



Why Hiring an Executive Recruiter is a Good Idea...Even for the Happily Employed **By Jean Maslanka Kelley**

If you look at your network of professional contacts, you likely have a solid relationship with such people as your banker, CPA, financial planner, and attorney. But what about your executive recruiter?

Unfortunately, most people never consider adding an executive recruiter to their inner circle of professionals...until they need one. But the fact is that even if you're happily employed with no plans for leaving your current job, having an executive recruiter in your professional network is key.

Why? As Harvey Mackay once said, "Dig your well before you're thirsty." In other words, you want to partner with an executive recruiter *before* you need his or her services.

"But my company is strong and stable," you may say, "So I don't have to worry about losing my job." Realize that needing an executive recruiter goes way beyond just losing your job. What if you get a new boss and your relationship with him or her isn't working? What if you get bored with what you're doing and can't get a promotion or new responsibilities? What if you start yearning for a new professional challenge in life? Or, what if something happens to your spouse's job and now you need to find a new, higher paying job to support your family? All these scenarios are very real...and very common.

Additionally, the Bureau of Labor statistics reports that more than 3.7 million people find jobs through employment services. And it's estimated that more than 50% of the jobs available right now are not formally advertised. Most are filled by employee referrals and executive recruiters.

Therefore, the relationship you build with your executive recruiter is important, and it needs to be an ongoing relationship that works both ways. You have to stay on the mind of the recruiter all the time, even if you're not looking for a job.

Then, when the day comes that you do need this person's services, all you have to do is call and the recruiter will be able to start working immediately to find you a new position. No waiting for an initial meeting to discuss your needs, no learning curve while the recruiter gets to know you and your strengths, and no wasted time working with the wrong person. Because you'll already have a relationship with this person, it'll be more like calling an old friend for a favor than hiring a new professional to assist you.

The Do's and Don'ts of Partnering with an Executive Recruiter

As you search for the right recruiter to add to your professional network, keep these do's and don'ts in mind.

- Do be picky about who you partner with. Randomly picking someone from an online directory or from a phone book is never a good idea. Interview a few recruiters and find out such things as how many years of experience they have, if they have exclusive accounts, what industries they specialize in, and how many candidates at a time they will accept. Ask for some referrals to contact and then actually contact them. Find out how they liked working with the recruiter and if they'd recommend this person to others.
- Do have a list of peers and former employers the recruiter can talk to. Remember, this is a two-way relationship. The recruiter has to feel comfortable with you too and may want

to thoroughly check you out. Make sure your peers know the name of the person who will be calling them.

- Do tell your recruiter the truth. Once you're fairly certain you've found the right person to partner with, let him or her know what an employer might find out about you through an exhaustive background evaluation. If there is something in your past that might make you hit a snag, such as a legal issue or a bankruptcy, your recruiter will help you manage that.
- Do let the recruiter know what industries you are and aren't interested in. With their extensive network, they will help you get into places you can't get into yourself.
- Do treat your recruiter as you would any other valuable professional resource. Take the time to build the relationship. Buy his or her lunch occasionally, send articles of interest, and find out the recruiter's birthday so you can send a greeting card. Discover small ways to stay in touch that are appropriate. The more this person feels connected to you, the more he or she will keep you on the front burner.
- Don't assume you understand how an executive recruiter works. You may have worked with a retained search firm or contingency firm many years ago. But times have changed, and each firm is different. Also, don't assume that because this person works on contingency that he or she is eager to work with you. Chances are the recruiter has many active and passive candidates to choose from.
- Don't get too comfortable ("sloppy") with your recruiter. Even though you want to create an ongoing relationship, be careful not to cross the line of professionalism. Whenever you meet face-to-face, dress professionally, not in your summer cut-offs and flip-flops. Keep your emails business oriented. Assume anything you write to this person could show up in a potential employer's inbox. And while inviting this person to a girls' night out or to your five-year-old's birthday party may be a nice gesture, it's probably a bit too personal of an atmosphere to keep the professionalism you've worked so hard to create.
- Don't think that because you have superb technical skills that your recruiter will respond favorably to you. When recruiters "sell" people to potential employers, they are putting their reputation on the line for their clients. Therefore, your recruiter has to genuinely like you and believe in you – for your technical skills, your people skills, and your overall business skills.

Take Charge of Your Career

Your career and professional growth is a big part of your life. That's why you need the support of an executive recruiter. But like all professionals you work with, a recruiter is not a magic bullet. Simply having one in your address book is not enough. You need to work with this person and nurture the relationship and even refer a top candidate to them from time to time. When you do, you'll never be unprepared for a job change, and your professional path will be more enjoyable and more profitable than you ever thought possible.

Visit www.jeankelley.com for more information on Jean Kelley's consulting services. You can also find Jean on Twitter at www.twitter.com/jeanmkelley or on LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com/in/jeanmaslankakelley.