

# Chapter 8: The Job Search

## *The Job Market: Developing A Search Strategy*

There are a number of typical avenues by which to go about marketing yourself. These include:

- Contacting Hiring Managers/Companies Directly
- Networking
- Applying for Specific Open Requisitions Through Web Sites or by Mail
- Search Firms and Employment Agencies
- Mass Mailings and Targeted Mailings
- BrassRing and Company Open Houses
- Answering Employment Advertisements



You can effectively combine the use of all these means to conduct your job search campaign. First, doing some research about the job market will help you to formulate your strategy.

### **Assessing The Job Market**

#### *You, the Salesperson*

Looking for a job is similar to selling a new product, although in this case you are the product. In order to know how to market yourself to companies, you must learn all you can about your potential customers (e.g.,



who they are, where they are, and what they will pay), as well as how to determine their needs and communicate to them your ability to fulfill those needs. The following questions will help you to develop your marketing, or job search, strategy.

#### *Job Search Questions to Ask Yourself:*

- What kind of companies or industries are interested in the skills that you possess?
- What is the title of the individual who can actually hire you? That is, do you have to be interviewed by the Vice President of Finance, the Regional Sales Manager, the Human Resources Administrator, or the Chief of the Production Crew before getting the job?
- What are the locations of the firms that interest you? Do they have local, regional, or national offices? Which office do you have to approach too get the job you want? Who is the individual you have to see to get the job?
- How can you best make contact with these firms? Should you do so through your personal network, search firms, blanket distribution of resumes, or direct phone calls?
- What qualities (e.g., work history, educational background or

personality), would make you especially desirable to these companies?

- What is the general salary range for the position in which you are interested? How does this relate to your last salary? Is it higher? Lower? The same?
- In planning your job search campaign it is important to make an accurate estimate of the size of the market. Are you limiting your market to a local or regional area? What are the trade-offs in broadening your market or restricting it? These assessments are crucial to the design of a realistic marketing effort that will produce the results you want.

### ***Ready, Fire, Aim***

Do your research on companies and industries first, before making contact in the marketplace. That way you will be knowledgeable of relevant industry trends as well as company reputations. You will be able to demonstrate to any interviewer, telephone contact, or recipient of a letter that your interest is backed up by initiative and preparation—a big advantage for you in your job search campaign. Also, if one chip manufacturer understands that you are familiar with other ones, he will think that you are being pursued by others, and hence are more valuable. Before you know it, there might be a bidding war for you. Think about it, would you hire someone in today's market who had not even jumped onto the Internet and looked you up?

### ***What To Research***



You need to analyze and understand a company by obtaining as much information as you can about the industry, the organization, its position in the industry, and the individuals in any organization you plan to contact. Some of the kinds of information that may be relevant to your job search are summarized below:

#### **Industry Information**

- Historic Trends
- Recent Trends
- Noteworthy Companies within the Industry

#### **Company Information**

- History, Size, Growth Rate
- Profitability
- Products/Services
- Financial History and Current Status
- Top Management Players
- Backgrounds
- Tenure/Average Age
- Philosophy
- Company culture
- Changes in Company Structure
- Changes in Product Lines or Services

#### **Geographic Area Job Trends**

- Sellers/buyers market
- Salaries at what percentile of the market
- What jobs are in demand

Here's a couple of sources for company information.

- Bureau of Labor Statistics Publications
  - Specific Company Publications
- Make sure you smile sincerely at the research librarian. That person will become your best friend.

### **Business References and Directories:**

Business references and directories will be useful to you in planning your job search strategy. Those listed below can be found at you local business, public, college and university libraries. In addition, local directories published by the Chamber of Commerce and government agencies are available in many urban areas. The San Jose Business Journal is our current favorite, along with Corp. Tech. We encourage you to use all available research sources.

***Guide To American Directories.*** B. Klein Publications, P.O. Box 8503, Coral Springs, Florida 33065

A listing and description of 6,000 directories with over 300 major industrial, professional, and mercantile classifications. Useful in locating membership names and titles. Calling the publisher or library and asking for specific information or a copy will expedite your research.

***Encyclopedia of Associations.*** National Organizations of the U.S. Gale Research Co., Book Tower, Detroit, Michigan 48266.

