

## Job Search Preparation and Strategy

When it comes to managing your executive career, leaving things to the last minute doesn't often lead to success. The same can be said for your executive job search. Before starting your search, it's essential to do adequate preparation. This preparation time will allow you to decide exactly what you're looking for in your next role and get the resources and materials ready to communicate this effectively to an executive search consultant or hiring manager.

### Self-Review

Do you know what your long and short-term professional goals are? The purpose of conducting a self-review at the start of your job search is to identify these goals and the type of career move that will help you reach them.

Assessments are helpful tools for this kind of pre-job search exploration. Whether you're in an active job search or preparing for a transition, consider taking a personality assessment. These can help you understand your personality and interests and how they fit in with your work style and career. If you are interested in changing career functions or industries, this information can be invaluable.

After you take a self-assessment, proceed towards figuring out what your stand-out traits are and how they relate to your career goals. You may find it helpful to speak with colleagues and friends to find out what they think your best qualities and skills are. In addition, review previous performance reviews and project feedback. All of this information will be useful as you continue to prepare for your job search, especially when deciding the "right fit" company and role, creating your brand message, and writing up your resume and career documents.

### Personal Brand and Unique Value Proposition

Your personal brand represents the unique kinds of problems you solve. Your value proposition is about special skills and experiences you have that can solve these problems better than other executives. These both need to be communicated to executive search consultants, hiring managers, and your network.

You communicate this through your resume and career documents, LinkedIn and social media profiles, interviews, and any other methods used to discuss your career. Developing your personal brand and unique value proposition will allow you to have a more effective job search and be able to express why a company should hire you.

Some questions you can ask yourself to get started include:

- Is there anything you're known for doing better than everyone else?
- What makes you more valuable than other executives in your field and position?
- What achievements have you had in your previous roles that make you stand out?

## Research the “Right Fit”

Executives have differing styles and bring varying expertise, so it is unlikely that you will be the “right fit” for every company you come across in your job search. Identify companies you’d enjoy working for and whose mission and company culture reflects your values and personal brand through research. You can usually conduct this kind of research by looking through their website, Googling them, and speaking with employees who have worked at the company.

## Resume/CV, Online/Social Presence and Career Documents

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## Activate Your Network

Don’t wait until you already need a job to activate your network. You should continue to stay in touch with your network while gainfully employed and offer your help to them whenever they need it. If you do this, you’ll likely have a willing set of connections who will want to help you in your time of need.

If you’re currently employed and don’t want certain people (such as those at your current company) to know you’re looking, you may choose to only activate certain trusted members of your network who are close to you rather than your extended network. If you decide to keep your search more confidential, be careful about what you post on public social media sites as well.

After deciding which members of your network you’re comfortable discussing your job search with, activating your network is as simple as letting them know you’re looking to make a career change and what type of role and company you’re interested in. If you’ve been keeping in touch, this won’t be considered burdensome. Establishing these alliances will support and accelerate your targeted job search campaign.

Last, but not least, when leaving your role, try to do so under good circumstances so that you can maintain active contact with those from your previous companies (now and in the future). Old coworkers can become career-long connections who are willing to help you reach your career goals.

## References

A vital part of your job search is your qualified references. Don't wait to think about these until you're nearing the end of the interview process. The optimal time to update your references and inform them about your new job search is right before you start looking. Update your reference list, adding in fresh ones and removing outdated ones, and confirm that they're still willing to speak on your behalf. Make sure they're aware of your personal brand so they will be valuable ambassadors when a recruiter or hiring manager calls.

## Education

Furthering your education by getting an MBA/EMBA, certifications, digital and social media training, learning a new language, or attending function or industry webinars and events will help you stay current on critical events and trends in your industry.

During an executive transition, you must demonstrate to prospective employers that you have an up-to-date grasp of essentials and can move ahead rapidly once hired, particularly if the employers are facing a crunch situation. Much like networking, it's wise to continuously further your education throughout your career and not just when you're in need of a new job. up your resume and career documents.

## Screening

The majority of employment offers and contracts are contingent on a positive background check (including references). Therefore, making yourself aware of anything that might be flagged in your background check or that you need to disclose during the interview process is absolutely necessary. Think about anything that an employer might consider pertinent.

Some items that must be disclosed include:

- Bad credit or large debt
- Major or minor legal misconduct
- Failed drug tests or drug addiction
- Fake credentials or college degrees

Keep in mind: Honesty is the best policy. It's in your best interest and the company's to disclose any indiscretions on your own terms rather than wait until the employer finds out. In addition to traditional background and reference checks, numerous employers now conduct online searches to check how you've presented yourself matches your online presence. Before you start your job search, research yourself online (via Google and other search engines) and make sure the information that shows up on social media, blogs, and any other websites matches your personal brand.

You might also want to delve into your private social media profiles and make sure there are no red flags that could be considered inappropriate (photos, rants, etc.). Anything you post on social media is never truly private; even with strict privacy settings a potential employer could find a way to see your profile's content.

## Interviews

One of the most important things you can do before an interview is to prepare ahead of time. You can even start doing so before you begin job searching. During your job search preparation, practice answers for behavioral and other common interview questions. This will allow you to focus on researching the company, its products, and the executive team, and prepare answers to company-specific questions when the time comes for the actual interviews.

You don't always have much time to prepare for an interview or call from executive search consultants, so it's beneficial to have something prepared. If interviewing is not one of your strong areas or if you would like assistance in identifying areas where you could improve your interviewing skills, consider hiring a career coach to help.

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