

CareerSmart Advisor™

Strategies & Solutions for Your Career Success

A Note From Dave

As 2010 begins, we at ExecuNet begin our 22nd year in business. In congratulating me on the milestone, a colleague asked how I thought the company had been able to react and adapt to all of the changes and challenges it has faced over the years.



The truth is that we have always worked very hard to remain true to our core values, and that is one of the major advantages of being a small company.

My colleague said that it must be difficult to do since the company has continued to grow throughout the years. I admit it wasn't easy, but I felt that as long as we never lost sight of what we believe in, we could always work our way through almost any challenge.

Every organization, large or small, has similar ideals or rules by which they try to manage. I don't consider them "rules" as much as "beliefs."

We have many of them at ExecuNet. I thought I would share a few core beliefs with you here:

1. Every relationship we have, be it inside or outside the organization, is built on trust.
2. We want a culture that feels like we are working "with" and not "for."
3. We don't want to ever forget that everything we do or say reflects on us both individually and collectively.

What are some of your organization's beliefs? How have they defined your company and you as a leader?

Sincerely,



Dave Opton
ExecuNet Founder & CEO
www.execunet.com/davesblog

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THE NUMBERS

KEY EXECUTIVE MARKETPLACE INDICATORS

- 54% | executive recruiters confident employment market will improve in next 6 months
- 50% | increase in ExecuNet members landing new jobs since September
- 33% | increase in ExecuNet's executive job postings in December over November
- 21% | search firms planning to add professional staff in Q1 2010

Career-Enhancing Programs

January/February/March 2010
Hosted by Dave Opton, founder and CEO, ExecuNet

1/29 — **Presentation Persuasion: Influence Any Outcome**
Kathy McAfee
Don't risk your success with a poor presentation that will overshadow the message. Become a better communicator. Learn tips to close the deal.
FREE PROGRAM FOR MEMBERS

2/19 — **Build Real Relationships with Executive Recruiters**
Dave Dart
The inside story and a “no holds barred” approach to how to connect, build and maximize an effective working partnership that can help your career and job search campaign. **FREE PROGRAM FOR MEMBERS**

2/5 — **Storytelling: Create Memorable Meetings**
Judy Rosemarin
Interviewers are tired of generic elevator pitches! What stays with them is an honest, authentic story. What's yours? Uncover the secrets to creating your unique message. **FREE PROGRAM FOR MEMBERS**

2/25 — **Master the Phone Interview and Close the Deal**
Paul Bailo
Your telephone interviewing skills could be the deciding factor in getting a live interview and, ultimately, landing the leadership role you want. Be ready! [[more](#)]

2/11 — **Market Your Potential, Not Your Past**
Karen Armon
Build a career that works for you, regardless of what happens to you by understanding your economic potential and preparing for the significant employment trends. Learn how to organize a well-designed campaign that will lead to your next job. [[more](#)]

3/18 — **The MarketOne Executive: Landing a Top C-level Role**
Karen Armon
To get the extraordinary results you desire, you need an extraordinary approach that is designed exclusively for moving into the top leadership role. Learn the “musts” for executives like you who want to organize a well-designed campaign and find their next top job. [[more](#)]

