



# Job Search 101

## The Basics of a Job Search

You've heard it all before. But, it's true. Getting a new job may be the most important job you'll ever have.

Everybody recognizes that the market is tough today for those who are looking for a new job. Even in the best of markets, finding the right job and doing it efficiently takes work. No matter how good you are. No matter what your track record, it is almost a given that finding your next job will take longer than you thought it would.

The one essential rule is that you have to treat the job of getting a job like a marketing campaign with all the discipline you would use in any business you've ever run or any marketing plan you've ever executed. Here are some ideas to help you get started:

1. Put the last job behind you. For a lot of us who have been downsized or rightsized or reorganized, the moment when we were told was like a punch in the gut. If you're like me your father worked for the same company for years. The rules of the game were, "Work hard, keep your nose clean and good things will happen." So if you were "let go" you must have been somehow flawed.

You need to work through those feelings and get them behind you. My guess is that nearly everybody you will meet during your job search has been through the same ringer or personally knows someone who has. They know firsthand that losing a job no longer means that you are damaged goods. The fact is that businesses have let a lot of very talented people get away in the name of short-term goals, so stop thinking about it. It's done. Now make the next move a positive one.

2. Get your technology set up. If you have an outplacement deal, great, but frankly I find them constraining. In today's world, you can do most of this from home. Here's what you need:
  - Computer – No surprise here. But, try to have one dedicated to you... that you don't have to share with the kids or spouse. Ideally, get a laptop you can take with you. If you do use an outplacement office, it's great to be able to take your information home with you.
  - Phone lines – For the duration of your search, add an extra line or two at home. One for incoming and outgoing calls that won't tie up your family line. One for your Internet connection (this can be cable of course).
  - Answering service – Think about calling your phone company and get your line(s) answered by a service. I just don't like to depend on a machine in your house or on your phone set. You want to be able to get messages when you are on the line instead of having the caller get a busy signal.
  - Email – If your email address was from your company, get one for yourself. Don't get too clever in naming your address. Your name is still the easiest for others to remember.
  - Software – If you kept your calendar at the office, get a calendar for your search. Also, in addition to a basic word-processing program, you want some sort of database so you can track you search. This can be as simple as Excel or Lotus 123 or something more like Lotus Approach which is more than a spreadsheet. We'll talk about tracking later.
  - Home Office – It's not really technology, but find a place you can "go to" when you're working on your search. The separation from the rest of the house and the family will help to formalize the process a little.
3. Target Audience. Just like any other marketing plan, you need to start with your target audience. We would recommend a multi-layered approach. The more senior the search, the more likely a new opportunity will come from either (a) a personal contact, or (b) a retained recruiter. But having said that, don't totally write off other approaches. Here are four targets to consider:
  - Personal Network – We'll talk about it in a minute, but these are folks you know OR contacts of people you know. Don't self-limit. Don't limit yourself to people in your industry. Chances are that your attorney or that friend from the club knows a very senior exec in your business.

- Recruiters – There are retained recruiters and contingency recruiters. The more senior roles are generally handled by retained recruiters. Sycamore and Company is a retained recruiter specializing in Marketing roles and General Management roles which require a marketing background. Go to the library or on line and get the Redbook of Executive Recruiters (<http://www.recruiterredbook.com/>). It breaks down firms based on specialties, locations, industries, etc. It's a great source.
  - Internet Sites – There is nothing wrong with putting your resume on one of the more well-known job search web sites. It's a numbers game. Get your name and background in front of as many people as you can. And, have the discipline to regularly review the assignment on those sites.
  - Target Companies – The odds may not be great, but make a list of those companies that are of particular interest to you. Try to network into those firms starting with the executives in your area of specialty. The fall back is to talk to the HR people. If you can't network in, then try a cold call or a cold emailing.
4. Maximize Your Network. Get started first with your network. It's straightforward. Get a piece of paper and write down everybody you know, even if it is only casually. Start with your most recent jobs and work backwards. If you remember them, they probably remember you. Go through old Christmas card lists, neighborhood directories from all the cities you've lived in. Be disciplined. Remember it's not just about peers from the office. Think about suppliers you've used, clients you've had, college friends, folks at church, the PTA, your charity work. I'll bet you can get a list of several hundred people if you put your mind to it.

Once you have that list, call each and every one of them. Your objective is to renew the contact and let them know that you are looking for a new opportunity. You are not asking them for a job. You don't want to put them in an awkward position. If they have a job for you, they will bring it up. What you want from them is more contacts. Don't ever get off the phone without getting at least one more person and phone number to call... and ask if you can use their name in making the next call.

One more rule. Swear that now that you've gotten back in touch with these folks, you will not lose track of them again just because you get a new job and the world gets overly busy again.

