

The
Ultimate
EXECUTIVE
CAREER GUIDE

2

**ADVANCED
JOB SEARCH**

 **BlueSteps**



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HOW DOES EXECUTIVE JOB SEARCH WORK?

As a top executive, you may have never been in a state of career transition. Maybe you have conducted a job search before, but it was long before the digital age. Or it's possible that the contemporary aspects of job search are not the challenge, but understanding the differences between job search at middle-management and executive levels is your main concern.

No matter what your situation, numerous executives are facing the same issues and are unsure about how to navigate these in the new world of job search. What is

clear is that doing the same things to find a job today as you did five or 10 years ago will no longer produce the same results.

You will need to build your network while you're currently employed, prepare your personal branding, improve your resume/CV and career documents, and develop your job search strategy, so making a career change won't happen overnight. This guide can help you through the various stages of your job search if you're actively seeking a new role or help you implement a plan to prepare for a potentially inevitable career transition.

KEEP MANAGING YOUR CAREER WHILE EMPLOYED



Most executives are so focused on the strategy needed to execute in their current role, they forget to put a career management strategy in place that will help them reach their next role. The few executives who focus on their careers at the same time as their executive roles (the present and future parts of your career) are leaps and bounds ahead of the majority of executives who are purely fixated on performing well in their current role (the present part of your career).

Another benefit to having an ongoing career strategy set up well before you need a new job, is that you'll significantly diminish the possibility of ever ending up unemployed in the first place because the network connections you gain will alert you of new opportunities well before you need them. Even if you do end up in transition, the network you built (an integral part of your career assets) will rapidly jump in to help.

So you're convinced - Having an ongoing strategy in place is integral to your career success. The problem is that you're already so busy; you can't possibly imagine adding more to your to do list. As a successful executive, you're likely an expert at managing numerous, changing priorities. Your career must become one of those priorities. It certainly does not need to take a large portion of time, but you should make an effort to carve out three to five percent of your week to focus on your career; your short, medium and long term job prospects will benefit greatly.

If you're currently employed, you may eventually come to the point in your career where you are interested in making a voluntary transition. Take some time to figure out why you want to make a career transition now and assess the pros and cons. Some factors driving your decision might include:



A CHANGE AT YOUR ORGANIZATION

such as relocation, new leadership, or acquisition



STAGNANT CAREER GROWTH

and no new opportunities within your current company

When considering a voluntary career transition, it is also in your benefit to consider the reasons you might not want to make a move at this time. These might include economic, personal/family, and career management issues. No matter what your individual situation, it's important to closely assess the negative consequences of leaving your current organization and decide if these outweigh the potential positives.

WHEN TO MAKE A CAREER TRANSITION



DISAPPOINTING COMPENSATION

increases with no promise of improvement



CONCERNS ABOUT THE COMPANY

its overall strategy, the leadership team, or future prospects for your products or industry

JOB SEARCH PREPARATION AND STRATEGY (Section 1 of 3)

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.

You should not only consider how you fit in to the company culture, but also how this new role fits into

JOB SEARCH PREPARATION AND STRATEGY (Section 2 of 3)

your career goals. Sometimes the reason for taking a new job is solely one of necessity, but if you have options, you should seek positions that are strategic rather than convenient. A career transition can be an opportunity to become more self-aware, allowing you to find a job that could be an essential part of a fulfilling career.



RESUME/CV, ONLINE/SOCIAL PRESENCE AND CAREER DOCUMENTS

Do your current resume/CV, LinkedIn profile, and other career documents tell the reader what your career goals

and unique selling points (USPs) are at a quick glance? If not, your job search will benefit greatly from refreshing these documents so that they're relevant and targeted to the role and industry you're looking to work in next. Other resume/CV considerations include formatting, spelling, and grammar – if something looks off, executive search consultants and hiring managers will assume that you're not an effective communicator or that you don't pay attention to details. Since these documents are so important, it's worthwhile to invest in a resume/CV writer so that you get these important documents right the first time.

In the today's job market, you'll have an extra advantage if you go beyond the standard resume/CV. A resume/CV writer can also help you create a full portfolio of career marketing documents, including a resume/CV, career biography, accomplishment summary, cover letters, social media profiles, and more depending on what's appropriate for your industry and function. Remember: Since recruiters and hiring managers are inundated with candidates, you will only have a few seconds to stand out before being screened out.



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.