Networking Meetings in Your Area

January/February 2010
Hosted by ExecuNet Facilitators

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1/25 — Boston Sr. Executive Roundtable — Marg Balcom | 2/9 — Phoenix — Fred Coon |
| 1/26 — Greensboro — John M. O'Connor | 2/9 — Orlando — Catherine Coates & Mike Murray |
| 1/26 — Vienna/Tysons Corner, VA Sr. Executive Roundtable — Peter McCarthy | 2/10 — Seattle Sr. Executive Roundtable — Susan Stringer |
| 1/27 — Toronto — Martin Buckland | 2/10 — Stamford — Linda Van Valkenburgh |
| 1/27 — Stamford Sr. Executive Roundtable — Linda Van Valkenburgh | 2/10 — Toronto Sr. Executive Roundtable — Martin Buckland |
| 1/27 — Denver — Karen Armon | 2/10 — Philadelphia — Mitch Wienick & Ed Kelleher |
| 1/28 — Atlanta Sr. Executive Roundtable — J. Patrick Haly | 2/10 — Portland — Jean Erickson Walker |
| 1/28 — Columbus — Janine Moon | 2/10 — Cleveland Sr. Executive Roundtable — Rick Taylor |
| 1/29 — St. Louis — Ken Coleman & Randy Hove | 2/10 — Philadelphia Sr. Executive Roundtable — Mitch Wienick & Ed Kelleher |
| 1/29 — Rochester/Finger Lakes — Arnie Boldt & Gail Smith Boldt | 2/11 — Atlanta — J. Patrick Haly |
| 2/2 — San Diego/Carlsbad — Mark James | 2/11 — Columbia-Maryland — Ed Loucks |
| 2/3 — New York City — Judy Rosemarin | 2/12 — Buffalo/Niagara — Beth Stefani |
| 2/3 — Chicago — Gail Sussman Miller | 2/12 — Parsippany — Nancy Sutter |
| 2/3 — Cincinnati — Jennifer McClure | 2/12 — Tampa Bay — Gina Potito |
| 2/3 — New York City Sr. Executive Roundtable — Judy Rosemarin | 2/15 — Detroit — Mark Cory |
| 2/4 — Sarasota — Susan Mell | 2/16 — Wilmington — Rick Hays |
| 2/4 — Southern Wisconsin — Clara Hurd Nydam & Tom Senge | 2/16 — Irvine (Orange County) — Mark James |
| 2/8 — Miami/Hollywood — Jeannette Kraar | 2/16 — Seattle — Susan Stringer |
| 2/8 — Detroit — Marge Larsen | 2/16 — Cleveland — Rick Taylor |
| 2/8 — Boston — Marg Balcom | |

Reserve your space! Call Member Services at 800-637-3126 or visit ExecuNet.com

From the Roundtables

Creating an Overachieving Corporate Climate

ExecuNet's Roundtables are an online community area where members can meet and help one another network their way into their next assignment or share information and experiences. [Access the Roundtables under "Make Connections" on the ExecuNet member homepage.] In this excerpt from a recent General Management Roundtable conversation, the question about how to create an overachieving corporate climate is discussed. [Some content has been edited.]

ExecuNet member CQ: What are your suggestions regarding creating a climate where everyone in your team stretches beyond what they thought they could do? What tools do you use to empower others?

ExecuNet member ES: The way I approach a job, is that I want to learn the skill sets of the people who work for me first. What are they good at doing NOW? What types of attributes do they show that would lead me to believe they could (and more importantly, would like to) take on more in the FUTURE?

While doing this analysis, I also spend a great deal of time looking at the business and determining the key focus areas that must be addressed, and determining what skill sets are needed to address those specific issues.

I combine the two to see who on the team has the skills, ability and desire to take on more and have them work on these new issues.

I think the key here, though, is to make those key initiatives a BIG DEAL. Let the company know THESE are the things that are going to fix/build/grow/save the company. THEN, when you ask people to work on those issues, they will feel like it is a truly important task, and one that they might feel really good about being asked to work on.

The only way you will get the trust and respect long-term is to ensure that these people know you appreciate their extra efforts, and you go out of your way to ensure they are happy and motivated.

I believe this process builds an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect. It gets people doing what they want to do and are good at. They get to stretch them-

selves and help the company, too, and you get to see who has the ability to grow in the organization, as well as areas that might need to be addressed. People are also given a sense of what they can expect if they do stretch and are willing to take on more.

ExecuNet member KH: I believe asking everyone to increase output is, to some degree, easy. But a majority of people will resist change, so be ready with a strategy first.

Having a clear plan and strategy and having the correct players are always the first things you should assess. Perhaps you are missing one of these very important ingredients.

Is your manager of like mind to what you want to do? If not, the first step is to get all of those above you to see the need the same way you do.

If what you are trying to do is just get them to stop standing around the coffee machine and taking long lunches and coming late and leaving early, I would suggest you look around your organization and see if you can pinpoint the one or ones who are creating a model of the type of performance that is acceptable. Then go to the manager and see if you can work out a positive change together.

If what you are trying to accomplish is just to get your department within a bigger organization to do more because you want the unique recognition, I suggest backing away.

Trying to move a part of the organization into improved performance without everyone being dedicated to the same thing will just cause

huge employee-related issues. This is not to say you should not work on department performance, you should; but be cautious so what you are doing does indeed blend in with organizational needs.

ExecuNet member AF: Within the businesses that I consult and teams that I have led, this is a frequently encountered situation, and many companies struggle with this challenge.

