

This newsletter is written by Debra Feldman, the head of JobWhiz, a career management and transition firm for executives. Sharing her article with our members does not mean that the TENG, Bruner Consulting or I am endorsing her services. This contribution discusses personal diligence during the career search process. If you wish to send her feedback or contact her, you will find her Web address and phone number at the end of this article I am grateful for her contribution. Ed Pospesil

TENG Newsletter, Vol. 5 No 7

For Swift, Success in Today's Job Market: Follow Up! Follow Up! Follow Up!
By Debra Feldman

Real estate brokers are always saying, "Location! Location! Location!" In job searching, there are also three key words for a swift, successful landing: Follow up! Follow up! Follow up! Today's highly sophisticated recruiting environment where keen competition is the norm, more favorable and faster outcomes result are reported by those who make the extra effort to unequivocally demonstrate to employers that they are outstanding individuals conveyed to prospective employers through their demonstrated initiative, dependability and character. Distinguish yourself from the throng of supremely qualified and eager candidates by showing that you are even more than they expected to find. Don't rely on your resume alone to convince the decision maker that you are superior. Show your future boss, don't just tell him that right from the get-go....

You are remarkable.

You are determined.

You persist.

You overcome tough challenges.

You succeed! (and will succeed for them in the future!)

How? By transforming your interest from "just" an impressive set of skills and appropriate background information into a memorable personality and potentially valuable resource, a seemingly perfect fit matched to their needs, their organization's culture and satisfying their requirements. If you wait passively for some member of the employer organization to contact you with their decision, you are definitely not demonstrating your initiative, responsibility, reliability and leadership. Hanging out for the job to find you, rarely produces a job offer that you even want. To land a fantastic new opportunity, takes a pro-active, assertive approach. Effectively planning and

aggressively executing campaign strategy to attract employers and impress them is the key to driving your search to a swift, successful landing.

In today's environment, getting ahead in the job market demands more active participation in the search process and a multi-faceted approach to tap all possible leads. Networking with colleagues is essential to unearth unadvertised or hidden jobs. To get the most out of all your efforts, it is important to follow up relentlessly. Don't let a ball drop. No matter how tempting it is to be passive and hope to get lucky, you can't afford to let potential connections slip through your fingers. To make sure this doesn't happen, the key is to follow up and stay on the inside contact's radar. Put simply: you have to follow up on leads so someone else doesn't get the job offer first.

What can you do to change the course of your campaign? How can you conquer barriers to your ascent? Be proactive: contact the appropriate hiring manager and show him or her that you are seriously interested in a particular opportunity at their company, not just sending out resumes and waiting for your turn to come. Communicate the message that you are extraordinary by your initiative and follow up. Don't wait silently hoping to be selected; prove that you want to personally present your qualifications and solutions to their challenges. Do your homework, prepare and then get in touch. Be polite. Maintain contact. Be patient. Don't give up until it's really over! Keep these connections alive as part of your network and they become career insurance for future transitions.

Here's how to ratchet up your campaign's velocity.

1. Invest the time and effort to customize your resume for each position you apply for. Use the terminology that the employer wrote in their job description. Be sure to provide relevant experience and highlight accomplishments that make it simple for the employer to relate to their own situation. Have yourself appear to be the perfect match and leave out irrelevant information. You want to get in the door, then you can deliver all the bells and whistles over and above the basic credentials to meet the employer's specifications.
2. Find out the correct spelling of hiring manager's name and title and use it on the cover letter. Find out from their assistant or a co-worker if they go by a nickname. Using a given name incorrectly is a dead giveaway that you don't really know whom you are addressing! Putting the correct name shows you are thorough and careful, may have some incredible research skills and that you have good business etiquette.
3. When sending a personal email or letter, alter your standard cover letter/ resume language to make it sound fresh using phrasing that personalizes the tone and sounds more like one person talking to another, not a boiler plate regurgitation of glorified achievements and credentials. Avoid resume-speak, such terminology is a snooze inducer common to most seasoned recruiters who can quickly scan a document for relevance. You want to write to them in a way that is memorable and communicates your message authentically, one that gets them to keep reading and want to learn more about you. Writing a resume to trigger a computer match is definitely different than writing a meaningful, clear, concise document that is

- going to be actually read, understood and appreciated by a thinking human mind. If your cover letter/resume has been developed to meet search engine or automated screening systems, revise it for human readers. Humanize it. Make it more fluent. Eliminate redundancy: you don't have to repeat key words but can use synonyms or rephrase a concept.
4. For positions that really capture your interests, follow submission instructions using your scannable format as specified in the advertised listing AND then also snail mail or hand deliver a copy of your "readable" or humanized materials to the hiring manager. Better yet, don't fold your documents and send them in a large envelope or express delivery package that draws attention and provides you with a receipt for delivery—and a signature/name to follow up with.
 5. Take on the admittedly tough challenge to identify and then make contact with the hiring authority for the job you want. Reach out directly by email or phone and continue to make courteous inquiries until you are told that you are no longer a candidate. Mark your calendar to follow up and stay in touch if you had a good rapport and can see networking with this individual in the future.
 6. Find out the hiring manager's assistant's name and call to introduce yourself. Let him or her know that you will be sending your resume and ask if it would be okay to check in with them to find out if it is received. Ask if you should address the correspondence to them directly. Start a dialog with this person and let them feel personally responsible for helping you. Thank them for their extra efforts on your behalf. Ask if it would be okay with them to email them a copy of your materials to share with their boss to expedite the process.
 7. Use your networking contacts to identify an individual connected with this company and ask them to introduce you to the hiring manager. Ask if they will deliver your resume personally and put in a good word for you.
 8. If you get referred to HR when attempting to connect with a hiring manager, be polite, follow their instructions and continue to attempt to connect directly with a decision maker. Don't necessarily depend on the HR contact to champion your candidacy because in many organizations HR does little more than screen out ineligible applicants rather than influence hiring managers about who they should acquire for their team. If you want to be on a decision maker's team, you have to win over the manager in charge of hiring which means you have to get to impress them directly.
 9. Don't worry if you end up with more than one inside contact. Hopefully both will endorse you and help you get exposure to the right decision maker. Plus, you will have expanded your networking contacts inside your target company!

In addition to follow up, the right focus and being the number one candidate are key to job search success. Future articles will discuss how to identify your target employers correctly to produce results faster and will show you what it takes to get in the door ahead of other potential candidates for the position you know you deserve.

Job search demands that you play an active role in defining and performing campaign tasks. Don't be a passive candidate at the mercy of employers. Set a focus for your campaign, strategize to be the first for openings and stay alive on decision makers' radar

screens. It's the old story of being the early bird and proactively seeking out positions you want. It's the tortoise that hangs in there plugging along faithfully to win the race.

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Debra Feldman is the JobWhiz™, a nationally-recognized expert who designs and personally implements swift, strategic, and customized senior level executive job search campaigns, banishing barriers that prevent immediate success. Her gift for cold calling, executed with high energy and savvy panache, connects candidates directly to decision makers, not HR. Network Purposefully™ with the JobWhiz, and compress your job search into mere weeks, using groundbreaking techniques profiled in *Forbes* magazine(2/28/05) and featured in an upcoming syndicated television series. In addition to writing columns and conducting workshops for several revered professional associations, Debra provides career guidance to alumni of top-tier business schools. Contact Debra @ www.JobWhiz.com to expedite your executive ascent.

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