

SEARCH AT THE EXECUTIVE LEVEL

*By Jerry Hellebusch**

Discretion Is Key In Your Executive Job Search

If you took a survey of corporate professionals, they would probably say the most difficult challenge in business is to climb the ladder to an executive position.

However, the individuals who've made it to the executive ranks would most likely disagree. That's because many who have already reached the top find it's even more difficult to make the next move. For some, it's next to impossible to secure a similar or better position with another company, especially when they have to do so unexpectedly.

Once you reach the highest ranks in business, the field narrows dramatically – both in the number of positions available and in the specific skills required for those jobs. To further compound the difficulty, the field of competition increases, the hiring authorities get much more selective, and the interview and hiring process slows down significantly.

The approach that you should use to locate that next executive position will vary greatly, depending on whether you are employed at the time of the search. Being employed enables you to conduct the search on your own timetable. However, it is more difficult because everything has to be done in a discreet and confidential manner.

The most effective way to locate a top-level position – whether you are employed or unemployed – is through your own network of friends and business associates. Anytime you can get an introduction to a prospective employer through an influential business contact, you automatically have credibility, even before your first interview. Those contacts might be previous business associates, customers or past employers.

The next best option is to engage the services of a reputable executive search firm. Ideally, you should find one that either specializes in your area of expertise or has done a number of searches in your field. It should have contacts or knowledge of the marketplace in which you are looking. This is an avenue that should be explored while tapping your personal network because the two approaches will

rarely conflict and your exposure to prospective employers will be enhanced considerably. Also, if job hunting while still employed, a search firm can assure you of complete confidentiality.

While it is preferable to be employed during this process, it is much easier to explore all avenues if you're unemployed. It can be fruitful to take a proactive approach by researching all prospective companies that might be interested in your background. After doing your homework, forward resumes and customized cover letters to the hiring authorities at companies that sound like the best fits for your skills. This information can be found through a variety of publications at the library, or on the internet, but this approach is not advisable if you're employed as you will not be able to control who might see your information.

Another option is to answer classified ads in newspapers and trade or employment publications. If currently employed, you'd be wise to answer an ad that includes the name of the company. However, it would be foolish to send your resume to a "blind ad" because it could be your present employer or an acquaintance of your employer running the ad.

Needless to say, you might have a lot more time to look if your resume landed on your employer's desk. Read [Creating A Killer Job Search Plan - By Jim Cipriani Jr, \(President Systems Personnel Executive & Technical Recruiters, Buffalo NY - WNY\)](#)

Regardless of the approach you use, it's important to remember this process can take a long time. You shouldn't be discouraged by what you may interpret as a lack of interest in your skills and background. Finding the right career opportunity requires a combination of patience, persistence and timing, as well as putting together and implementing a solid plan for marketing yourself.

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