

Systematic Job Search – A Method to the Madness

Most high achievers are great at doing their job, but pretty awful at finding a new one or even considering their options in the world beyond their current organization. Yet job and career changes obviously happen – sometimes by choice, sometimes by chance and sometimes by crisis. However it happens, you may find yourself wondering about the smartest way to conduct a search. Most of the hundreds of people I have coached over many years have not known how to really take control of this most humbling time of transition. I want you to land 3 offers, in jobs that you like, in companies where you would like to work. Now THAT is career management.

The good news is that there is a system to managing an effective job search to make that happen. Our methodology is based on 25 years of front line research with job seekers at all levels, in all kinds of markets, across all kinds of industries. Working that system increases your chances of getting the job you want – faster. Working the system also helps relieve your natural anxiety about what you should be doing next. And you can forget about hunting down job openings. Our system will guide you through creating your own opportunities.

The system is the same whether you are employed or unemployed, and even if you are not interested in changing jobs now. The system is the same whether you are looking for full- or part-time employment, consulting, or freelance work.

That's because job hunting in a changing economy means: continuously **becoming aware of market conditions inside as well as outside your present organization. And learning what you have to offer—both inside and outside your organization.**

The time to become aware of your opportunities is not when the pressure is on to find a new job, but now.

The Job-Hunting Process

Assessment and Targeting – The Beginning

Begin with an assessment – a deliberate and structured analysis of who you are and where you want to go. Do not skip Assessment. Even if you are rushed or know what you want to do with your life, the exercises you do – alone or with your coach – will help you develop a great resume and positioning statement, help you ace your interviews, and feel more confident. This helps you develop a direction and a focus. Assessment results in job targets along with a resume and campaign materials that make you look appropriate to those targets.

A target is NOT a company, but rather:

- a geographic area you'd be willing to work in (e.g. New York City),
- an industry (e.g. banking) or company size (small, medium or large company),
- and a job or function within that industry (e.g. VP marketing, COO, Portfolio Manager).

For example, you may want to be a writer in the publishing industry in New Hampshire. That's your target market. Or you might want to be in Los Angeles as CEO of a \$25-\$50million consumer product company that is looking to grow and find a buyer. That would be your target.

"For profit" is not a target. "Not-for-profit" is not a target. They are too broad. For example, "not-for-profit" could include: associations, hospitals, universities, the government –and all of those sub-targets are huge.

Segment your target

Break down your targets into sub-targets. Healthcare, for example, could include: hospitals, home healthcare, HMO's, pharmaceutical companies, nursing homes, hospice care, health insurance companies, crisis intervention programs, congregate care facilities, medical billing, healthcare consulting firms, medical device manufacturers, distributors, anything having to do with the aging of America, vitamin companies, healthcare publishing, and more.

Rank your targets.

You are going to pursue your targets one at a time, so you will need to prioritize the order in which you start.

There are 3 guidelines for ranking your targets:

- How much do I like this target?
- How easy will it be to land a position in this market?
*How quickly do I need to land?

Measure each of your targets

Remember that this is ultimately still a numbers game, so you must make sure your target is big enough to conduct a search that won't take you 5 years.

*How many positions are there for you in an organization? Not how many openings are there, but how many opportunities are there. For example if you are

Most people start out with targets that are just too small. Their searches are doomed

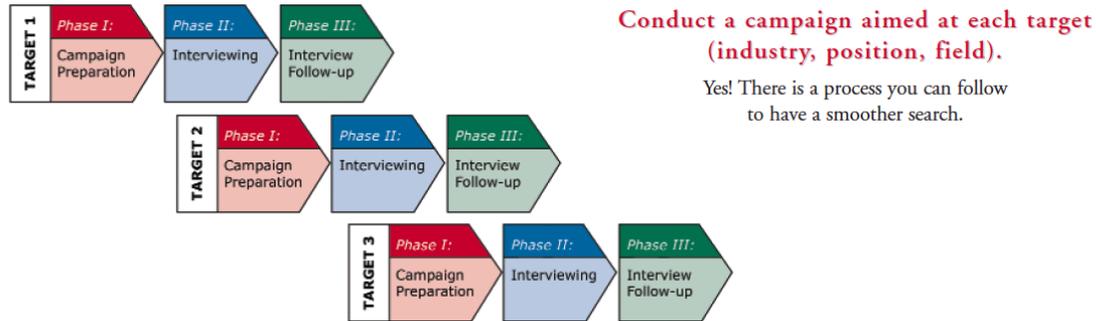
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an analyst there may be 20 or more openings in a large company. But if you are a CEO, there is only one.
*Make sure your list of opportunities is as large as possible (from 50 - 200 positions is not crazy, though many executives try to settle on less). Remember you are not looking for current openings, but possible positions.

Staggering Your Targets

Once you have identified, ranked, and measured your targets you are ready to begin to organize your campaign with the first one. You will focus on Target 1, and stagger Targets 2 and 3 as you progress. Here is what it looks like:



You conduct your campaign for the sole purpose of getting interviews in your target area. A number of those interviews might eventually lead to acceptable job offers.

