



Article

DIRECT MARKETING YOUR SKILLS

A tried and true strategy to find your next job – Direct Marketing

The worst time to apply for a job is when the opportunity is advertised and posted on the Web. Though the employment market is getting better, it is still lagging behind a growing retail market and a rapidly improving stock market. It still can be very tough finding the right position. If you are looking to find new employment opportunities, why don't you give "direct marketing" a try?

Anyone can do it

Even with the most elementary marketing and networking skills, you can substantially increase your chances of success by direct marketing yourself. This technique has been used by top notch recruiters in the recruiting industry for years. It entails creating a simple yet effective marketing campaign for yourself. You target specific organizations that are most attractive to you – and have a need for your talents – regardless of their current job openings.

Thinking outside the box

This approach lies outside the conventional job hunting paradigm. Normally you passively wait for your "ideal position" to be posted and then apply. By the time a job is posted, it's already too late. In an instant, the job is sent to numerous job boards and job aggregators, it is pushed out through social networking sites like Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter, and broadcast to an audience of millions. You will then have to compete against the many individuals and agency candidates clamoring to get noticed, interviewed and hired. "It can be like a casting call for a Broadway play" says one recruiting industry executive.

Instead of going the traditional route, you just might increase your chances substantially by direct marketing yourself to prospective employers, bypassing that all too familiar competitive grind. The best time to search for employment is actually well before a company realizes its need and certainly before they post the job opportunity.

"Who says you can only apply for a job when a company is looking?" said Ron Karr, author of the CEO best-selling book, Lead, Sell or Get Out of the Way. "You shouldn't wait for a job opening to apply for a position. You may find better luck in applying for a position before it opens."

First Things First - Figure out what you're looking for

The first step is for you to create an accurate assessment of your interests, talents and strengths. You may even need to enlist trusted friends and mentors in providing candid feedback to round this picture out. You then need to determine your ideal position; the type of work environment in which you would thrive, the skill sets you want to utilize, your ideal role, industry and, geographic location. Then, through research and professional networking identify those companies that you think are best matches. This definition phase might take a bit of time to complete, but it will serve you well. You will then know exactly what you're looking for, to have that crystal clear vision that is necessary for you start your direct marketing process.

Who do I talk to?

It's easier to determine than you think. You can approach this question like the game of twenty questions you used to play as a child. Enlist others to assist you in your search by using networking websites. Ask them to help you identify who would be responsible for the hiring decision for your ideal position. (A note of caution, it is generally not an HR or corporate recruiter. You are actually looking for the name of the person you would be reporting to.) Be prepared to ask questions like: "What team(s) in the company do you think would need my skills the most?", "Who could I talk to who would know more about that group?", "Who leads that group?", "Who would know the answers to these questions if you don't?", "Would you be able to provide an introduction?", and "What is their contact information?" It may take asking a few questions and running into a few dead ends but don't give up. Identifying these specific people in your target organizations is key.

Why would they want to talk to me?

It's simple. They need you – your skills, and your experience. If they do hire people like you, even if they are not looking right now, they know how difficult it is to find the right person and will want you in their network when the time comes.

How do I get time with them?

Be politely persistent and professional. Ask to arrange an informational interview, a quick phone conversation or at the very least an email conversation. During the conversation ask them about the major challenges their team is facing, how they are meeting them, the environment, etc. This will allow you the opportunity to determine if they still meet your criteria for the ideal position and if you meet theirs. If it looks like there's a match, interject how your skills and experience might come into play if an opening should arise. Emphasize your interest in pursuing an opportunity, should one occur, and ask how often it would be OK for you to check in. If you determine it's not a match, ask the manager if they would refer you to other managers who might have a need for your skills.



Be prepared - you might just get what you wish for

Prepare yourself ahead of time with an updated resume, references, and research the company and manager using the web and social and professional media sites. Develop a series of questions to ask. Thoughtful questions will not only yield information but also indicate your level of knowledge and sophistication with issues being discussed. Be sure to ask for permission to follow-up periodically after the conversation and then do so. It may take time for an actual hiring opportunity to arise, but when it does, you will already be known to the company and manager. You will have leapfrogged your competition and have created a definite competitive edge.

Then do it over and over and over again

It is important to realize that you will likely have to repeat this process on an ongoing basis with a number of companies and hiring managers until you find your ideal, next position.

Direct marketing might just be the way to go.