

# Hunting The Head Hunter

*Make the King-Maker Crown You Prince*

by Robert Meier

When you send your resume to a headhunter you might think you're doing the recruiter a favor by presenting your credentials. After all, isn't it true if they place you they make thousands of dollars? Yes, but until you are successfully placed, you're only one of hundreds of potential candidates. It's one thing to have a headhunter call you and quite another to have them refer you to their client. If you don't prepare properly for these rather brief and preliminary phone screens, you may not only waste an opportunity but also squander the potential for a long and fruitful relationship. It is your responsibility to pursue the job, not the responsibility of the headhunter to convince you the opportunity is worth considering.

Each call offers a short and long-term value. In the short-term you'll want them to present your credentials to their client and in the long-term you'll want an ongoing relationship that can benefit you when you find yourself needing to look again for employment. These relationships, if handled properly, can result in the creation of a career network.

The conversation with a recruiter can at times be unnerving. Since they have never met you, typically received your resume unsolicited, and probably have not helped you before, it is very easy for you and the recruiter to disconnect. Each conversation has a dual purpose. The recruiter is looking for the right candidate to fit the position profile but is also concerned that you might embarrass them and damage the relationship with their client. So, when a recruiter calls they are not only interested in you for the position, but they are

also probing to see if you pose a risk for them to recommend for an interview. The key is to remain tactful no matter what the recruiter says, how offensive they may be or how uninteresting the opportunity may appear.

You should ask intuitive questions regarding the search assignment, specialty, urgency, number of candidates under review, what issues they are trying to solve, etc.

## Your key objectives:

- Win an interview—don't get screened out. Help the interviewer remember you for future searches if this one does not fit
- Demonstrate interest and enthusiasm (passion for opportunity).
- Prove that given a chance to be presented to their client, you will make the recruiter look great.
- Memorize the resume and know exactly where everything is so you can lead them to the information that demonstrates your best qualities.

How to successfully handle recruiters calls.

## 1 Learn the reason for the call

At the point of initial contact we don't know what in our background attracted the recruiter's attention. So a great first question to ask is: "What in my resume caught your attention?"

You may need to be persistent here because the recruiter's tendency is to be dismissive or vague. They have a brief agenda; to call dozens of candidates with one opportunity in mind, so you need to stand out from the competition.



You may need to deflect from weaknesses and redirect their attention to your strengths. For example, you might not have demonstrated broad industry experience because you have limited work history or recently focused on one industry, i.e., healthcare, insurance, or technology. The recruiter needs to see that you have learned common management, tactical and business strategies, that ensures you are a good fit for their search.

If you don't have time to talk, get their name, number, firm name and good time to follow-up. You should ask: Is this call for a specific search or just to touch base? If it is for a specific call, what is the title, industry, client type, etc.? What is the time frame for filling the opening, how urgent is the search? If their call was just to touch base (i.e. they might want to keep you in mind for future searches), ask: type of professional work histories are you familiar working with?

## 2 Communicate Interest

Recruiters are very sensitive to voice, tonal inflections or hesitation. Recruiters are not interested in your "window shop-