Job hunting seems to have dozens of equally important steps. There are resumes and cover letters to write, personal contacts to make, search firms to contact, ads to answer, notes to write, and so on. You can lose sight of what is most important.

There are only four main parts in a job-hunting campaign: targeting, getting interviews in each target, interviewing, and following up. Do your best and put your effort into those areas. Everything you do in a job hunt grows out of your targets, which lead to interviews and then to offers. If you have targeted well, can get interviews, are well prepared for them, and know how to turn interviews into offers, you will be focused and less affected by mistakes in other areas of your search.

PHASE I - CAMPAIGN PREPARATION

Conduct research once you have selected your target. You are looking for:

1. Problems you can solve
2. Places you can solve those problems
3. People to contact in those places

To determine the problems you can solve, you must look at the trends in the industry. What are the areas of growth? Of decline? What about your background separates you from your competition as it relates to solving those problems?

Our favorite sites for this research (as of this writing) is www.firstresearch.com. Other strong sites include include www.aberdeen.com, www.frost.com, www.glgroupp.com. Don't forget to check the conference pages of your association's websites. Here you will find panel discussions, workshops, and presentations about the timeliest topics of interest to your target. You will also find names of companies you may not have identified, as well as industry leaders you may want to connect with.

Once you have an idea of what you would have to offer, validate your hypothesis by talking to people you know. "As our industry continues to consolidate, merging disparate businesses seems to be a huge factor for success. Do you think that is true? I have been responsible for the integration of our last 6 acquisitions, and have learned to quickly leverage scale while maintaining talent. Do you agree this is a critical factor for the industry leaders?" As you gain validation, fill out a [Summary of What You Have to Offer](#). This will help you focus on creating impactful your campaign material and a strong pitch.

Next, develop a list of all of the companies in your target market. When you have your networking conversations, show them your list. Instead of "do you know of any jobs for me?" you can ask your contact to look at your list and share their

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thoughts about who is a mover, who is not, and if you have left anyone off that should be on. Include large, small, and medium sized companies.

We recommend you put an exhaustive 50 to 60 companies on your list, in three groups, A, B and C. The C list is made up of companies that would want you though you might not want them. The A list is where you most want to work. On the B list are companies that you are not sure about. Contact the C list first. Practice. Are they interested in you or not? You are researching. If C-list likes you, contact B list. "I am already talking to a number of companies, but I didn't want to do anything with them until I chance a chance to speak with you". If B list likes, you, contact A list.

Divide up your list

There are only four ways of getting meetings in your target area:

- Networking (40% of meetings)
- Direct Contact (40% of meetings) Click here for an outline of [how to write a direct contact letter](#).
- Ads (print & internet) (10% of meetings) For information about how to use them wisely, click here: [the definitive guide to job boards](#).
- Search Firms (10% of meetings)

If you have a list of 60 organizations:

- Network into 5 or 6, if you can
- Send a direct contact letter to another 5-10 each week as you work down the list (do more each week if you are conducting a full time search). This letter requires a follow up phone call.
- You can use many sites to help you craft your list: www.findthebest.com, www.zapdata.com, www.google.com/finance.com, perusing newsletters, articles, etc. For more specific information and guidance, contact us at wendy@wenroth.com.

Condense Your Search

If Target #1 is hospitals, contact all of the hospitals. "Just yesterday I talked to..." You appear interested and an insider. It gives you added credibility.

Segment your targets. The pitch that you use with one of these targets, say, hospitals, will be very different from the pitch you would use with a different target, say, healthcare manufacturers.

Once you have meetings set up, you are in the game. The more time you spend in Phase 1, the greater success you will have in Phase 2. So spend the time and get off to a great start.

Phase II - Interviewing

Most people think interviews result job offers. But there are many intervening steps before a final offer is made, which you know from your own experience if you have had to hire people. In fact, interviews should result in getting and giving information so that you can follow up.

- Did you learn the issues important to each person with whom you met?
- What did they think were your strongest positives?
- How can you overcome his or her objections or concerns?

Don't think like a job hunter. Think like a consultant trying to land a \$50,000, \$100,000, or \$500,000 consulting assignment – whatever your salary is. What consultants do:

- Do research beforehand
- Prepare your 3x5 card including your pitch as well as your key points

Find out:

- What is going on? What are their problems and needs?
- How can I satisfy those needs?

Consider your competition.

- Ask how you stack up against others (yes you can ask this question)
- Do they have all the information they need?
- Are they ready to decide?
- Try to keep in the running

Plan your follow up.

- Get and give information
- Don't try to get an offer right now

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- Get the next meeting
- Consultants write proposals. So will you!

Conduct a campaign aimed at a company

- If Miss Gold is the hiring manager, don't try to see her just yet. Surround the hiring manager. Meet with others, so when you finally get in to see her, you will have a lot of advocates and know a lot about the organization.

