

Member Etiquette

How we behave toward each other, a potential employer or a search firm has been a challenging issue since TENG was launched nearly two years ago. We have exchanged a few Emails over the past week concerning proper self screening and general etiquette when applying for a position. Two of our members reported that search firms they know refuse to circulate leads within TENG because they are tired of being bombarded by resumes of non-fits. Additionally, the FENG published a member's letter concerning four members of another IT executive networking group who bypassed a search firm and applied directly to its client. Let's deal with the issues:

- It's no laughing matter to be out of work for an extended period and face the pressure of spending down your retirement savings to pay the rent and groceries. Nevertheless, this does not justify the selfish, impolite behavior of sending your resume to every job lead you see in the hope of getting lucky. Failure to play by the rules of self-screening and selection not only makes you look desperate and unprofessional but it reflects negatively on all senior IT executives. You are signaling recruiters and hiring executives that you have no regard for their time, work or professionalism. Mature professional behavior is the norm whether we are in a buyers' or sellers' market.
- Being a member of a network group carries with it certain responsibilities. You can no longer act as if you are alone, but must consider the impact of your actions upon your colleagues and your chosen profession. Outsiders make judgments about all CIOs based upon the actions of those they observe. When you fail to self-screen, you announce to members of your network that you will resort to almost any tactic to get a job, even at their expense.
- You may think you can manage any IT department because you have many years of executive management experience. Unfortunately, while you may have an impressive track record, impeccable educational credentials and outstanding intellect, it is not enough. Companies only consider specific experience. When an executive announces that they can manage anything, hiring officials and recruiters alike regard such pontifications as self-aggrandizing and bombastic.
- "Been there, done that" cookie-cutter recruiting is the primary recruiting model, because everyone is trying to leverage the present buyers' market, cover their backside and reduce risk of a poor hire. Is this an effective means of recruiting the best people? Sometimes it is, but just as often it is not. Instead of trying to find the right person to fill the right seat in their organizations, hiring executives want to fill multiple positions with one person or they are intransigent about hiring anyone unless someone unbelievable turns up. We simply have to deal with it, but not by fighting the system.
- Companies hire recruiters either on retainer or on a contingent basis to fill only select positions. Any recruiter fortunate enough to land a search assignment in this tight market may offer consultative advice but will not push the client too hard. Either a recruiter accepts a search assignment for what it is or they don't and nowadays I suspect that very few are refused. The corporate version of "The Golden Rule" is, "The one with the gold makes the rules." Like the people they place, recruiters have been commoditized, and those who ignore client preferences are fired.

- Web posted jobs on Monster, Dice and 6Figurejobs are part of the marketplace. Most members appreciate receiving them because they help to provide an overall picture of national demand. Such leads will be distributed within TENG for the foreseeable future.
- People only share confidential lead information with those whom they trust. If we want to share job leads that are true leads and not just Web postings, we have to earn the trust of each other as well as the national recruiting firms. Trust grows out of mutual respect from being considerate of the time, relationships and priorities of others.

As a senior IT executive and TENG member you must be willing to follow these procedures:

- The primary rule is that you carefully screen yourself before applying for any position. Failure to do so is not proper etiquette when belonging to any network group and will only serve to harm your chances for success as well as those of your fellow members. Consider how you have hired in the past, how you wish to be approached by candidates and how you select your finalist. Follow the requested application protocol in every job lead.
- Never bypass a search firm and approach their client directly. This is an unforgivable sin, which will remove you from consideration and end your relationship with the company, the recruiting firm and its clients.
- When you obtain a lead from a trusted business contact, hiring executive or search firm, request permission to circulate prior to submitting the lead to the LeadShare Group. You may wish to offer to collect and prescreen all the resumes, rather than allow direct contact by other members to protect your source. Even you don't prescreen, by obtaining permission to share, you will spare yourself, the search firm and potentially its client of any embarrassment created by inadvertently going public with a confidential search or the nuisance of burying them in Emails.

The key word in the name Technology Executives Network Group is "Group". Our future value will be determined by how we treat and assist each other, share leads and present ourselves to the rest of the business community, which will mold our reputation and image among our peers. Our professional behavior is one of our strongest marketing tools and if held to high standards, will allow us to continue our growth and become a magnet for the best senior IT executive members and position leads.

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