firm in executive leadership for 18 years, this fellow of 50+ was laid off, much like his pals in technology and manufacturing. So what's a Baby Boomer to do? Keep hope alive!

The Age Discrimination in Employment Act added the age factor to the earlier Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, stating that an employer may not discriminate against candidates based on gender, race, religious preference, or national origin. The designated age against which employers were not allowed to discriminate in the ADEA was forty, and one wonders what was really happening to determine that this particular stage of life should create cause for the passage of special legislation. The answer lies in the anticipated downsizing and layoff activities that ultimately occurred in the 1970's during the worst recession since the Depression of 1929. Focused on the oil crisis and layoffs in the aerospace, automotive and construction industries, companies found their biggest area of payroll expense to be those with the highest salaries who were also closest to retirement pensions. Folks over forty were not necessarily laid off because they were too old to perform, but because they were too expensive. Obviously this became illegal but the implications of the ADEA pointed out the need for protection for older workers, as opposed to the fact that they were also more lucrative money-makers who directly threatened bottom-lines. So as our decades passed we became inherently age-paranoid



Today, as we've all seen, there are plenty of younger millionaires. Even if we choose to remember the ADEA, society looks at life stages far differently in 2001, and we now have cause for celebration. Does this surprise the guys mentioned above who still sleep like babies? Without question, but there is a basis to conclude that not only is age not a problem in 2001 but it is repeatedly used as an advantage by candidates who know how deliver resume and interview presentations from positions of strength.

According to Gail Sheehy in her landmark book, *New Passages*, our 21st century society is tracked as maturing later, from adolescence through senior citizens. On average, teenagers leave home later, adults marry later and start families later than did their grandparents; middle age lasts well into what Sheehy calls the "flourishing 40's" and "flaming 50's," and these decades are seen as periods of liberation rather than debilitation.

So why all the pessimism from the "flourishing and flaming" as they are downsized? Without a doubt, I believe the media to be responsible for leading us to believe that the corporate world would prefer not to welcome back the guys at the top of their games. My memory is tattooed with the TV image of the 50+ job seeker riding on the subway for a full day reading the classified ads in the 1980's as the network anchor lamented his odds of getting hired. Here I was in Columbus, successfully coaching these very executives back to work, and here were the major networks sending devastating messages. Needless to say, they wouldn't return my calls. One of the reasons I now write a career column is to reveal what really happens in the trenches, and I continue to spread encouragement, instructing all candidates to operate from positions of strength.

What is a position of strength? First of all, the realization that there is no greater asset than our decades in the business world. My nearly 34 years in my industry attract clients like magnets, and my younger colleagues become fatigued trying to out-market my facts of life. Second, the demonstration and utilization of my knowledge directed toward meeting the needs of my clients is based on the insights my experience has provided. I strongly demonstrate my ability to meet their needs, and from the moment they call me they feel my passion to do the job, a passion that only a seasoned pro could accumulate and project. Finally, despite the fact that I look every bit over 50, I project a real young 59. By nature I'm energetic, enthusiastic and



optimistic; my voice doesn't crack and I know what's happening in the world. Most of all, I never longingly discuss the "good ole days".

For years, I've felt fear for the younger work force if the folks over 40 or 50 ever realize the power they possess. So if you also slept like a baby last night, be encouraged and show your stuff. In this volatile economy, your proven track record and calm sense of "been there-solved that" is more attractive than ever! Just ask Bill Clinton! He's 60!

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Pat Schuler was born in a humble log cabin, stolen by gypsies at an early age and raised by wolves, all of which served as excellent preparation for a 25-year career in sales and sales management in corporate America. She helps sales executives, managers and business owners salvage their investments by turning around sales reps in trouble. She makes a difference in an astonishingly short time. Seeing these sales reps flourish is the joy of what she does.
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Fear Fighting

By Pat Shuler

You've heard of Fire Fighting, Let's take a minute today to talk about Fear Fighting. You may have heard the old saying "Fire and fear – good servants, poor masters."

Whenever I hear that quote, I always am struck by how much fire and fear have in common.

It's easy for both to get out of control and maim or damage.

We have a fear of both. (Nothing to fear but fear, itself)

Both can be hard to capture or contain, much less extinguish.

Both can be controlled and made to serve us, if treated respectfully and knowledgeably.

We are currently in a business climate where fear is an every day companion for most of us. Our friends, business associates and clients can seem to take an almost ghoulish delight in sharing the latest business horror story. Even the strongest of us can find ourselves bitten by the Fear Bug, and from there, the Fear can start to grow like a dread disease. It starts to permeate every task, every phone call, every prospect interaction.

How do we inoculate ourselves from the Fear Virus? How do we keep it from destroying our peace, sapping our energy and stealing our motivation?

You may have heard "What we resist, persists". This is definitely true for fear. We can fear any number of things in these challenging times, many of which are beyond our control.



Pivot Point Question:

What can I affect? What is within my ability to change, control, or manipulate, even minutely? Am I willing to take the effort to do so?

1. Honor the fear. Acknowledge it. Thank it for showing up. Do not deny it, stuff it away, or anesthetize it with food, alcohol or drugs.
2. Be aware that there is no shame in being afraid. Fear is a natural response. It means our systems - body, mind, spirit, and emotions - are working the way they are supposed to.
3. Ask yourself, "What's the worst thing that could happen? Have I been through something like that before? AM I willing to deal with the situation? If not, what *am* I prepared to do? What *am* I prepared to change?"
4. Understand that fear is not a signal to stop, not a Red Light. Fear is a Yellow Light, telling us to proceed with caution and awareness.
5. Give yourself permission to move forward cautiously, with the fear. Consider Fear an informative traveling companion, not an adversary during these challenging times. And certainly not the thief of our peace of mind and our future security.

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