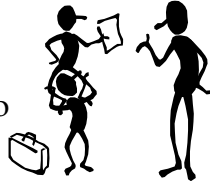
A guide to 22,000 national nonprofit organizations of all types, purposes and interests; including commodity exchanges, public administration, military cultural, patriotic and scientific organizations, fraternities, sororities, and fan clubs. Gives contact names, headquarters addresses, telephone numbers, chief officials, number of members and chapters, descriptions of membership, aims and activities. Includes lists of special committees and departments, publications, and a four-year convention schedule. Arranged by subject, and cross referenced by name of chief executive, geographic location, as well as by organization name. Not too complete, but the best available.

Useful in locating placement committees which can help you learn of specific job openings in your field of interest; getting membership lists of individuals in order to develop personal contacts learning, where and what the jobs are.

## *Using Search Firms and Employment Agencies*

### I. Search Firms

It's important to remember that search firms (fondly referred to as headhunters) work for the employer, not for the applicant. They are paid by companies to find people, not vice versa. They can be classified into two types of companies: retained or contingency firms.



**Retainer firms** are paid by the company on a retainer basis to locate qualified people for specific positions. Retainer firms search for the right candidate on an exclusive basis; no other search firms are involved. They are paid a standard, usually large, flat fee up front or over a period of six months. They receive the fee whether or not the candidates they identify are selected by the company and regardless of whether the selected candidate is a success in the position. Just like the American Buffalo herd has diminished, so have retained recruiters. There are just too many competent, hungry contingency firms around.

**Contingency firms**, on the other hand, are paid a fee by the company only when the individual presented by the contingency firm is hired. These positions are not generally exclusive with one search firm. Contingency recruiters will receive as their recruiting fee a bonus equal to an average of 30% of a candidate's salary. There is usually a 60 to 90 day period in which the fee will be refunded if you don't work out.

Therefore, your first few months with a company can be very important. If given the choice, many companies prefer not to pay a fee in order to review qualified candidates themselves.

Although contingency firms work mainly at the middle management and technical professional level, they may also be effective in placing people in other positions. If you can find a good, aggressive contingency recruiter who believes that he will make money off of you, try to work with him. He may have excellent contacts. One trick will be to teach him exactly what you can do on the job, and how he can quickly market you.

Should your background match the needs of an ongoing search assignment, the search firm will usually contact you by telephone. Letter responses are generally used to inform you that there is no current client assignment matching your background. Miss Manners would be appalled to find out that recruiters are among the rudest, busiest, financially motivated individuals around. If they decide that you are not going to make them money, they probably will not even accept or return your call. Do not give up trying to reach them. Many are very disorganized (just like you and me.)

During the initial phone contact, and even during the first interview, the identity of the client firm will probably not be divulged. Nevertheless, the

information should be sufficient to give you some idea of its size, industry, geographic location, etc.

Decide how much time you are willing to spend working with recruiters. The less experienced ones may use a good phone script but waste a tremendous amount of your time. Typically, recruiting agencies will have their least experienced recruiters do the initial sourcing of candidates. They may ask you to drive 90 minutes to their office just so the new recruiter can practice interviewing you. It can be very frustrating to go through this to realize later that the recruiter was not even working on an assignment that would be right for you.

We recommend that if a reputable search firm such as Korn-Ferry or Heidrick & Struggles or ESI wants to meet with you, do it. They have so many searches and potential searches in their pipeline that if they are impressed by you, they will market you.

Otherwise, consider insisting on a phone interview with the hiring manager before driving anywhere. Also, ask the recruiter some detailed questions about the position and how he sees you contributing there.

Frequently it turns out that a junior sourcer did a one word search for "Windows" instead of "Senior Windows NT programmer with five + years of experience using RDBMS and C" and your resume got pulled up because your p.c. skills include word processing and spread sheets on Windows 95. Once you explain what you do, the recruiter may not give you the time of day. Realize

that it is a two way street, and carefully invest your valuable time. Remember that long-term recruiters and contract recruiters build and maintain their own proprietary data bases on candidates. They may keep track of you for years before eventually placing you somewhere.