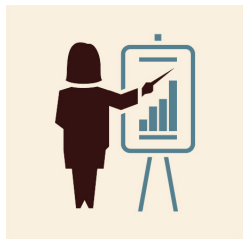


REFERENCES

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.

JOB SEARCH PREPARATION AND STRATEGY (Section 3 of 3)

Update your reference list, adding in fresh connections 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 search professional or hiring manager calls. This is also a great time to secure written references on LinkedIn if any of your references are former bosses or coworkers. Having up-to-date references on LinkedIn can be instrumental to getting contacted by a researcher who might be sourcing candidates through the site.



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.



SCREENING

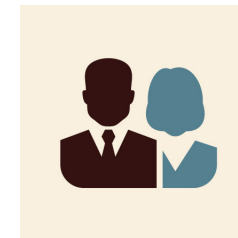
The majority of employment offers and contracts are contingent on a positive background check (including references). Therefore, making yourself aware of anything that might be flagged in your background check or that you need to disclose during the interview process is absolutely necessary. Think about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

JOB SEARCH ROUTINE

Whether or not you're starting a job search of your own accord, you can easily become overwhelmed by the growing maze of job boards, company databases, and online recruiting networks unless you have a solid job search routine. Now that you've taken time to prepare, you're ready to start your search. Use the following as a guide to get started.

1 KEEP A STEADY PACE.

Searching for a job at the executive level can take six months or more, so it's important to have and follow a plan consistently, making adjustments as necessary. Rather than emailing your whole network in one mass email, take the time to connect on an individual basis. You may not feel like you're accomplishing as much, but this approach is proven to yield better results in the long run.

2 PRIORITIZE.

Since your job search will be a long-term project, you'll need to treat it like a full-time job. If you're currently employed, you'll have to devote at least a few hours a week to career and job search-related activities, but keep in mind, the more effort you put in, the more you're likely to get out of your job search routine. Schedule a reoccurring appointment each week to carve out the time.

6 STAY POSITIVE.

Focusing on the negative can derail your job search, so it's crucial to focus on the possible actions you can take rather than lament about situations that are out of your control. This positivity will come across in your day-to-day job search communications as well, which could improve your likeability. Reward yourself for effort, not for results.

5 ASK FOR HELP.

Start a support group or a group chat with others you know who are seeking opportunities. Or ask someone in your network to help keep you on track with weekly check-ins. Be honest with your family and friends when they ask how the search is going so that they'll know when you need support. Last, but potentially most impactful, reach out to a career coach for their expert advice. Most executive career coaches are authorities in their field and can help you identify appropriate companies and expand your network.

4 TAKE CONTROL.

If your current approach is not working, try something different. Whether it's deciding to hire a resume/CV writer to refresh your resume or attending more networking events to expand your network, realize that you're not stuck and you have options. Be the CEO of your job search.

3 TRACK YOUR PROGRESS.

Much like your fitness regimen, you should keep a record of what you've done so far in your job search and the results achieved. Using a spreadsheet, list the companies you're interested in, contacts in your network, the dates of your emails, texts, calls and letters, the responses you receive, interviews, and the next steps for each opportunity.



WHERE TO FIND EXECUTIVE-LEVEL JOBS (Section 1 of 2)

Not all job search methods are equally productive, especially at the executive level. Spend most of your job search time growing your network rather than searching job boards. Activities that increase your chances of referrals and connecting with the right executive search consultants will make you the most visible for executive jobs. Many executive positions are not even posted on job boards as they're confidential or employers are simply weary of wading through a flood of resumes.

REFERRALS

Employers regularly note that referrals have the highest hire rate, particularly when the source of the referred hire is a well-respected, happy employee. Referred hires save companies time and money in the long run. If you're an executive in need of a quick job transition, you'll be glad that you prepared ahead of time by building up your network while you were happily employed. Once you're ready to look for a new role, you can feel out your network to find out what's going on in the marketplace and where there is a need for your particular set of skills and experience.

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

As another proactive job search strategy, informational interviews can often be attained through referrals or by meeting someone at a target organization through networking. Once you identify employees

from your "right fit" companies, you can seek out more information about the company and its current challenges to ascertain if there's an opening that fits your skills and experience.

BECOME A SUCCESSOR

Most organizations only have so many positions, many of which remain filled. Options can be limited if you're interested in moving up, but want to stay at the same organization. Yet, in some cases you may catch whiff of a potential opening of interest coming up within the next year or two. Maybe the CEO has announced his retirement or the CMO's performance has been unsatisfactory. In this situation, you can network with key decision makers within the organization, on the board, or sometimes even the person leaving the role themselves to ensure you're kept in mind as a possible successor.

