

Persistence and Focus versus Tools

My previous newsletter, (Vol. 5 No 8, “This is about you”), expressed my concerns toward members who were not timely in replying to solid leads I had shared or were ignoring them altogether. It brought about a variety of responses, some of which were surprising.

One member wrote, “A mailing list such as TENG is so much noise – in the form of positions that would not be appropriate for me – that I sometimes miss things that ‘might’ be relevant. This could be for any number of reasons, such as a message header that is insufficiently descriptive, or that the essential details are buried too far down.” He goes on to comment that he has been searching two and a half years. His replies from online postings are less than one per cent of his submissions, and “well-crafted cover and follow-up letters, as well as phone calls are ignored.”

Another wrote, “I agree with what you say in principle, but over two years out of work and several hundred job ads submitted on and many interviews – sometimes you just can’t find the strength to get rejected again. So you try to start your own business or whatever. You just don’t believe you will find a job electronically.”

Yet another wrote, “Life brings us all an overwhelming amount of information and clutter. It’s time consuming to pick through it and it easily gets discouraging, despite your motivation. If your job group had a high probability of landing interviews for everyone, they would read it word for word every day...I know that any one source has a very low probability of being useful for each person. They are therefore faced with the task of scanning, reading and filtering out thousands of things to find each item worth pursuing. In the face of all this statistical noise, it (is) highly likely that qualified people would NOT notice a suitable lead.” He goes on to say, “the other aspect of the job search process is that dirty little word ‘depression’...That stops people from engaging their creative processes. In their corporate jobs they’ll quickly look to tools to solve their work related IT problems but in their personal job search, they don’t easily engage their creative side to look for, or better yet, develop solutions which help. Lead the group in some brainstorming exercises to find new solutions to common problems...these might be easier to do in an in-person format than by Email.”

I am not a very technical person, but embrace technology whenever it makes my work and life easier. The instantaneous ease of communicating via Email and the readily available research on the Internet has improved my productivity immensely in recent years. Indeed, TENG would not have been as successful as it is without these technologies to enable its operation. But technology only takes us so far and then we must still do some work. The common element among the above replies is that each author is running a passive electronic job search or sales campaign, Emailing resumes and waiting for the perfect job offer to roll in.

Executives in transition are sales people, plain and simple, like it or not. Selling is a numbers game. It is about reaching out to others personally to establish a relationship, not sending an Email to a blind address. It means suffering through many “no’s” to get to a “yes”, which makes the suffering worthwhile. This is about persistence and grit, namely one’s determination to stand up one more time after having been knocked down a few hundred times. Any sales veteran will agree that success does not come easily. As Winston Churchill once said, “Never give up!” History is filled with accounts of presidents, generals, inventors, business leaders, scientists, etc. who faced years of disappointment and failure only to reach the pinnacle of success, in many cases to the betterment of their fellow man. It’s fortunate for the rest of us that they did not give up.

You should spend some of your search effort replying to Internet postings and TENG leads. Remember however, that job boards account for two per cent of executive level hires while networking accounts for at least sixty per cent. If you want to filter out the noise in your search, replace your passive electronic approach with an active one that is focused on your value, passions and building relationships:

- Develop your value statement; know your passions, interests and the accomplishments that best illustrate them. Be ready to articulate this in a succinct elevator speech.
- Only seek those positions which will allow you to leverage your values and strengths as well as fuel your passions. All other positions then become the noise which you filter out.
- Network, network and network some more. Spend sixty per cent or more of your job search effort on networking. The Internet allows you to obtain leads and information as well as communicate more rapidly, but it does not replace relationship building. My clients are increasingly frustrated by digital recruiting campaigns that produce more volume than quality.
- You are being spoon fed leads from TENG. LeadShare Group rules specify that each Email show the position title, industry or company, location and compensation, as known within the subject line. You should be able to delete most inappropriate leads based upon that information alone. If you have to read thirty Emails a day out of a hundred received from all sources, is that a burden?
- TENG is only one line in the water. Join as many appropriate networks as possible. Get the word out. Don’t be too proud to overlook any possibility.
- Maintain, nurture and continue to build your network after you land.
- Help others in transition. Most will have long memories and may be the source of some future position for you.

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