## **II. Employment Agencies: Contract and Permanent**

Since nearly all companies make some use of employment agencies to supplement their own internal recruiting staffs, it will be useful to understand their policies and practices. Here are some pointers:

- Employment agency listings generally range from entry-level positions to those with a salary of approximately \$80,000 a year. Some of the better reputed local agencies include Act 1 Technical Services, Kelly Technical Services, and Adecco.
- Agencies that specialize in technical jobs such as programming and development; the salaries these agencies deal with are often higher. These companies may place candidates in both contract and permanent jobs.
- Some companies will become closely allied to certain agencies and give them most of their business. If there is a company that you are interested in but have no contacts, call the Human Resources department and ask which agency they use. Then call the agency, present your skills, and let them know where you would like

to be placed. This can be extremely successful for career changers who are willing to take bridge jobs in order to get into a super growth company like Netscape or Oracle.

- The amount of time and attention that an agency will give you is a fair indication of how marketable they feel you are. If you look like a very suitable candidate for their types of openings, they may send you out on interviews immediately. One of the ways that you can insure this wholehearted attention is to make a good impression in your first interview with the agency. If they find anything that limits your marketability, they may decide not to refer you.
- Recognize that agencies make their money by placing as many individuals as possible. Unlike recruiters, they may want to give your resume to companies without your prior permission. This could create problems regarding fees, positioning, etc. They may also push you to take a job you really don't want so that they can increase their volume of placements. You can say "no" to an interview or a job; don't let yourself be pressured.
- Be aware that agencies can work against you by calling companies you have interviewed on your own and suggesting other candidates that they represent. Be careful not to tell the agency the names of the companies you have approached directly in your job search campaign. Also, if they know that you are covering the market on your own,

they may be more reluctant to work with you.

- You must be very assertive in working with agencies in order to maintain control of your job search. Success can depend much more on the agent than the agency. To find the best agent in your targeted geographic location and functional area, go to the agency and interview with the agent who will be representing you. Make sure the agent you select is professional and knows your function. Find out how long the agent has been with the firm. Try to determine how many and what companies the firm represents so that you can strategically select agencies covering the market you wish to penetrate without duplicating efforts.

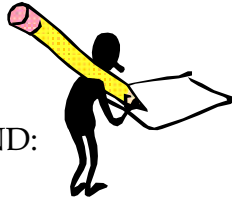
Consider using agencies as one of the strategies in your campaign. They know about open positions and can get you interviews. They can also provide you with valuable feedback on your interviewing skills, salary range and a company's reaction to you. Check in with them regularly so you can maintain some control and use them to your best advantage.

## *Job Search Letters*

### **Guidelines for Search Firm/Employment Agency Letters**

Generally, your letter should include the following:

- **YOUR BACKGROUND:**  
Be succinct and highlight years of experience, general track record, and reason for leaving.
- **YOUR JOB GOAL AND SALARY:**  
Include relocation options as well.
- **YOUR RESUME:** Enclose this with your letter.



Unlike cover letters that you send to companies directly, the search firm/employment agency letter should include an indication of current salary or approximate compensation desired, and whether or not you are willing to relocate to another area of the country.

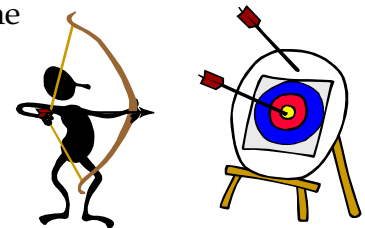
### **Using Mass Mailings vs. Targeted Mailings**

Although both mass mailings and targeted mailings require sending letters to contact companies on a “cold call” basis, your preparation, as well as the results, will differ. Once you have identified an industry, and a list of companies within that industry that might be of interest to you, you choose whether or not to conduct further research. If, instead of continuing your research on the companies, you simply create a general letter, called a broadcast letter, that could apply to all of the companies on your list, we call that a

mass mailing. Using mass mailings as a job search strategy has the lowest return of all the strategies, and is probably not worth your time.

For a more effective approach, you identify only the specific companies on that list which you believe have strong potential in your job search campaign. These become your target companies, for which you’ll do very thorough research so that each letter will be composed specifically for a particular company. This is a targeted mailing. In this chapter we will focus only on targeted mailings since that produces the best results.

