

Greetings,

The challenges continue to grow. This calls for my reaching beyond my normal or most recent effort at the job search market. I keep hearing and reading that I need to “think outside the box.” It didn’t take me long to recognize that most of those offering this advice are not professionally qualified to help me, or anyone else, at securing my next role. What I realized was that what they were trying to say, but didn’t; was to begin using activities, actions and contacts I had not used in my previous job search endeavors. Today, I know that I need to really do the things that I have been advised to do but haven’t in the past. It is all part of Managing my own career.

In my research do I reach out to the author of a business book? to a columnist at my paper? What do I read to get ideas? Have I expanded my reading from what I was reading three months ago? Have I attended professional gatherings and meetings over the past three months and committed to more?

I need to first know what it is I want to do for an employer – that I am qualified to do. (I will probably need to do research on each potential employer so I know what they need that I can do well, and also to identify the decision-makers involved for me to reach out to.)

I will then need to develop a strategy for each of my targets. This involves more research on the employer and decision-makers, and also contacts I need to reach the identified decision makers. This strategy includes developing a resume focused to the specific opportunity I am going after – whether the opportunity is a listed vacancy or a possibility does not matter. I know that the reader of my resume needs to read it as one written for the specific opportunity.

Do I have a group of “sound-bites” for the different career fields or industries (as a minimum) and do I “deliver” each as a comfortable conversation as opposed to a stilted pitch. The same for my two-minute pitch. And do I include Accomplishment examples that are focused to the employer’s needs in both the sound-bites and the two-minute pitch?

Who am I networking with? Am I making a continuous effort to identify decision-makers in the fields and employers I am interested in? How am I working with my network, as I have three “levels” in my network? The three levels are: Acquaintances; Allies; and then Advocates. Am I keeping my Advocates and Allies informed of my status? How? Is it personal or all impersonal? What am I doing to move some of my Acquaintances to the Allies level and some of my Allies to my Advocate level? (These terms are self explanatory, I believe.)

I know that this sounds like a lot of work, and believe me, I know that it is. At the same time I have a responsibility to myself, to my family and to my “employer to be” to be the best that I can be, first of all for myself to ensure that I am that for my family and then my employer. This is what I recognize as managing my career so someone else doesn’t manage it for me. Additionally, and most importantly today, I need to recognize that the employment market is the weakest it has been in 25 years! Thus, my competition for any position I wish to consider has more competition than anytime in the last 25 years! - Ouch!!! Soooo..., no more one resume for all, no more one pitch for all. Now this is “Thinking Outside the Box!”

Make it a great month ahead.

Jim Ditt