

JOB SEEKER WORKSHOP: KEEP YOUR CHIN UP AND YOUR PIPELINE FILLED

As a job seeker you are a full time marketer - the product is you

1. Consider your “uniques”. What unique expertise or combination of experiences do you have to offer? What types of questions or problems do people tend to seek out your opinion for, or consider you the “expert”? Are these skills in demand in a particular industry? How can your experience add value in a new or different company / industry / position?
2. Truly understand what you want to do and who do you want to do it with. Finding yourself without a steady income is financially and emotionally draining and incredibly stressful. Being laid off is not a personal affront or judgment of your personal value – it is an economic reality. Just because you are out of work, does not mean you have to settle for the first employer who will have you. Spend time thinking about your best fit – what are you passionate about? What tasks drive you crazy? What would you get up in the morning and do whether you were being paid or not? What type of people and company do you thrive in? Is it structured and well defined, or more “seat of your pants” chaos? Do you prefer to work autonomously or collaboratively? Target your job search to companies that seem to fit your passions and values. Organizations with similar passions and values are more likely to recognize your value and you are more likely to be satisfied in the long term.
3. Create a one page marketing piece. This is NOT a resume that lists what you have done. It is a marketing piece that quickly and effectively positions you as an expert and conveys your unique offering. This can be done easily in MS Word. Be proactive! Don’t wait for a job posting – send your marketing piece to your network and ask them to refer you to others who might benefit from your expertise.
4. Differentiate your offering. Update your resume in consideration of your “uniques”. Focus on specialized knowledge or experiences that differentiate you from others. Focus on results, not just tasks.
 - 100 other people have “10 years experience” selling in your industry. What makes you different? Did you successfully penetrate a key account when no one else could? Did you position the company to successfully enter a new market? If you are in sales, PLEASE focus on actual numbers – percentages are smoke screens. It is easy to grow 150% when you are starting from \$1,000. This is not as easy to do in a \$4M territory in a mature market.
 - 200 other people have supervised a production line – what have you done that is different? Was it a key role in implementing lean manufacturing or ERP system? Were you able to increase retention on the 3rd shift, reduce scrap or improve productivity From X to Y in 12 months?
 - Be able to back it up. Hiring managers and recruiters love to see results, certifications and experience working with the latest technologies and practices – if you have it, spell it out. Just make sure you can back it up with real knowledge and proven results.



5. Create a marketing plan – and work your plan. Now that you know what you want to do, and who you want to do it with, it is time to research and create your marketing plan. Develop your prospect list and find out who you know that might be able to connect you with the targeted company. Use your network – LinkedIn, former coworkers, associations, friends and neighbors. Warm introductions have a much greater chance of earning a phone or face-to-face interview than simple resume submissions. Be sure to work your plan. Sales don't happen on the first call...you need to set aside time every day to diligently work your plan.

You've made the contacts and earned an interview – now, how do you “sell” you

1. A good sales person does their homework. Recruiters and hiring managers want to know you took the time to learn about them – do basic research before a phone interview and have a couple specific questions prepared that demonstrate your genuine interest in the company. At minimum, spend a few minutes on the website to research the company, industry, clients, culture, etc. in order to customize your cover letter. Before an in-person interview do additional research about recent company news, strategies, their competitive positioning and their key employees (Linked in is a gold mine, but if all else fails, use Google).
2. Listen, listen, listen. Then respond directly and succinctly. Interviewers are not always clear in their questions, while at other times they more or less let slip the answer they want to hear. The better you listen, the more likely you are to respond thoroughly, yet succinctly. Avoid rambling. If you aren't sure you fully answered their question, just ask. “Is that the type of information you were looking for?” or “Is there additional information you would like to me to share about this topic?”
3. Uncover the company's needs. Successful sales people listen and ask great questions to uncover underlying needs of the company before they start “selling”. Ask follow up questions to their questions (e.g., if the interviewer asked about e-marketing for example, ask a follow up question about the success of their current strategy, their position on social marketing, etc). They may not have time to answer the questions at this time, which is ok – the point is to show that you understand their issues, listened well, and that you may be just the expert they need on staff. Only after you understand their needs, can you effectively sell.
4. Sell your offering based on their needs. By now you should have a fairly good understanding of what the company needs, what they are already good at, and what gaps there are. Make sure your responses address their unmet needs. If you have expertise, make sure you share it. While others may disagree, I believe that experts are confident and not afraid to disagree with an interviewer. How you tactfully position your differing opinion is obviously important (I understand your position and it may be the best approach in your environment. Would you like to hear about alternative approaches I have found to be successful?)
5. A strong close is important. Provided you are interested in the opportunity, a strong close is important. Summarize their key needs and pain points and how your skills and experience will close