What I have found to be a successful approach includes the following steps. First, assess the business from top to bottom:

- The organization's missions and goals
- Their strategy to reach the desired outcomes
- The structure of the organization (does the firm have the resources and capabilities to execute on the strategy?)
- The people tasked with fulfilling the tactical components of their roles
- The incentives designed to motivate the team members to achieve the needed targets

Once a leader (and the leadership team) has taken stock of the above items, and makes sure all of those elements are in place, communication of the missions and goals of the firm, and mutual adoption of those goals throughout the ranks is critical.

More important than the initial wave of communication is the follow-up, not only in leading by example, but also by setting very specific and challenging goals for each member of the team in completing her role as part of the team vision. This is where many companies fail. All organizations will have some marginal producers, and a question is how the firm leads, coaches and develops those employees (or moves them out of the firm) while still motivating top producers and maintaining a positive, forward moving culture. ■

What Worked: ExecuNet Members Reveal Job Search Success

Expert advice is always enlightening, as it is based on deep research and analysis, resulting in actionable plans, best practices or strategies. But when combined with experiential information from peers, that understanding is deepened.

The suggestions you receive from peers aren't necessarily found in a book. These are usually the unique secrets — those special nuggets of information and insight — that are shared among friends and close connections — people just like you. Others have already tried to solve the problems you experience, and they are often very willing to share their knowledge and offer solutions that worked for them.

The ability to gain real-world feedback and exchange information through an executive-level peer network can provide an invaluable resource for executives, regardless of the particular issues they are facing. That peer support can also provide the courage and confidence executives need to take the necessary “next steps” in their careers and confront the many challenges they face as they strive to achieve both their personal and professional goals.

Creating New Opportunities

A strong combination of that expert advice and peer involvement can undoubtedly help lead executives to their next career opportunities. The most obvious place to start is the job search.

Experts and job seekers agree that the key to a successful job search involves utilizing more than one main strategy or tool. A solid résumé, a complete online presence, as well as confident networking and interviewing skills all contribute to a job search that ends with an exciting new position.

Here we share some of the strategies and suggestions from ExecuNet members who successfully landed the executive-level jobs they sought. By sharing their success stories and keys to securing successful landings, we hope that you will find the guidance and inspiration to create your own.

Early Preparation Sets the Tone

“Network and prepare. Preparation, in particular, provided me with the knowledge, technique and confidence required to establish myself as the premier candidate for the position. And as the interviewing process proceeded, the interviewers and the recruiter reaffirmed that I had done so.”

— 44-year-old Vice President of Software Development, Educational Software

“I made sure my résumé was in top-notch order and prepared my wardrobe, voicemail, etc., in order to put my best foot forward. In addition, I set up a space for ‘at home’ telephone interviews with notepad, printed out computer research, and made a list of my strengths. In addition, I prepared by researching some of the top interview questions, answered them for myself, and printed out a ‘cheat sheet’ so that I was ready for the ‘What are your top three strengths?’ type questions.”

— 46-year-old Business Development Manager, Information Technology

Know What You Really Want

“Identify the top ‘X’ criteria that your new position must meet and the ones you’ll compromise on (if any). I had four specific items I was looking to meet with my new position and was not willing to bend on any of them unless I got beyond six months into my search (my new position meets all four).”

— 36-year-old Vice President, Program Management, Technology

“I think the biggest challenge in a career change is between a person’s ears... Many things can impact the length of time it takes (economy, industry and location), but I am convinced that leaving your ‘baggage’ and moving forward is the one thing that lengthens many people’s searches.”

— 41-year-old Executive Vice President, Medical Devices

“Avoid being too limiting in the search, and don’t necessarily take the first opportunity offered (if it doesn’t fully align with your personal/professional purpose and vision). Mobility is a good thing — keep an open mind on location.”

— 43-year-old Executive Director, Business Information Systems Consulting, Pharmaceutical

The Résumé: Show Your Value

“I called to make sure my résumé got to the right person. One of the gregarious part-time workers answered the phone. I learned a lot about the organization and ended-up speaking with the executive director within 24 hours. Sometimes luck, chance and ‘need’ come together.”

— 42-year-old Director of Marketing and Fundraising, Nonprofit

“I attended several ExecuNet-sponsored conferences (interviewing strategies, networking, negotiating), which helped hone my techniques in a timely manner. Getting my résumé professionally rewritten was by far the best thing I did this time around. It generated (and is still generating) interest and had a much higher ‘conversion rate’ than any other version of my résumé since I entered management.”