Your choice of target companies should reflect your ideal job preferences, including location, working climate, opportunity for promotion, pay scales, etc. And, of course, you’ll want to consider what you can contribute to the company. Target company names can come from Internet searches, Dun & Bradstreet, as well as from state, county or city company directories, professional directories, your own knowledge of the industry, or suggestions by network contacts.



After the target email and web site list is developed, you should construct your marketing letter and resume in both Word and ASCII format and send it directly to the companies’ job listing

web sites. If you are sending hard copies, address the letters to the appropriate hiring manager and send on high quality, white bond paper.

### **Guidelines for Target Company Letters**

FORMAT: It should have four paragraphs, each of which serves a specific purpose.

1. **The Opening.** It must catch their eye and hold their attention. "As a Production Vice President for XYZ Corporation, I saved my firm \$250,000 by increasing production and decreasing expenses." Explain in detail in three lines how you did it. This opening is your most outstanding accomplishment reworked.
2. **Second Paragraph.** Describe your most recent work experience: title, company and responsibilities.
3. **Third Paragraph.** State, "Several of my other important accomplishments are..." then list four to six of your work accomplishments. Only list experiences that are relevant to the position you are seeking. List work accomplishments by order of importance, not by chronological order. Go back five to seven years; dates are not needed. Sell your accomplishments.
4. **Final Paragraph.** "I would welcome the opportunity to discuss with you how my experience and abilities

could contribute to your efforts in the international arena. I will call you in the next few days to set up a mutually convenient time when we might discuss a position in your organization. If no position is currently available, I would greatly appreciate whatever information you could give me about other opportunities in international banking. Thank you very much."

5. **Educational background.** Can be left out of the cover letter, or slipped into the final or second paragraph if it's worth highlighting.

LETTER LENGTH: No more than two pages.

DO NOT INCLUDE: Personal information (e.g., age, marital status, hobbies), salary information, references, resume.

Try to send the letter to a decision-maker in a specific department, otherwise to Human Resources. Mail ten to fifteen letters per week and then follow up by phone within five days. Don't send more than a total of 25. Work with those until you get two or three appointments, then start again. Try to get an appointment even if no appropriate job is available. This process may uncover more unadvertised openings than any other method except networking. Keep at it, be persistent, and don't be discouraged.

## Answering Employment Advertisements

Engineering and administrative candidates usually have more success answering want ads in Silicon Valley than other professionals. For most groups, however, this is the least effective way of getting a job and we want to suggest that you limit your job search time in this area. One caveat is that you can glean a lot of excellent information about what positions are in demand, etc. from reading the want ads.

There are two kinds of ads:

### Open Ads vs. Blind Ads

- **OPEN ADS:** Companies publicize job openings to employees through internal bulletin board announcements, as well as to the general public through newspaper ads in compliance with Equal Opportunity guidelines. These ads include the company name, and usually are placed in the newspaper directly by Human Resources. Open ads imply that the company reputation is an attractive aspect of the actual job opportunity.
- **BLIND ADS (P.O. Box Numbers):** Blind ads do not reveal the company name. Companies use blind ads for a number of reasons. Human Resources saves time by not

having to answer every ad response. This is particularly important when many people respond and the employment staff is small. If there are imminent internal changes taking place and the company does not want to reveal this to the public or to the company employees who will be affected, a blind ad may be a suitable vehicle to screen and hire without alarming the people still on their jobs. Also, the company can protect itself from candidates calling and following up. Finally, the company can prevent job seekers from “back dooring” H.R. and going directly to the hiring manager. Blind ads also may be used by executive recruiters and employment agencies to develop business and contacts; they don’t necessarily represent existing job openings. A blind ad could mean that the agency is trying to stockpile a list of good potential candidates and then will go solicit a requisition.

### *Special Considerations When Using Classified Ads*

Each reply is usually screened for the minimum qualifications, either by a human or Resumix. The higher the job level (pay scale), the less chance of placement via ads.

