

Managing TENG in 2003

I would like to wish a Happy New Year to you and your loved ones. Hopefully this year will see an upturn in business and employment to the benefit and betterment of all of us. I am amazed at how rapidly each year passes, but I am not sad to see 2002 fade into the distance and am also confident that I am not alone with my opinion. One year ago, the TENG had fewer than 100 members and it is now nearing 1,000. Growing and managing it has rewarded me with a blend of feelings that include accomplishment and frustration with sidesteps into exhaustion. Some of you have approached me with new ideas for managing the TENG. Your thoughts are always appreciated. If I have failed to acknowledge any suggestions, it is due to a lack of time.

Over the past year, I have commented in writing and in conversation that some of our newly landed members have been dropping off the distribution list to reduce their personal Email traffic. Many Associate (landed and employed) TENG members have indicated a desire to stay connected to our group but not receive the Emailed job leads. Up until now, I have operated only one distribution list for the entire TENG. I have now created a separate Associate Member Distribution List for landed and employed members and will send them only Newsletters and Success Stories, but not the job leads. As personal circumstances change, members will be able to move from one distribution list to the other, by sending me an Email notice that her or his employment situation has changed. From now on, newly landed TENG members will be automatically moved to the Associate Member List, unless they specifically request that they be allowed to remain on the Active Member list. Please contact me via return Email to let me know whether you wish to be placed on the new Associate Member List and allow reasonable time for me to make this change. I have already notified many previously landed members of this new list and they have reacted positively. I am also pleased to report that some members who had disconnected altogether have reconnected with us via this alternate list. I am seeing some volatility in the job market, with a few members who landed in early-mid 2002 already coming back out. This instability makes it essential that members stay connected to the TENG and keep network channels alive.

Some members have inquired about the sources of the jobs we circulate. A few are disappointed that many leads are off the job boards and company Web sites; many others are pleased to have such leads delivered for free, rather than having to spend the time personally digging for them. When I originally founded the TENG based upon the FENG (Financial Executives Network Group) model, I naively thought that members would share the “unpublished” marketplace of jobs that they discovered through friends, colleagues, vendor contacts and the like; and would refer fellow members to these leads, while still pending themselves. In doing this, you are introducing competition to your candidacy, but it also helps to control the ultimate outcome of the hire. If you are not selected to fill a position, you are increasing the odds that a friend or colleague will be chosen, which strengthens your network of contacts with people who owe you. This has worked successfully for the FENG in the past. While some members have embraced this approach, most have not. I suspect that this is due in large part to the general lack of opportunities over the past year. I know that it’s difficult to be charitable when you have been

unemployed for a long time and personal resources are low. Hopefully we will enjoy more sharing of unpublished leads as market conditions improve.

Along with this, bear in mind that most of the leads we distribute are in the public domain and are available beyond our group for those willing to go to the trouble to look for them. Notwithstanding, some general procedures apply and must be followed:

- Forward all job leads to me for distribution to the membership.
- Keep TENG leads within the TENG. If you know a non-member who fits one of our leads, nominate them for membership first, if they qualify. Once we admit her or him, we can share the lead. This helps to control distribution but also grows the TENG and gives us another potential source of new leads and members.
- Before sharing leads from search firms, first obtain the recruiter's permission. Do this for both retained and contingent recruiters. Some don't want the Email traffic and phone calls, simply because they want to hunt their own candidates. Always ask before sharing.
- Prior to sharing leads from corporations, obtain the permission to share with our network. Ask the company for preferred contact information, which will either be Email or fax. If the company is running a confidential search it may wish to avoid the publicity it would receive from TENG.
- Do not submit leads from Execunet and other similar services. Execunet members pay for its services and it is unethical for them to share internal leads with non-members. Even an inadvertent sharing of such a lead would cause embarrassment for us and has already done so. Time does not permit me to verify the sources of leads. You must do this for me.
- Most of our members read CIO Magazine and subscribe to cio.com. Re-circulating leads from this online magazine is not necessary. More important, if we distribute CIO leads, we may violate the magazine's privacy policy. Most online publications offer readers the ability to Email an article or page to a friend. Forwarding copyrighted information to one or two colleagues is acceptable, but sending it to nearly 1,000 is considered republishing and requires special permission. Keep this in mind when forwarding a lead from any publication. Check first to determine whether broad-based sharing is allowed. If it is forbidden or if it requires special permission, don't forward the lead to me.
- My review time to determine whether a lead is appropriate for our members is limited to seconds. I regularly receive inappropriate leads, but out of respect for your time, I delete any lead that does not fit our member profile. Leads for non-IT senior executives or for lower level IT (below Director) will not be distributed. Some members may consider working lower level, hands-on positions and it is up to them to find such work. A significant majority of our members have frequently expressed their appreciation of the quality and fit of TENG leads. Subjecting everyone to leads for DBA's, Software Engineers, General Counsels and the like is contrary to our purpose and wastes time.

- I delete all leads that lack contact information. It is up to you to furnish this. I don't have the time to research it.
- I delete all leads that provide poor or scant information to allow members to self-screen.
- I do not represent any TENG member to any lead we share, although many members have asked me to do so. I feel this would be a conflict of interest. Any corporation, search firm, job board or other services whose leads we share do not compensate me.
- Time does not allow me to place geographical locations in the Email subject line for multiple lead Emails. A few members have asked me to do this because they don't want to scroll down to read each job description and search for the locations. They must be the same people who ask their spouses to peel grapes for them. You don't pay for TENG membership, or have you forgotten? My time is just as precious as yours.
- If I duplicate a job lead, understand that I can't commit all of them to memory. Once again, this is a free service. If a few extra Emails are that annoying to you, perhaps you should use only pay services.

I hate to beat a dead horse, but in spite of my previous announcements and newsletters, I still receive requests from employed and newly landed members for free access to the TENG database to help them hire their direct reports. I am puzzled by the contradiction of the glowing and gushing appreciation I receive from a landed TENG member when it is accompanied by such a request. Our landed members should be the best evangelists for TENG, easily recognizing both its value and its costs, and are the only members who can financially ensure its survival via consulting contracts and search work through my company, Bruner Consulting. We have supported TENG for a year, but we can't continue to do so indefinitely. No matter how we operate it, managing the TENG costs money and our costs will increase as it grows. I am appalled that so many of our landed members report that they don't have any budget for search firms or consultants, or that company policy forbids their use. While not all companies are alike, I find it to be nothing less than incredible that such a large number of C-level executives suddenly have absolutely no budget, influence or say about these matters. The costs of consulting and search contracts are paid by corporate and not personal funds. All TENG members get a free ride. Our Associate/landed/employed members will have to display their appreciation more substantively in the near future or when they seek us out on line for their next job search, they may find "Page Not Found" or "Not Deliverable".

On a related subject, the national TENG database will not be distributed to anyone, posted to a Web site or shared with outside parties. Access to this database is limited to one other person besides me. Every week I receive inquiries from marketers, sales representatives, recruiters, consulting firms, attorneys and services of every stripe that have heard of the TENG and want to sell to it or use it for their own gain. I refuse every one and will continue to do so for the benefit of all the TENG members. I do not wish to subject you to such abuse. Thank you in advance for not asking me to share it.

I hope your 2003 will be happy, healthy, rewarding and fulfilling.

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