— 44-year-old Vice President, Software Development, Educational Software

“Clearly define the position, functional area and industry you wish to target for your search and work with a professional to update your résumé for that position.”

— 51-year-old Vice President of Sales, Medical

Target Your Search

“Know yourself well — what you’ve done, what you want to do and what you’re prepared to do. Be ready to talk about how your experiences can be applied to the target’s opportunities.”

— 50-year-old Vice President, Sales & Marketing, Energy

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What Worked

Continued from page 4

“Define a workable target list of companies in the industry you want to be and network with professional colleagues, industry contacts, ExecuNet members, friends, relatives, alumni, former clients or customers to reach the senior level contacts at your target companies.”

— *51-year-old Vice President of Sales, Medical*

“The smaller and more niche-oriented [a company], the better. They usually have more needs for great executive talent with experience in their particular niche!”

— *59-year-old President and CEO, Medical Equipment*

How Networking Works

“Just sending cover letters, résumés and responding to boards is working less than it ever has before because people are numb by the vast amounts of data being pushed at them. Therefore, using social networking platforms and boards that create a community were extremely helpful.”

— *41-year-old Executive Vice President, Medical Devices*

“I would encourage you to meet with nearly everyone who is willing to talk to you, even those who, on the surface, don't seem to have anything to offer. I also would encourage people to take the time up front to put together a solid list of companies to target.”

— *53-year old, Director of Corporate Communications, Nutritional Supplements*

“Stay actively engaged in one's profession — I had been on the board of directors of the local chapter of my profession's professional society for four years at the time I left my last position. Being actively engaged in the leadership of this 8,000+ member organization not only served as a differentiator as I went through the process, but also opened up a surprisingly large number of leads and gave me an outlet for professional stimulation, networking, etc. while in between jobs.”

— *36-year-old Vice President, Program Management, Technology*

“I leveraged my alumni network (both undergraduate, graduate), my volunteer activities (with which I had been involved for nearly 20 years), and expanded my network both within and outside of my area of specialty. Two key ways I expanded my network were to join ExecuNet and the International Executive Resources Group (IERG).”

— *43-year-old Executive Director, Business Information Systems Consulting, Pharmaceutical*

“Without the intercession of my friends and contacts at my previous company, I would still be searching.”

— *59-year-old Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer, Photographic Services*

Ace the Interviewing Process

“Make sure you can make the company feel you have already done what they are hiring you to do. Talk about specific experiences that directly relate to their issues.”

— *58-year-old Chief Information Officer, Hardware*

“Early on, I looked at the process from the perspective of what I needed. It works much better when you look from the perspective of the company. Filling positions is not their highest priority, even if it is yours.”

— *50-year-old Vice President, Sales & Marketing, Energy*

“Bottom line, I laid it on the line. After several interactions with the decision-maker, I presented them with a 30-60-90 day action plan that outlined how I would approach the role. While I didn't have all the details and knowledge to do this in a comprehensive manner (i.e. I took some risk)...it gave them a good sense of my style, approach...and probably most importantly, how much thought I had put into the position.”

— *55-year-old Vice President and General Manager, Construction Services*

Working with Recruiters

“Don't overwhelm the recruiters; pass on only new information once initial contact is made. To further the relationship, let the recruiters know about other talent

that can help them — this generally helps you as well (if the contacts pan out).”

— *43-year-old Executive Director, Business Information Systems Consulting, Pharmaceutical*

“Don't assume a company is not hiring even if they do not have a position posted. Seek advice from recruiters rather than specific job information. Let their knowledge help you with your community and contacts. Have them critique your résumé and cover letter. Brainstorm with them about approaches.”

— *52-year-old Vice President, Business Development, Healthcare*

Exploring the Consulting Option

“I also did consulting, partly to earn some additional money, partly to get my name around, partly to keep my résumé fresh — I would highly recommend this. This job actually came about as offering to consult and with the help of a senior executive I knew as a supplier in my past.”

— *47-year-old Vice President of Sales and Marketing, Plastics*

“I would highly recommend doing some independent consulting (if possible) during the process, to further the contacts and keep connected to business changes.”

— *43-year-old Executive Director, Business Information Systems Consulting, Pharmaceutical*

Remain Positive, Persistent

“Even after it appears you are making progress on a particular job, don't stop working on landing (or advancing) other opportunities. You never know how the search will turn out until you've signed on the dotted line!”