5. Paperwork. You will need three things and actually the first one isn't paperwork.
- Your Capsule – This is the two-minute story you tell that recruiter or the contact when you finally get them on the phone. Your goal is to give them enough information for them to want to keep the conversation going.

This is exactly like great print or direct mail advertising. The headline is critical. What is it about you and your background that will get my attention? Then you build on that. Be disciplined. What is your point of difference? What benefit or value will you bring to the new opportunity? Don't be too generic. Everybody at your level is going to claim to be a great leader with people skills and business results and seeking more responsibility. What makes you special?

- Coverletter – I will admit that I sweat over the coverletters I wrote for myself. I'll also admit that as a recruiter, I don't read them now. I look for two things in a coverletter – what compensation does the candidate claim and are there any relocation limitations. These are filters. We see so many resumes that we need to segment the piles. If someone will only consider positions in Orlando, it's easier to segment them out of most of what we do.

Having said that, a lot of recruiters do read coverletters. Frankly, I'd start with the same wording you develop for your capsule. Start with your headline – here's why you should read the rest of this letter and even look at my resume.

- Resume – Don't get too fancy. Recruiters see a ton of resumes. Stick to the facts. I'll tell you what I look for. Where did you go to school and when – don't leave off the dates. Where did you start your career? Does the company have a great reputation for selecting great talent in every discipline and then training those people very well?

After that, I look for progression and performance. Is there a logic to the job progression and the job changes? Is there increased responsibility and how long did it take to get promoted? Are there too many jobs in too short a period? Definitely a red flag. So be ready to explain what happened.



I don't think a resume needs to fit on one or even two pages, but don't write a biography. Give us the name of the company and division. The job title and the length of the assignment ... from/to dates. If the company is not extremely well known (don't assume it is), briefly describe what business it is in. A recruiter can't evaluate all your bullet points on accomplishments if they don't even know what the company did. Finally, list your role and your top three accomplishments.

Make sure that the story you tell in your resume includes three things. What you did, what your performance accomplished and how that makes you unique. Active verbs. Results. Numbers. These are all good. But remember the basics of print advertising – if you can change the brand name and the ad can read the same, it's the wrong ad. What makes you special?

Remember, your resume is not designed to get you the job. It is only designed to get you a conversation with an interested party.

6. The Campaign. Your goal is to get a job, but there are some intermediate steps and goals. To get an interview and a job offer, you need to get on somebody's radar screen... somebody who is looking to fill a job. So the first step is to get yourself known by as many of those people as possible who are in your target audiences.
  - Mass mailings or emailings – The objective is to get your coverletter and resume to as many of those recruiters as possible. In the largest firms, these unsolicited resumes will be sent to the research departments for screening. In other firms, resumes are circulated. In many cases, great candidates are "held" by a recruiter who thinks he or she may have a need in the future. As a result, everyone may not see it. Firms will tell you that once your resume is in their system, everyone has access. I never quite felt comfortable with that as a candidate. I'd at least be sure to reach each of the major offices of a firm, if not to multiple partners or principals in an office.

The preference today is electronic mailings with the resume attached in a Microsoft Word format. This is the easiest for the recruiters to paste into their databases. Hardcopy letters have to be scanned. PDF formats don't always convert easily.

- Follow Up – Follow up your mailing with personal calls to each person you wrote. Your objective is to connect with a decision-maker and put a voice and a personality with that resume. Do it on a timely basis, close to the emailing/ mailing so there is a chance to connect you with your paper.
- Networking Campaign – Whether you get to a person via your emailing OR through your networking, you want to be ready when you do connect with the person.
  - ☐ Be crisp. Know what you want to say when you make that connection. Use your "capsule" to start out then answer questions briefly and to the point.
  - ☐ Don't be afraid to use first person singular. A recruiter wants to know what you accomplished. "We" is important for teamwork, that's true, but you're the one being recruited and nobody else is on the line to make your case.
  - ☐ No BS. I can't tell you how many people have told me that they attended XZY University because it was rated as one of the top business schools in the country. So far I have a list of 45 top 10 business schools.
  - ☐ Have a plan for your career. When you're asked what you want to do next, have an answer that is focused. It doesn't need to be a particular job, but it does need to be something more than "I want to utilize my skills to drive a new business opportunity and motivate people."
  - ☐ Relocation. Bottom line, be as open as you can reasonably be. If you absolutely won't go somewhere, say so, but don't spend six months limiting your search to your current hometown if you would eventually be willing to look more broadly.

Good luck with your search.

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Sycamore and Company is a management consulting and executive search firm specializing in marketing roles and general management positions that require a marketing background. If you're interested in talking further, contact Ed Tazzia, Principal, at 248-258-3800 or at [edtazzia@sycamoreandcompany.com](mailto:edtazzia@sycamoreandcompany.com) And look to our web site at <http://www.sycamoreandcompany.com> for more information.

