

Relationships

Most of the leads which we share within TENG are from job boards and company Web sites. While the overwhelming majority of our members appreciate the time saved by having any leads distributed to them; a few others have expressed a desire for us to share more leads that are not available publicly or are offered by the retained firms. Indeed, when I created TENG and patterned it after the Financial Executives Network Group (FENG) model, I too hoped that this would be the case. Ultimately, a job is a job, no matter how and where you find it. But most of our members would like to be recognized as unique rather than as part of a thundering herd, stampeding through a Web portal, such as Monster or 6FigureJobs. There is a big difference between being hand picked and chosen by lot. Who wouldn't want to be introduced to the CEO and key decision makers of the best companies and enjoy a series of interviews with little or no competition? We see comparatively few opportunities shared where members can offer a personal connection to a search firm and fewer yet where they can introduce fellow members to the decision maker in a company. I think this is occurring for these reasons:

- Due to the overabundance of job candidates at the senior executive level, companies are guarding both permanent and consulting requirements carefully. They don't want to review a large volume of candidates, nor do they necessarily want the publicity or rumor that "they are hiring", which will then lead to additional unsolicited resumes coming their way.
- As a result, hiring executives call their friends and toss them a "life line" either in the form of a consulting assignment or permanent job. Many of our members have been hired this way, and the companies which hire them specifically request during the interview process that they not share the opening with anyone else.
- In a tight market like the present one, if a friend is not hiring you, you must be a better than perfect fit for any job where you have no inside contacts. Years ago, if you had six of the ten job requirements, you could be hired. Nowadays, you must have ten plus to be considered. Only bull's eyes count now. "Almost" only works with hand grenades and horseshoes.
- Very little hiring is occurring, even in the unpublished market although we are seeing some signs of a thaw.
- The few unpublished opportunities that do come up are being jealously guarded by candidates who have been in transition for lengthy periods and who wish to minimize their competition. I would prefer that our members share such leads; this "protectionism" is survival mentality and human nature.
- Some members are not following proper self-screening prior to applying for the few confidential retained searches that we share. This is causing potential problems between the search firm and the referring member, but is beyond the control of either. It is causing some alienation with the search firms to our detriment. Although the search industry suffers from image problems caused by some unprofessional players, many of its practitioners are reputable and sincerely want to do

their best for clients and candidates alike. They make business decisions much the same way that IT executives do. Just as you avoid doing business with disreputable search firms, any IT executive that “burns” a reputable search firm in any way is probably not given further consideration. Be honest with yourself before submitting your resume.

- Members who have performed prescreening on specific jobs for recruiters are attempting to build trust-based relationships that will have a future pay out. They want recruiters to contact them about top jobs with their best clients. These members are reporting that other unqualified members are seeking consideration for jobs they helping to represent. However, by pre-screening, they can weed out non-fits.

The old term, “never let them see you sweat” certainly applies here. Many of our members have been in transition for a year or more and can count the number of real job interviews they’ve had on their hands, with fingers left over. I suppose if I were more creative, I could turn the TENG membership into the cast of a “Survivor” show spin off, where the winner would be hired, but the job market doesn’t work that way. As unpleasant as unemployment is for everyone, failing to screen your experience against a position specification doesn’t help anyone. It potentially prevents you from being considered by the victimized search firm or corporation for future, more appropriate opportunities. Who would want to consider an executive who has blatantly demonstrated personal attributes including selfishness, inconsideration and an inability to follow directions? Perhaps most of our leads are from the public domain because,

- That’s where the jobs are. Companies feel that the Internet is a cheap alternative to hiring via more traditional methods. This may be true with some of the lower level positions, but has been determined to work in only two per cent of senior executive hires. Perception has become reality and will need to change.
- Some retained search firms have been buried by Emailed resumes of non-fit candidates and will not allow their job leads to be circulated by the TENG in the future. Indeed, I have been called by search firms and corporate human resource departments asking me not to circulate their jobs to the TENG membership. No company or search firm wants high volume, unnecessary traffic and attention when a search is being conducted confidentially to replace an incumbent executive, or when a search may signal a competitor that a company is launching a new business initiative. If we are going to be trusted with sensitive and confidential information, we must be able to prove that we can deal with it appropriately.
- Some of our members are probably not sharing solid personal leads because they do not want their best contacts in search firms and corporations buried by resumes of non-fits, which in turn will injure a trust-based relationship.
- TENG membership is being abused by members who pass leads to non-members. I have been contacted many times by executives, who although they are non-members are nonetheless asking me to provide additional information concerning a specific job lead. I do not respond to these requests. Email takes on a life of its own. If you pass leads to a non-member, how many other non-members will receive it from them? This is a chain reaction that goes out of control and hurts our members.

TENG has grown into a group of twelve hundred senior IT executives and is becoming a recognized resource in the business world. Failing to screen ourselves against position specifications will only tarnish our image and make us to appear as a group of desperate, unemployable people, who lack confidence in ourselves. From the conversations I have had with many of you, I know that this is not the case, but poor self-screening creates a negative first impression which can kill future potential opportunities.

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