FACE-TO-FACE NETWORKING

In-person networking at events or meetings is still one of the most impactful ways to expand your network. During these conversations, it's best to focus on the other person and find out what you can do to help them. Then, exchange contact details to continue the conversation further either online, via phone, or during another event or meeting. After you've started a mutually beneficial relationship, you can let them know that you're looking for new career opportunities.



WHERE TO FIND EXECUTIVE-LEVEL JOBS (Section 2 of 2)

SOCIAL MEDIA

Keeping active on social media is a long-term job search strategy that should begin before you even start looking for your next role. Through social media, you can publish thought leadership and showcase your experience, accomplishments, and skills. Having an active presence on LinkedIn is an absolute must for contemporary executives even if they're not actively looking. That's because executive search professionals, hiring managers, and even corporate boards will source a candidate through online searches and social media in addition to checking up on the candidate's background.

Beyond simply having a profile on social media networks, you can leverage these sites to expand your professional network. Do this by joining groups, discussions, and commenting and sharing other people's content. If you start to become a recognized contributor in a specific area of a social media site, you may even be asked to panel events, participate in journalist interviews, or connect further with other professionals in your industry.

JOB BOARDS AND DATABASES

Unlike the previously mentioned job search activities, job boards and generic databases give the feeling of having accomplished something quickly. That's because you can post your resume to numerous job postings and databases within a couple of hours. Unfortunately, this kind of job search activity rarely amounts to much – networking

usually provides better leads. Large generic career sites have thousands of candidates in their databases and are often geared to entry-level and mid-management positions. Instead of putting your focus on generic job boards and databases, look for those that are more exclusive and focused on executive-level opportunities, particular occupations, industries, or job functions.

COLD OUTREACH

Emailing your resume to a large list of search consultants or contacts through a mass mailing is never an effective strategy. To be successful, you must narrow down your list and contact each person individually. If you're looking to

contact an executive search consultant or a key executive at one of your target companies, you may be tempted to send them an unsolicited resume, but the better option would be to research them and find out what you have in common, whether it's an interest in the same sports team, a common connection, or an association membership. In many cases, cold outreach may not be the best time to send over your resume; instead you should attempt to make a genuine connection that could eventually lead to a valuable networking asset. Lastly on this, think about the method of outreach; maybe you'll stand out more to this cold contact if you connect with them on Twitter first or meet them at an association event.



JOB SEARCH IS JUST ONE PART OF YOUR CAREER STRATEGY

At one stage of your career or another, it is likely that you'll need to conduct a job search. This guide can be a resource to help you prepare for this likelihood ahead of time so that you stay ahead of the competition. The top advice you'll receive from a career advisor is that you should never wait to manage your career and reach out to your network until you need a job. Career management needs to be a part of your daily routine.

“When one door closes, another opens; but we often look so long and so regretfully upon the closed door that we do not see the one which has opened for us.”

Alexander Graham Bell

THE JOURNEY CONTINUES WITH PART THREE: “RESUMES / CVs, LINKEDIN PROFILES, AND MORE”, WHICH WILL DIVE INTO:

- *Resume/CV writing strategies*
- *An example executive resume*
- *Elements of a successful LinkedIn profile*
- *How to write an executive biography*
- *Producing an effective cover letter/e-note*
- *And more!*



Are You Ready to Take the Next Step in Your Executive Career?

Get Started With BlueSteps

BlueSteps, the confidential career management service of the Association of Executive Search and Leadership Consultants (AESC), helps busy executives like you advance their careers, track their goals and stay visible to the right recruiters. We are proud to include your program in our Global Business School Alliance Program, which includes over 40 of the top business schools.

BlueSteps Guides You Through



Executive Job Searches

Finding a new role with our Opportunities Page, featuring 400-600 executive-level opportunities, including ones exclusively shared on BlueSteps.

Learning about executive search, what the process looks like and how to effectively leverage it as part of your career plan.



Executive Recruiting

Making lasting relationships with executive recruiters who align with your interests using our database of 9,000 AESC members around the world.

Creating a BlueSteps profile to increase your visibility to AESC member recruiters who fill 80,000 positions each year.



Career Management

Building short-term and long-term career strategies with our Guide Series on topics ranging from compensation negotiation to landing a board role.

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