

Networking and Job Hunting Done Right

I am especially pleased to share this newsletter with you. It chronicles the transition and success of one of our recently landed members. I didn't write it; only someone who experienced this could write it so well. Its author sent it to me with permission to share it with everyone as a newsletter, but requested that I not reveal his or her identity. What makes this a compelling read is that our colleague has described not only personal experience, but also emotional reactions and the actual statistics of their transition and job search. Once you have read it, I think you will agree with me that this story mirrors the experience of many others who lost their positions, but more important, it provides an excellent example of the mindset and approach needed to find the next job. Please read on:

“I was part of a re-structuring that hadn't been announced yet. I was aware that it was coming because of information in meetings I attended. I had been there 5 ½ years, received a glowing rating and significant bonus weeks before and had been reassured by the CIO that I did not have to worry about job security because he had even better things in mind for me.

“When I was notified, I was shocked, then angry. I learned later that, for my level, the severance package was below industry. At my spouse's insistence, I talked to a “top lawyer” who said I had a strong legal case if I wanted to spend the time pursuing it (I decided I didn't want to spend any time re-hashing it). The company provided me with outplacement services at an external company, which was a big help and they gave 90 days notice, which is 30 days more than legally required. In hindsight, the company did a great job. At the time, it was not pleasant.

“The emotion didn't last long. I reported to the outplacement service the next Monday and began the process of developing an exit statement, updating my resume and developing a targeted marketing plan (identifying industries and businesses to target). My spouse and I determined the lowest salary we could possibly live with, and then I contacted all of the people I could think of and arranged face-to-face meetings over coffee or lunch. I didn't ask any of them for jobs, just asked for advice. My former boss knew of a couple of openings so I applied immediately. Within a week, I had my first interview and was invited back for a second round. Unfortunately, that CEO wanted more current industry experience so I was pulled from the list. While I waited for that process to move along (about 45 days), I re-modeled a room in my house and re-decorated, visited my family out of state, took care of all the medical, dental and vision appointments I had put off because I was too busy working and generally renewed myself.

“Also, part of the renewal was to read all my old performance appraisals, resumes and pitches about projects and groups I lead. This reminded me frequently of what I could do and what I liked to do and helped me focus my efforts.

“Then a miracle happened! I met two great people through other people. Each introduced me to SIM and one sponsored me into both TENG and IT-NET. I found the daily emails and the meetings I was able to attend to be uplifting and informative. I really began to see my “job” as a project manager of job hunting.

“I became a very active member in SIM—both New York and Stamford. I never mentioned to any of the other members that I was not employed or that I was looking for a job. I used the membership to keep current on my industry knowledge, which turned out to be useful during interviews. I strongly believe that professional groups like SIM are NOT for job hunting.

“Each morning, I would “go to work” at 8AM on my home computer. I searched my target market/businesses (from my marketing plan) and reviewed the leads from the organizations. My goal was to send out at least one unique lead a week, apply for 3 jobs a day and talk to 3 people a day. Most of the time, I was able to achieve my goal. I only applied for jobs within driving distance of my house.

“When the lead was not a website application, I would send a brief email to the recruiter outlining why I was a good fit based on the limited information I had and said that if this seemed like a match to them, please call and I would be happy to send my resume.

“I always wrote a cover letter and thank you notes. I made sure that I used similar phrases in my cover letter and resume to those in the job description just in case they were using a computer based screening program.

“I had a good “hit” rate—about 25% of the time someone called me back. Of the call backs about 75% lead to an interview with HR or the recruiter. For each lead where I knew the name of the company, I did a web search and studied the company. If I knew someone personally who might help, I would call them. I didn’t send any emails to the group asking for company information, but probably should have.

“The net of this effort paid off. I wound up with 7 active interview schedules all going at once! For all 7 positions, I made the final short list. I was told by HR and/or the recruiter on 6 of the 7 to expect an offer and the 7th position was put on hold. I received 2 written offers and one verbal offer within 3 days of each other. The choice was terribly difficult. They were different types of jobs, each with their own attractions. 5 of the 7 were with recruiters and those were the ones where the process moved along and I was kept informed.

Basic stats:

- 90 days notice from my company
- 90 days between jobs (total out of the office 6 months, total job searching 4 months)
- 15 days after first resume went out to first interview
- 30-120 days--depending on company--to get from first scheduling phone call to final round of interviews.
- 71 resumes and cover letters sent on line (no hard copies sent out)
- 18 calls back (16 recruiters/2 HR people within the firm)
- 9 hiring manager interviews
- 7 second round interviews
- 5 assurances that an offer was “very likely” or “being worked on”
- 3 verbal offers
- 2 written offers
- 8 hrs/day 4 days per week (I generally took Fridays off)

“None of it would have happened without the networking and the mutual support of the groups. Logging on each morning to “you’ve got mail” and finding a description of something I could do gave me the encouragement I needed to keep going.”

I am very grateful to our contributor for their time, thoughts and insight. I encourage any of our members to share their experiences with us and welcome your contributions to our newsletters.
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