

JOB SEARCH & NETWORKING STRATEGIES

Two page extract from my Outplacement and Networking Manual.

Life is competitive. Don't wait for things to come to you, act early and act often. Make a plan and consciously and constantly work at job search, just as you would at a job itself. The harder you work the 'luckier' you will be! But make your actions count and don't waste energy. I recommend you buy two books to help you to do this - Super Job Search and NLP in 21 days.

At every stage of the job search process you have to distinguish yourself from other candidates, to put yourself ahead of them. Every action you take needs to increase the odds in your favour, however marginally. Little distinctions at every stage will help you to get into and stay in the 'YES' pile. Put yourself in the position of the recruiter and ask yourself how it will affect your chances. Will it improve them, will it reduce them or is it neutral? Only take those steps that will enhance your chances.

Life being full of chance you will find that unforeseen opportunities arise when you take many actions and meet many people. Go for anything that could be suitable and for which you appear to be qualified, whether or not you definitely want it. Only at the offer stage do you need to make a decision as to whether or not you want the job. By keeping your options open you will get more interviews that will provide practice, maintain confidence and keep you active. So, don't be choosy until you have to choose!

Think of yourself as a product and you will realize that you need to make selecting you as easy as possible by identifying your 'features' (education, skills, experience, personality, circumstances etc) and demonstrate clearly how they can be of value to people you meet (benefits) whether they are network contacts, recruitment consultants or company interviewers. To do this you must devote serious time to preparation. As someone once said: "To fail to prepare is to prepare to fail" and nowhere is it more true than in job search.

At the CV preparation you do this by going back over all the stages in your life and noting your achievements and the skills or qualities you used to bring these about. It's important to ensure that you don't forget or take for granted achievements or qualities. Doing this will:

1. Give you choice that enable you to include on your CV the most relevant achievements.
2. Remind you of all that you have achieved so that it is fresh in your memory and can therefore be recalled more easily at interview.
3. Boost your morale when you remind yourself of how much you have achieved.

At the self-evaluation stage consider using psychometric profiling to get a good understanding of your personality preferences and how these impact on your work and in particular your interactions with people. This is especially useful since many companies use these as part of the selection process. You should therefore know what sort of information you are 'giving' them. Knowing your profile will help you to validate strengths, feel good about them and market them with greater confidence, as well as provide insights into possible weaknesses and blindspots so that you can handle these areas at interview.

At the job search stage harness all avenues including agencies, adverts, websites, direct speculative applications, networking etc rather than putting all your eggs in one basket or relying on just one or two methods. Think carefully about whether interim or temporary opportunities offer the potential to broaden your choice, open up opportunities or simply keep the bank balance healthy.

At the networking stage reach out widely to meet as many people as you can. Have faith in the process because it has been proven to work time and again. Meetings where you gain nothing will often provide you with the chance to help someone, which then reinforces the relationship further. As the saying goes: “What goes around, comes around”. Make sure that you tap into your real network and your virtual network, the internet, Linked-In, Facebook etc. Not to do the networking, but more to find or re-connect with people to set up face to face meetings.

At the written application stage you make sure that you demonstrate how your qualities, experience, skill etc match what the role requires, to make it easy for the recruiter to put your papers into the ‘YES’ pile. And follow any application instructions carefully, since failure to do so can be a reason for a recruiter to put you in the ‘NO’ pile.

At the interview stage ensure that you are thoroughly prepared to answer all the questions that you may be asked. In particular you will need to have well developed, but genuine sounding, answers to some of the trickier questions you may be asked, such as questions about weaknesses, or the qualities you dislike in a boss!

At every stage stay in touch with as many of your contacts as possible, without making a nuisance of yourself, to maintain morale and to be aware of opportunities they may hear about. Also use spare time to add to your skills by reading, or listening to personal and professional development tapes. Take advantage of every opportunity to add to your knowledge and skill. It’s motivational in itself, it may help you get a new job and it will repay dividends once you are in a new role.

At the new employment stage don’t forget the lessons you have learned in getting there. Too many people see this as the finishing post rather than a new starting post.

1. **Use networking, internal and external, to develop and harness a contact network** to help you achieve in your role, to help you to solve problems or to help you learn about new opportunities or jobs.
2. **Take action to manage, or develop in your areas of weakness** through self development or, if your company is willing to pay, through corporate training. Work on those areas in particular that will help you to promote yourself, but in a nice way! Self awareness, enhancing confidence, presentation skills, networking, influencing skills and a foreign language are six important areas whether you choose to work for yourself, or in corporate life and almost regardless of your job specialization.
3. **Keep your CV updated.** Whenever you acquire new skills or achieve something of note, jot it down and pop it in a plastic folder with your most recent CV. From time to time update your CV to reflect the progress you are making. It’s easier to do this as you achieve things than it is to start from scratch when an opportunity presents itself.

The methods are tried and tested - they do work. Remember that you and only you can get and keep your next job. Working through the PeopleFocus manual will ensure you’re clear about who you are, what you want and why others should hire you. Once you’re clear about this it will be much easier for you to ‘sell’ yourself as the solution to someone else’s problem. The process does not aim to “give you the fish” but the knowledge and tips you gain will “teach you to be better at fishing” and help you now ... and far into the future.

Resources

Outplacement Workbook
PeopleFocus.co.uk website
John Gotting, PeopleFocus.co.uk

Email john@peoplefocus.co.uk
Visit www.peoplefocus.co.uk
Tel. 07973 561265 or 01372 370849