

Preparing to Advance Your Career

By Jackie Bandish

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There comes a time in each of our lives when we feel the need to make a change, whether it be personal or professional, and we will often seek the advice of a specialty resource person.

In my fifteen plus years in Human Resources and Executive Search, I have come to learn that there is no one right way, however, there are some ways that will help us advance our careers. When a candidate has decided to make a job change, I recommend they contact a professional search firm to assist them in identifying new opportunities. A skilled recruiter will coach and train the candidate as well as help them prepare for a successful interview. A good recruiter will represent the candidate to their clients seeking their particular skill set. A professional within a well- respected recruiting firm will also help the candidate to determine what sets them apart from their competition. Not only will they help the candidate to obtain an interview they will also help prepare the candidate for the interview.

When I interview candidates, I want to get to know them. I will often ask open ended questions to learn about their personality, their strengths, their peer's viewpoints of them and so forth. In conducting this type of question and answer format, I engage the candidate in an open-ended conversation and I make them really think about whom they are and what they have accomplished and most importantly what they are seeking to achieve. Even though no one knows us better than ourselves, and our mothers, we often don't take the time to truly evaluate our needs, desires, strengths, weaknesses and accomplishments. I recommend that twice a year candidates evaluate themselves and document their achievements and log which areas they seek to develop in their. Every candidate needs to set their goals in order to chart their path to success.

As I initiate my conversation with candidates, I have them describe for me their ideal position and to describe the perfect job that they envision for themselves. From this description we begin to break it down and we assess the pros and cons of their current

situation. We define what they are lacking and what they seek to gain. We are essentially preparing their "wish list". If we determine that they cannot advance with their current employer then we begin to prepare for the "search" and to look at potential new employers.

"Research and Preparation is Key to Obtaining and Successfully Conducting an Interview"

At all levels, I encourage the candidate to research their prospective client and to conduct a self-evaluation as to determine if they are a good fit for the position. I dissect the job description by each sentence and I outline the candidate's experience against the requirements. I have them highlight their experience and accomplishments over the past years and I get them prepared to summarize their skill set and strengths. When it comes time to interview, both parties will engage in conversation.

The interview is a two-way process. It is a time for the candidate to introduce him or herself to the client and to share with the client his or her work experience. It is also the time for the candidate to question the client and to find out what the client can offer to them and how they can aid them in their career development. Commonsense and personality are the most important things a candidate can bring to any interview. While it is important to prepare beforehand, the candidate's ability to think on their feet and to open up, may be what separates them from their competition.

About Author:

Jackie Bandish is President and Founder of The Bandish Group, Warrington, PA 18976, 800.881.9976, jackie@bandishgroup.com, <http://www.bandishgroup.com>.