those gaps. Be sure to confirm your interest. Ask when to expect follow up, and offer to provide additional information in the interim.

Closing the deal

1. Follow through is important. A well written thank you letter is essential. It will be noticed if you do not send a thank you email (letter is better!) within 24-48 hours. If you are really interested in the opportunity and believe the company is interested in you, customize the thank you to each person you met with – what you learned from them, what was special about your time with them.
2. Nurture the prospect. If you are interested in the opportunity, find relevant opportunities to keep in touch. Was there a topic of particular interest to the interviewers? Send them a link to a particularly good article about the topic. Send a note of congratulations if the company recently received recognition or an award. Provide them a (non-confidential) copy of your work that they were particularly interested in.
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4. Follow up to keep top of mind. If the company said you would hear back by Monday, call the following Wednesday. “Hello Joe, this is Julie calling to touch base on the Accounting position, and to assure you that I am still very interested in the opportunity. When we met, you mentioned coming to a decision on Friday. I realize how busy you are, and if there is additional information I can provide to help you in your decision process, please call me. I look forward to hearing from you within the next few days.
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6. Do more than is asked. If you really want the job, offer to write up your own 30-90 day orientation and action plan. Send a note a few days later with additional ideas for addressing the company’s pain points. This shows initiative, reaffirms your interest and helps the manager understand how hiring you will make his / her job much easier in the long term.

Resiliency

Successful sales people face resistance, gatekeepers and rejection every day. Today’s job seeking environment is no different. As a job seeker, you may not get the interview or the offer the first few times out. Both sales people and job seekers need to get up every day, be confident in their value and keep working the plan.



ADDITIONAL TIPS AND TRICKS

Rule #1: Differentiate Yourself

In this economy, employers can be very selective – there is top talent available, and recruiters are overwhelmed with resumes – make yours stand out. Can you use unique packaging or materials? Take time to perfect your resume.

Rule #2: Proofread Your Work

Email and spell check has made people lazy. Lack of attention to grammar and spelling in your written communications leads the recruiter to question your diligence and attention to detail in your work. Have someone proofread your communications. Avoid the use of company-specific acronyms that outsiders may not understand.

Rule #3: Write for short attention spans

Recruiters typically spend less than one minute per resume. If the candidate appears qualified, in the right location, with the right experience and key words (specific certification, experience, etc.) the recruiter will spend 4-5 minutes on it. Get to the point quickly in your introductory email (sample provided)

Rule #4: Focus on results

Did you increase productivity or retention, or reduce costs or lead times? Did you implement a new system? Include results in your resume and cover letter

Rule #5: Network, network, network

Stay in regular communication with your formal and informal network – associations, former coworkers, LinkedIn, neighbors, etc. Obtaining an introduction or referral will increase the likelihood that a recruiter will spend time reviewing your resume and you may be given more favor in the screening process.

Rule #6: Get Noticed

Stay active in professional groups and leverage opportunities for speaking engagements, pro bono or project work, etc. Respond to blogs or questions on LinkedIn or professional association websites to remain visible.

Rule #7: Pay it Forward

Offer to help others using your key strengths. Help a non-profit with a project or help others with job seeking referrals. Helping others feels good, reminds you of your unique strengths, and it might just get you noticed.

Rule #8: Prove yourself

Employers are beginning to hire but are still hesitant to commit to a full time hire. Consider offering a one-hour brainstorming session in your area of expertise. Follow up with a high level summary of your meeting and suggestions. If appropriate, suggest a contracted project and consulting as a way to demonstrate your value. Important: offer ideas, but do not give them away.