- Blind ads (box numbers) may be placed by search firms or companies who do their own recruiting.
- For particularly attractive openings, use follow-up letters and/or phone calls. Persistence does pay!
- Directors of employment at large companies are now telling us that to

*Sample letters for targeted mailings can be found in Appendix 7a.*



them, the want ads in the newspaper are a waste of time.

### ***Best Sources of Classified Ads***

Most candidates think only of their Sunday newspapers as a source. Do not exclude other media. Seek the assistance of your local library to obtain:

- Daily newspapers.
- Leading newspapers for those cities to which you would relocate.
- Local papers or weeklies.
- Professional and trade publications in your field.
- Weekly business papers for your area.
- School/University job listings.
- For lower-middle through upper management posts, the Wall Street Journal reprints of employment opportunities in their National Business Employment Weekly.
- National Ad Search.
- Government publications.
- Web searches.

### ***Selecting Appropriate Advertisements***

- Answer ads for which you're qualified, overqualified, or under qualified. There is such a shortage of highly skilled workers that if one comes along, most companies will create a job for that person.
- Answer advertisements for companies that you might have contacted before. Companies don't have infallible tracking systems, and a "no interest" letter does not necessarily apply forever.

- Look for companies who run large advertisements and who do considerable hiring. Even if your qualifications don't exactly match those jobs featured, there might be other positions available when companies are restructuring.
- Be aware of firms that are expanding or moving into other areas. They might hire you at a later date and it's never too soon to lay the groundwork. Furthermore, staffing plans might be advanced if you are available.
- Don't overlook box number advertisements. They too are potential job leads. But keep in mind that they have a low response rate.
- Also keep in mind that small firms and companies with less than perfect images use this method more frequently than other, more desirable companies, and that recruiters may be sourcing.

### ***Guidelines For Letters That Answer Classified Ads***

The first step is to jot down experience and any other information that could be assumed to be desirable in the kind of position described.

Next, be aware that although most advertisements ask for "complete salary history" or "compensation requirements," until you know about the company and the position, there is no way to determine what your salary requirements are. After all, the employer could be a family owned company requiring relocation, which is

already in Chapter 11, and has a group of young relatives ready to take over after you have rescued it. Your salary requirements in this case would certainly be higher than for a similar position in a more traditional corporate situation.

On the other hand, you cannot ignore the request for salary data because the screener may well have instructions to discard any response without some sort of salary mention. Giving an exact amount may eliminate you if you are a few thousand dollars too high or too low to fit the compensation bracket given to the screener. The best way out of this dilemma is to mention that salary is negotiable based on both the job requirements and your own related experience. This should satisfy the screener's needs, but not commit you to specifics until you have had an opportunity to find out more about the position.

Compose a brief cover letter and enclose a resume in response to the ad. You may want to develop a file of form letters to minimize the time needed to respond to each advertisement.

*In Appendix 7a is an illustration of an actual ad and a cover letter and resume which responds to the ad.*



## *Following Up When You Haven't Heard*

If your response to an ad does not bring immediate results, there are a number of possible reasons:



- An ad may continue to run almost indefinitely even though someone was hired immediately. This may occur for the following reasons:
  - a. The company is trying the person out while taking a market survey of potential candidates.
  - b. A company may pay for newspaper space at a reduced rate for a set length of time. (The ad still runs, but the position is filled.)
- A company may be overwhelmed by the number of replies and needs time (e.g., several weeks and possibly months) to go through the data.
- The decision may have been delayed and become a lesser priority.
- Internal conditions have changed for better or worse and the position is updated, redrafted, restructured, consolidated, eliminated, etc.
- An internal candidate for the position shows up, and the lead time for interviewing changes to accommodate the new conditions.
- Budgetary and fiscal constraints halt the selection process.
- Most companies cannot afford to acknowledge individual submittals.

Until you know the job has been filled:

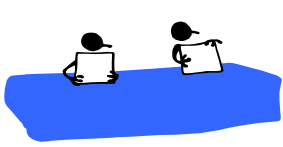
- Follow up on attractive ads with another letter.
- Make follow-up phone calls to all open listings until you know how the search was concluded.

