

# Conscious Careering

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**Sure, you're an executive—but are you confident you'll be able to "execute" your own job search effectively?**

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If you study the resume of the average executive-level job seeker, you'll see scads of "power language" packed in there talking about the candidate's ability to walk through walls, overcome obstacles, and achieve breakthrough results. Why is it, then, that these skill sets so often seem to vanish when executive-level candidates suddenly find themselves faced with the challenges of a job transition?

As a career coach specializing in assisting senior-level professionals, this paradox is one of the most perplexing ones I encounter on a daily basis. I observe people who have pulled off a laundry list of amazing exploits in the corporate world, yet who seem utterly unwilling or unable to apply this same aggressive, can-do attitude to their own benefit during the course of the job search process. In fact, the thought has struck me many times that many job seekers would likely end up being "fired" outright if their search efforts were ever judged using the same sorts of criteria upon which their on-the-job performance has historically been evaluated!

For example, while career coaching experts universally agree that successful candidates should invest at least 40 hours per week into the search process, statistics show that most job candidates actually spend fewer than 10 hours per week looking for work. Or consider the common executive "success characteristics" of project management, organization, and planning. Most executives possess these traits in abundance, and yet rarely apply them in any meaningful way during the course of their employment search. The proof? Ask just about any unemployed executive to walk you through their game plan for finding work and you'll likely be met with a blank stare. Ask them instead, however, how they went about accomplishing any of the performance goals they were tasked with completing on their last job, and they'll likely talk your ear off and blow you away with their proactive planning capabilities!

Without question, the professional work habits and goal-oriented behaviors are all still in there, intrinsically; it's just that most people aren't aware of how important it is to apply these exact same principles when it comes time to secure a new career opportunity for themselves.

If you're an executive or professional in transition, therefore, let me offer a few tips to help re-awaken your professional instincts:

● **Write your career goals down and develop a formal plan for reaching them.** Even though you might have a brilliant job search strategy percolating between your ears, it's amazing what can happen when you take the time to write out your thoughts on a piece of paper or using some sort of project management tool. Not only will a written plan allow you to savor the satisfaction of crossing off key milestones as you accomplish them, but keeping tabs on the actual metrics of your search (i.e. how many resumes you've sent out, contacts you've made, interviews you've landed, etc.) will be critical in monitoring your progress and fine-tuning your search strategy.

● **Take aggressive steps to maintain your professional work habits and mindset.** While most working professionals would never drop the ball on a critical project assigned to them by their boss, they will struggle to hold themselves accountable during the employment transition process. To counter this, try to maintain as many of your professional habits as possible during your job search. Build your job hunt routine around your typical corporate work schedule. Ditch the pajamas and dress professionally. Conduct your job search at the library or at a friend's office, outside of the house. And lastly, attend at least one or two professional events per week to stay focused and keep your interpersonal skills razor-sharp.

● **Remind yourself that the more professionally you run your job search, the more options and choices you'll have.** Even if you're truly not worried about landing a new job, and have the financial resources to sit on the sidelines for a while, keep in mind that the tendency to "settle" for a lackluster opportunity will be far greater if you limit yourself to nothing more than a half-hearted effort. By engaging in a robust search that generates multiple leads and opportunities, within a parallel time frame, you'll be in a position to be far more selective about where you end up—and will have much more leverage in terms of the employment terms and compensation package you'll be able to command in your next assignment.

The bottom line? If you can motivate yourself to approach the job search process with the same pride, proactivity, and professionalism you've displayed throughout your career, there's a good chance you'll reach your goals a lot sooner—and more successfully—than you think!

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