

## CAREER CENTER

### HOW TO USE A SEARCH FIRM – A GUIDE FOR JOB SEEKERS

By Jon Harvill, CPC

As a Job Seeker the best time for you to establish a relationship with a Search Firm is long before you actually need it. With a relationship created, you can then do things to strategically position yourself to be hunted by the “headhunter”.

## NETWORKING

Many of you have heard or read my remarks encouraging you to proactively get involved in networking, whether you are in sales, management or a technical position in industry. Not only is networking essential in performing many of the function we are called upon to accomplish in our day-to-day business lives, we also see the tremendous advantage when we are considering new employment opportunities. And who better to have in your LinkedIn network than your best positioned recruiter?

As a person who may *someday* want assistance in changing jobs, become well known by your favorite recruiter(s) well in advance. Target one or more who have strong reputations for your specific skill and/or industry.

Also, when you get the typical call from a recruiter seeking your help in identifying candidates for the recruiter’s current search assignment, be as courteous and cooperative as you feel you should be. Find ways to establish an ongoing relationship with your selected recruiter(s). Recruiters depend upon access to information sources within industry to keep themselves aware of the trends and developments taking place. Be valued as one of those sources of information. Be quick to advise them of what is happening, the availability of outstanding people in the field, and also of potential searches for talent where their services may be needed.

## BRANDING

Establish yourself by your own *branding* process. Develop your own uniqueness in a currently needed technical specialization and your intrinsic characteristics - such as *having the ability to get things done, possessing impressive personal accomplishments, exhibiting leadership ability, being the Go-To person for your ERP system, and having a positive attitude.*

By participating in user group conferences, leading association committees, and encouraging others to take advantage of your expertise, you can help the reputation-building process along. A little positive press, when you can arrange that, doesn’t hurt either.

To capitalize on your branding, insure that your resume is a focused document that reads from beginning to end to be that of a professional Production Planner, Materials Manager, Buyer or whatever happens to be your focus; and that it includes quantitative examples of your related accomplishments.

Cultivate an impressive list of references. Although there are some suspicions associated with written references (because they are frequently used to cover up bad references) a set of well-

written reference letters can reinforce a well-written resume and add to the presentation package offered to the recruiter.

Presenting the recruiter with a marketable product can separate you from the hundreds of resumes that may actually represent similarly qualified individuals, but lack the sizzle you offer.

## COOPERATION

Be willing to offer a coordinated effort along with your recruiter. Share with him or her as much information as possible that will help them represent you, including what we call “sizzle” - facts to attract the attention and interest of the hiring official. State your accomplishments in quantitative terms, i.e. “purchased \$18MM annually of computer hardware and software”, “saved \$3.2MM by developing off shore suppliers of metal fabricated parts” or “reduced inventory \$2MM by improving inventory accuracy to 99.6% and improving inventory turn rate from 11 turns to 14 turns”. Seek the recruiter’s guidance and follow their instructions in crafting the most effective resume, developing responses to expected questions, practicing for the interview, and following up interviews and negotiations. Your recruiter may ask you to develop a list of specific companies you would like to work for, and will surely ask who you have already been presented to and the results.

If you are given the opportunity to write a version of your resume for each specific open position it is well worth the effort. If given a job description, you can address each listed responsibility and requirement with a parallel qualification in your resume. For technical positions, a “very general” resume does not serve you well because hiring officials are typically looking for very specific solutions and a resume that attempts to cover every contingency will just not be read.

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