Prepare for the interview

Say to the person who set up the meeting: "I'd like to go in prepared. With whom will I meet?" Ask:

- names and job titles
- issues important to each of them
- what they are like
- tenure with organization

Uncover their objections

- Where are you in the hiring process?
- How many others are you considering?
- How do I stack up against them?
- Is there any reason why you might be reluctant to bring someone like me on board?

Have each person see you as the ideal

- Each should advocate having you on board. If anyone objects to you, handle it now.

Always have 6 to 10 possibilities going

- Try to get an offer (even if you don't want the job), or you'll never get 6 to 10 possibilities
- Do not drop other search activities when an offer seems certain. Mistake: Trying to get an offer too soon

Mistake: Trying to get an offer too soon

- Instead, get that next meeting.
- Give and get information. Move it along.
- Address issues that concern them rather than what's bothering you (getting the job).

Questions to Ask

Responsibilities

- What is the most important part of the job?
- What is the first problem that would need the attention of the person you hire?

Resources

- May I meet other people who work in the area?
- What are the department's employees' experience, training and tenure with the company?

Authority

- How is the department organized?
- What would be the extent of my authority in carrying out the responsibilities of this position?

Performance

- What are the short- and long-term goals of the position, and how are they established?
- How is one's performance evaluated? By whom? How often?
- What would you like to say about the person in this job one year from now?

Culture

- What do you find most satisfying about working here? Most frustrating?
- Who tends to get ahead here?
- How would you describe your management style?

Remember . . .

- You are being interviewed by everyone including receptionists and peers.
- They say they are going to call you back in 2 days. Do they ever? No, never.

PHASE III - INTERVIEW FOLLOW-UP (including salary negotiation)

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Follow-Up After a Job Interview

This is truly the brainiest part of the process and takes as much time as getting interviews and interviewing.

- Keep things alive with 6 to 10 organizations.
- Don't write a silly "thank-you" note after a job interview. Instead, influence them.
- Tailor the follow-up to each situation.
- Build a relationship. Company says that they're not hiring until February. That's OK
- Whether to call, write or email is not the issue. Uncover their objections to you.
- The best you can do: **If they were going to hire someone, would you be the person?**

Your coach will want to know:

- Who did you meet with?
- What are each person's key issues?
- Why would each want you there?
- Each person's objections to you.
- What can you offer vs. competition?
- Problems each interviewer has?

Decide the next steps, such as:

- another meeting; meeting w/others
- an in-depth review of documents.
- developing a few ideas & then meet-drafting a proposal

State the "next steps" in your follow-up note. For example, "I'd like to get together with you to discuss my ideas on . . ."

- Influence the influencers
- Be in sync with their timing, not yours.
- If unemployed, be open to consulting work

Salary Negotiation

- Starts with your first meeting: position your-self so they see you at a certain level.
- Mantra: "Salary will not be a problem."
- Manage the process to get the right offer
 - If original offer is too low, okay for now.
 - Don't try to close too soon & ruin deal.

The Four-Step Salary Negotiation Process:

1. Negotiate the job
2. Outshine and outlast your competition
3. Get the offer
4. Negotiate the salary

Salary negotiation must be done in this order. For example, don't negotiate salary if you have competitors.

- "Grow the job" to make it worth more.
- Find out what you personally are worth.
- Network: "What would you expect to pay someone with my background?"
- Research on Salary.com, glassdorr.com, and others. Get info from associations.

Make yourself in demand:

6 to 10 things in the works at all times is a must. The best way to close 1 situation is to have 5 more that you are focusing on as well. Five will fall away through no fault of your own. With six to ten things going, you increase your chances of having three good offers to choose from.

- Don't reject the offer—talk about the job.
- Keep process open; hear their best offer.
- Postpone salary discussion until offer. The person who names a number first loses. Talk more about the job and how to grow it.
- Discuss salary using a collaborative tone and remember that it may take more than one meeting.

When you are in the Interview Phase of Target 1, it's time to start Phase I of Target2. This will give you more momentum and insure that you do not let things dry up. Keep both targets going, and then start Target 3.

Remember . . .

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- Get 3 hours of fun a week—like it or not!!
- Job search in summer and over holidays.
- “They” never call when they say they will, so follow-up by being creatively persistent.

Follow-Up After Networking

- Immediate “thank-you” note.
- Then, at least every three weeks.
- Status report of search; send articles.

Measuring Effectiveness of Your Search

You sent 100 résumés and talked to 75 people. But was it effective? Measure where you are.

- **Phase 1:** This is the critical set-up for a successful search. Keep in touch with 6 to 10 people in your target area. Get feedback.
- **Phase 2:** This is the core of your search. Keep in touch with 6 to 10 of the right people at the right level in the right organizations, AND when they say, “I wish I had an opening right now – I’d love to have someone like you on board,” you have a GREAT search. Now, aim for 10 to 20 ongoing Stage-2 contacts.
- If you’re not getting positive feedback, your target is wrong or your positioning is wrong.
- **Phase 3:** This will happen naturally: 6 to 10 job possibilities. *Aim for 3 concurrent offers.*
- Don’t select the job that simply pays \$2,000 or \$20,000 more. Select the job that positions you best for the long term. You will have to search again.