Persistence and diligence pay off in job searches. It is a numbers game. Also, some candidates who have received letters of rejection but kept answering the same continuously running ad have eventually secured interviews with the company that initially rejected them. Sometimes different individuals or committees are involved. Follow up on good potential jobs by phone call.

Don't forget, this is supposed to result in interviews and offers. If it does not, try a different method.

## *How To Prepare For BrassRing and Company Open Houses*

Everyone should attend BrassRing and a company open house at least once in person. These events are usually free and are scheduled to support area employers in filling existing openings in their companies. They can present very helpful



opportunities for you to use your time efficiently to

visit with a number of people in just a few hours. Watch for announcements of the time, days and locations of these activities in the classified section of the Sunday newspapers. Occasionally, local radio stations will also run advertisements to inform you of these events.

BrassRing is a very large employment fair where hundreds of different local employers pay to have a booth set up and a recruiter or two available to conduct brief screening interviews with anyone who attends the event. Some fairs may have 250 or more employers represented. BrassRing is the largest local job fair and is held approximately every two or three months. Do not miss BrassRing; even if you don't end up giving out any resumes, it is the hands-down, best way to know exactly what is going on in the local employment market.

An Open House is an event held by individual employers on those occasions when they need to fill a number of positions and want to attract a variety of

applicants at one time. The company usually holds the Open House at their facility, and representatives of the employment department are on hand, sometimes joined by hiring managers from other departments.

For both of these events, you can expect to find hundreds or even thousands of other people in attendance, most of whom are like you and want to find out information about the company and available positions, and to submit their resumes. This means you should plan ahead so you can use your time in an efficient manner. You also need to have a strategy on how to approach the situation in order to present yourself concisely and with enthusiasm.

### **How to Survive BrassRing**

#### *Before BrassRing*

- Read *High Tech Careers Magazine*, which is available free almost everywhere. Look at the positions that are advertised and the employers who will be represented. Make a preliminary list of your target items and companies.
- Plan to take with you a professional looking note pad, a pen and a pencil, and 25-30 copies of your resume.
- Be prepared to gather product literature and other materials from each employer whose booth you visit.
- Dress for success in clean, high quality "business sophisticated-

business casual.” This means slacks, shirt, jacket for men (don’t make it look like all you did was take off the tie), and matching pants suits for women, along with moderate make-up and no perfume.

- Even if the job you want does not require you to wear these types of clothing, remember that you could have an interview on the spot at the fair. You don’t want to miss an opportunity to create a good first impression especially since it may be the only opportunity you will have.
- Review your resume. Know every item on your resume and how to talk about your best accomplishments. Rehearse your answer to the questions: “What are you looking for?” and “Tell me about yourself.” (The 30 second commercial is an ideal tool to help you open conversation with strangers.)

### *Attending BrassRing*

- Plan your route. When you arrive at the door, there will be a guide with company listings and a map showing the location of all employer booths. Study the map and find your target companies so you can plan an efficient pathway among them.
- Plan a warm-up exercise. Like an athlete in training, you want to build up your stamina for the long run. First visit with a company that is of less interest to you than others. This will give you a chance to practice your approach and build your self-confidence.
- Be willing to be the first to speak. Walk up to the recruiter and

introduce yourself. Don’t wait for them to talk to you. You will demonstrate your confidence this way.

- Ask questions. Read what openings are available. Find out who is recruiting for your particular field or interest. Get the name of the hiring manager, and write it down.
- Collect information. Product literature, annual reports and business cards may be available at the event. Gather anything that you think may be useful to you. Write down all information you learn about any particular company.
- Talk with the recruiter. Plan to spend as much time as possible talking with representatives of the company. *Never just drop off your resume without getting more information.* If it is late in the day, the recruiters may be tired and will find a friendly smile appealing...and memorable!
- Don’t hang around. When you have completed your rounds and have dropped off your resume with all companies that interest you, there is no point in lingering at the fair. Before leaving the premises double check: Did you collect the information you need to follow up? If so, call it a day.

### *Following through*

- Review and organize your materials. While the event is still fresh in your mind, sort through the information you collected and jot down any other notes of interest.
- Write down a list of follow up calls. Some of the people you spoke with

may have suggested you call them or the hiring manager at some future

date. Make a list of these activities for your "To do" list action items.