

10 Essential Guidelines for Successful Career Transition

A Special Report prepared by Louise Kursmark

Stressful, time-consuming, expensive, frustrating... these terms can certainly describe the typical executive job search. Unfortunately there's no magic bullet or sure-fire formula for quick success—in most cases it takes legwork, brainwork, creativity, critical thinking, and just plain dogged persistence. But before you get discouraged, consider these 10 quick guidelines that can help you get your search off to a successful start and maintain momentum to reach a satisfying conclusion.



1. Chart your own course..

Take responsibility for managing your career. Keep your resume updated, your networking contacts fresh, and be prepared to answer when opportunity knocks.

2. Hold yourself accountable.

Be organized and methodical. Establish specific goals—such as number of new networking contacts per week, number of target companies identified—and define the strategies you'll use to reach them. Monitor your progress and become a strict taskmaster, especially for those tasks you consider unpleasant. Reward yourself periodically for your achievements.

3. When fishing for a new job, throw a lot of lines in the water.

Keep open as many options as you can. Make use of recruiters, print and online ads, networking contacts, interim or consulting roles, professional and alumni organizations. Cast a wide net, and you stand a better chance of catching a big fish.

4. Keep a positive, confident attitude.

Your attitude about yourself and your qualifications is supremely important. Try to gain a realistic yet positive outlook on your unique blend of abilities and experience. Thoroughly assess yourself so that you know and communicate your strengths and successes. If you are out of a job, it can be very challenging to remain upbeat. Keep company with positive people, and give yourself regular breaks and rewards.

5. Don't get stopped before you get started.

Avoid common resume and cover letter mistakes that can sink your candidacy right at the start. Make certain you communicate your executive brand and your proven capabilities in a way that is compelling, memorable, and relevant—and that readers can tell instantly “who you are” and what you're good at. Triple-check for spelling and other typographical errors. Employ a high-caliber executive format so that your presentation matches the quality of the content. Your resume and cover letter create powerful first impressions—be sure they are the best they can be.

6. Prepare for interviews.

Don't try to wing it! Do homework on the company to learn their successes and challenges. Don't focus on your (perceived) negatives, but practice answers that put you in the best possible light. Be prepared to

present yourself as a problem-solver to specific challenges the company is facing. If your interviewing skills are rusty, bone up by reading a recent interviewing book, or invest in some one-on-one interviewing coaching.

7. Develop an effective sales strategy.

Be sure you know the benefits and features of your “product”—yourself. Be an attentive, effective listener to learn the needs and problems of your “customer”—the employer. Be prepared to go the extra mile to make the sale, but don’t be pushy. Don’t sell yourself; let the employer buy.

8. Follow up.

Follow through on your promises. Call when you say you will; send materials you’ve promised; contact references; thank networking sources; send follow-up letters. Be diligent about nailing down the little details that showcase your courtesy, thoroughness, persistence, and ability to get the job done—all desirable job traits.

9. Make it a priority.

If an item is not near the top of your “to do” list, chances are it won’t get done. In general you can expect to get out of your job search as much as you put in. Devote the time, energy, and resources to make the search number one on your list every day, and you will be rewarded with increased opportunity as well as a sense of urgency and excitement that is contagious.

10. Project professionalism and top quality in every way.

When you’re in a job search, your smallest actions may be scrutinized. Send a message to potential employers by projecting a professional, high-quality, executive image in your attire, manners, written documents, telephone calls, and all your communications and interactions.

Career transition may not be the most enjoyable thing you do, but by following these guidelines you can make the most of the experience and help ensure that it results in a satisfying new opportunity.

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