

The New Rules for Executive Job Searching

By Stacey Berk, Expand HR Consulting

As an executive recruiter and human resources consultant, I often have clients ask me for career advice. So whether you are casually interviewing or actively seeking out a new opportunity, here are some great tips for executive job searching.

In today's job market, especially using social media wisely, new rules (along with some time tested old ones) are definitely needed. The key to securing your next position is creating a pulled together, cohesive identity throughout the search and interview process.

1. **Social Media** --- you may not be a social media wizard, and that's okay.
 - LinkedIn is the premier site for professionals, so make sure the text of your profile is well curated and matches your resume. Facebook and other social sites can help leverage your search if you use them correctly.
 - If you have a friend who is a PR, marketing or communications professional, ask her to review your profile and give you feedback.
 - Seek out key recommendations and endorsements. Keep your photo professional and current.
 - Recruiters, human resources professionals and hiring executives all mine this popular database as a key tool in the candidate sourcing process.
2. **Networking**--- one of the most meaningful ways to find a job is through networking. When done correctly it adds instant credibility to your search.
 - Network with former work colleagues, clients, friends and relevant social media contacts.
 - Attend professional seminars and events for key introductions and to build relationships.
 - Surveys repeatedly find that at least 50% of jobs are found by networking, and that number rises to upwards of 70% if social media contacts are included.

3. **Your Resume and Cover Letter**- treat your resume and cover letter like a writing sample.

- Ensure that your resume closely mirrors your social media profiles.
- Take the time to customize each cover letter to the job you are applying for. Believe it or not, hiring executives read these very carefully. My clients almost always pick up on discrepancies. In a recent search, we rejected an otherwise highly qualified candidate because the candidate's cover letter contained a reference to the wrong organization and position.

4. **Interviews**

- Before your interview, carefully review the job description, the company website and any documents the recruiter has sent over.
- Be sure to go prepared to the interview with examples that draw your experience to the responsibilities of the job and questions that show an understanding of the organization and role.
- Your physical presentation is important. Unless the recruiter indicates otherwise, a tailored (but not sleek) suit is almost always the best interview attire. Workout before the interview – exercise is a great stress reliever. Leave early so you are sure to be on time the day of your interview.
- During the meeting, don't just use the word *strategic*, *demonstrate* that you are strategic. Explain in detail how you planned a large scale project, resources you cultivated, financing you secured and the short/long term impact of the project on the company. Show you are decisive by describing critical decisions you made and risks you took that paid off.
- Articulate how you build relationships. If your company's board or CEO called on you to lead a special assignment, describe how you successfully worked with other executives and specialists from other departments, outside consultants or industry leaders to achieve success in completing the task. Be careful not to 'name drop' too much. You want to convey a sense of trust, professionalism and the confidence others have in you.
- Don't "oversell" or "undersell". Present yourself with self-assurance, charisma and compassion. Be thoughtful in your answers. Be astute to social cues during the meeting; if interviewers are looking at their watches or papers, wrap up your answer.

5. **The Follow Up** – there’s nothing more important than following up on a job interview.

- You’ll want to formally email or a mail a letter renewing your interest, briefly tying your experience to the role as explained in the meeting and thanking the interview panel for their time.
- Be sure your letter is succinct and timely. And have your marketing friend review it first!

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