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Title:

What Do You Mean I Am A Product?! (Career Marketing 101)

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Summary:

Job search seems to have many hurdles to overcome � resume, interview technique, appearance, and networking are challenges that job seekers face. These hurdles are surmountable with a strong job search plan and dedicated execution. Job seekers need to apply traditional advertising and marketing methods to their job search to achieve results. By thinking of themselves as the �product� and the employer as the �buyer� job seekers can approach their career transitions from a sale...

Keywords:

Article Body:

Job search seems to have many hurdles to overcome � resume, interview technique, appearance, and networking are challenges that job seekers face. These hurdles are surmountable with a strong job search plan and dedicated execution. Job seekers need to apply traditional advertising and marketing methods to their job search to achieve results. By thinking of themselves as the �product� and the employer as the �buyer� job seekers can approach their career transitions from a sales aspect.

Market Analysis

Most job seekers have no clear concept of their target market, the conditions of the market, and the types of employers whom would hire them. They need to conduct a market analysis similar to what most business owners have developed as part of a business plan. The business owner must conduct some sort of market analysis to determine to whom they are going to be selling their products or services, to create a profile of their target customer, to describe their competition, and to find out the conditions of the current market. Job seekers should go through the same process.

Job seekers should educate themselves on the conditions of the employment and economic markets in their targeted geographic area. They must research companies in either the industry or area to create a profile that includes financial conditions, past activities, names of executives, products, services, financial forecasts, etc. for each company. By doing this, job seekers get a good picture of their target �buyer� � who they are, what they do, how much money they can spend, and if they are planning on being around for awhile.

Scoping out the competition is also important for job seekers. The market is flush with very qualified, highly experienced professionals who are offering �buyers� (employers) skills and knowledge that are all very similar. Job seekers need to find out what kind of competition they face � what they are offering employers, what salaries they are seeking, what benefits they are seeking, and what type of skills/experience combinations they are offering. One method is to contact target companies and ask what skills/experience the employees they�ve hired in the past six months possess. Job seekers can also talk with executive recruiters to find out what they see in the market conditions and what they expect for the next six months.

Pricing is important in a market analysis. Salary levels can be researched through the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Salary.com, and from scanning most recent job advertisements. In a buyers� market, prices go down; therefore, salaries are going down. Salaries have fallen from a high in 2000 to levels last seen in 1998 and are continuing to slide. Many job seekers price themselves out of the market because they do not know what their skills are currently worth. Job seekers who find out what salaries they can expect and market their skills with that salary in mind will receive better job search results.

Target Market

Location, buying power, motivation, industry � all are aspects of a target market. If Santa�s chief elf gets downsized because suddenly Santa decides it�s cheaper to outsource to Thailand, Mr. Elf has very few alternatives at the North Pole for work. Toy makers are overseas or in the US, not the North Pole. He can search for a job all he wishes at the North Pole but if the work isn�t there, he will not have success. Location is a key factor in a job search.

Buying power is expressed through stock prices, growth forecasts, quarterly reports, annual reports, and spending. A company in stable growth mode has buying power � it can meet payroll and will be less likely to lay off. Determining the buying power/financial status of the target market (employers) is vital to a successful job search. Many people have not done this research, accepted a position, and found themselves laid off again in a month and a half or so.

Career Branding

Career branding is a hot term in the employment industry these days. Technically, career branding is simply building a great reputation in your career on purpose and then leveraging that reputation to further build your career. In traditional business, branding is a promise of an experience. If you see an advertisement for Coca-Cola, you automatically think of a cool, refreshing beverage. Coke has worked diligently over the years to establish their brand. To some degree, job seekers can do the same thing with their careers by documenting their achievements, working hard on their skills, and building a good reputation within their industries.

Direct Marketing

Direct marketing in a job search is getting your message directly to the buyer. In this case, that means getting your resume directly to the decision-maker. Most job seekers have difficulty with this task. How do you identify the decision-maker? Many job seekers are turning to resume blasting services that employ databases full of hiring managers, recruiters, and other people in hiring positions. Just as traditional business people purchase mailing lists, job seekers can purchase resume blasts that send their resumes to members of similar databases. Typical results for direct marketing is around 1-2% response rate. Resume blasts tend to have similar results but they are relatively inexpensive and may be worth the effort.

Research companies can be hired to target specific industries, companies, or other sectors based on specified parameters. These companies can gather very specific information, often mining down to the direct decision-maker, but their fees are higher than resume blasting services. For the serious job seeker who does not have the time or the abilities to do serious data mining for contact information, this can be an investment in career search that pays off.

Print Advertising

Career print advertising is the resume and accompanying documents such as cover letters, project details, portfolios, and biographies. Most job seekers feel a self-written resume and supporting documents are fine but it is interesting to note that big companies rarely do their own print advertising in-house. They concentrate on doing what they do best � providing goods and services � and outsource advertising to experts in the field. In recent years, more and more professionals, especially those who are intent on career success, seek the services of professional resume writers and career coaches to assist them in effectively marketing their careers.

Word of Mouth Advertising

Simply put, word of mouth advertising is networking. Someone talking to another about the benefits of �buying� a �product�. As any business owner can tell you, word of mouth advertising is the least expensive, most effective, and longest-lasting of all forms of advertising. Unfortunately, most job seekers use this method least because it seems so difficult. A good career coach can be invaluable in teaching job seekers networking and helping them overcome their fears of talking to others concerning their careers.