

# The Successful Executive's Tool Kit

## Three things you need when jobs appear unexpectedly

Unexpected job opportunities can catch most professionals' off-guard, much like a flat tire. But a little forethought can protect your career like a can of Fix-A-Flat saves changing a tire. We can't take it for granted that sufficient warning will be offered when a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity comes knocking. Good career management requires that you put together a career kit now, rather than later. Speaking of time, the best time to find a great job is when you don't need one, so if you prepare now for unexpected career situations your payoff is a more rewarding career path.

### A GOOD CAREER-KIT TAKES 3 TOOLS.

#### Tool #1 A great resume

Most people don't like to think that it all begins with how you look on paper. But don't kid yourself; even a well-respected executive with a sterling reputation and strong

network of friends must present his or her qualifications to a hiring chain. Even if someone is lucky enough to have a friend on the "inside," that champion represents only a single link in a multi-link chain. Since most people hate to write their own resume they put it off until the last moment and then put down bland functional data that doesn't support a positive hiring decision. The key to writing a powerful resume is proving your value. Proving value means that you explain the challenges, strategies and results of the projects or assignments you lead or supported. The cornerstone of an effective resume is using numbers, percentages and quantities, i.e. dollars saved or earned for your company. If you can prove that you're worth much more than your salary, getting hired becomes a no-brainer for the staffing manager.

#### Tool #2 A great cover letter

The relationship of a cover letter to the resume is like a tie

to a business suit. The cover letter complements the resume as the tie complements the suit. The art of writing a perfect cover letter is to be concise, focused and direct. It needs to illuminate key areas that the reader should focus on and the information should be stated in three paragraphs. A great cover letter explains who you are as a professional, highlights compelling career facts that are supported in detail in the resume, and finally, justifies why a further interview is needed to discuss your abilities. The typical mistake people make with their cover letter is they are too terse, perfunctory and not illuminating. Or they reiterate each position they've held and it becomes too long. Always keep in mind the old saying, "what have you done for me lately?" The cover letter should summarize how your most recent role is a progressive step in an ever more challenging career path.

#### Tool #3 A Great Network

Do you agree with the following bromide; *what you know* isn't always as important as *who you know*. If true, why do we spend almost no time building a professional net-

work? The three easiest ways to develop a network are;

Join a professional group, business club or trade association like the Business Marketing Association, the Chamber of Commerce, local alumni association chapter or a business club.

Become active in your church, neighborhood community, condo association or humanitarian organization such as Rotary International.

Subscribe to trade publications (it's always wise to read what your boss' boss reads) that serve your industry and attend events, trade shows or conventions.

Once you have prepared your 3-piece career-kit, you can respond to any job opportunity on a moment's notice. Opportunities are ephemeral; if they are not pursued quickly they don't wait around. These three tools, resume, cover letter and professional network ensure that you don't miss the chance. ■

Robert Meier is president of Absolute Career Services and a career coach specializing in resume construction. He can be reached at 312-222-9966 or [jobcatcher1@qwest.net](mailto:jobcatcher1@qwest.net).