— *49-year-old CEO, Healthcare Software*

“I read industry magazines to see what drugs were in development. I saw that the company was developing a drug in a therapeutic area (TA) where it had little to no internal marketing experience. I sent my CV to the head of the TA to let him know how I could help. Fifteen interviews and six months later, I got an offer.” ■

— *43-year-old Senior Director of Marketing, Pharmaceutical*

Your Career Advisor

How to Promote Your Own Career Growth

By Dianna Booher

Too many people work hard at their jobs and not hard enough at their careers. That's a problem because jobs come and go, but careers control your future.

Those looking to move up in the job world must be constantly reinventing themselves, determining what skills they possess, acquiring those they need, and broadening their career goals.

Human resource professionals agree that executives consider the following skills and attitudes among the most important in promoting career growth:

Communicate Your Ideas and Intentions Orally

Most executives consider this the most valued skill. Your speaking ability either generates confidence or doubt about your work. Others only "see" what you're able to communicate to them. In addition to relaying needed information, speaking skills are crucial because they prevent your work, and its value, from going unnoticed. What you say is who you are.

Communicate Your Ideas and Intentions in Writing

If speaking is the most prized skill, writing runs a close second. Clear, concise and well-written documents have high impact and staying power. As listeners become bombarded with phone calls and face-to-face interruptions, written messages can be read, reviewed, verified and contemplated for later use.

Good writing means not only good content, but also an appropriate style. The employee who can think clearly and logically and communicate that in written form is in high demand.

Access and Analyze Information and Resources Effectively

Keeping informed on facts and trends in your business is critical to career advancement. Today the question is not "Do you

know X?" but "Do you know how to find out about X?" The real skill is in knowing how to access the latest information quickly, assess its usefulness logically and act on it promptly.

People are racing down the information highway. If you're not up to speed or commandeering the right vehicle, you're likely to get run over. In the age of skepticism, facts and stats drive the world.

Manage Resources Wisely

Whether it's your time, money, energy, skills, files or staff, you have to stay organized. Good organization depends on clear thinking, consistent decision-making and decisive action.

“

Keeping informed on facts and trends in your business is critical to career advancement.

”

Mismanage your time and you lose business today and opportunities tomorrow. Mismanage your data (the total body of information doubles every seven years) and you become uninformed and obsolete. Mismanage your employees and you risk being inefficient and ineffective, if not losing your top performers to better run companies. Managing your resources is managing your career.

Increase Your Network Net Worth

To be successful, you personally have to nurture your networks. As a manager, you have to build consensus up and down the food chain with stakeholders. You need your networks to:

- Gather intelligence to make better decisions.
- Recruit people to come to work for you.

- Be innovative.
- Bring in ideas from outside conferences.
- Bring in business.
- Create a favorable impression of your organization in the community.

This core competency has been labeled several things: connectivity, building coalitions, horizontal integration, social acumen or relationship capital. Whatever you call it, be sure to consider its value to your career.

Place a Premium on Staff Development

While money and machines may move industries, it's people who handle the money and machines that move industries. Whether you're selling lemonade on the street corner or wheeling and dealing on Madison Avenue, you'll find that business is a contact sport.

Knowing how to meet, relate to, develop, motivate and empower those you work with will determine where you fit on the organizational food chain. Business may be getting bigger and more technical, but it will always remain personal.

Organizations have decided that they're no longer paying for face time; they're paying for results. As long as you have the prerequisite skills, attitudes, and traits, you can turn a wayward job into a successful career. ■

Dianna Booher works with organizations to increase their productivity and effectiveness through better oral, written, interpersonal and cross-functional communication. She is the author of Booher's Rules of Business Grammar: 101 Fast and Easy Ways to Correct the Most Common Errors and The Voice of Authority: 10 Communication Strategies Every Leader Needs to Know. Booher's communication training firm, Booher Consultants, Inc., is based in the Dallas/Ft. Worth Metroplex and serves many Fortune 500 clients. She can be contacted at 817-318-6000 or Booher.com

Executive Toolbox

Corporate Culture as a Retention Strategy

By Cathleen Faerber

We have all heard that a company's most important asset is its people. Organizations will go through tremendous efforts to ensure that they are hiring "talented" people. Assessment testing, behavioral interviewing, as well as thorough background and drug screening is the norm in many of today's top corporations. These efforts cost a tremendous amount of money and take a concerted effort by your human resources staff as well as hiring managers. But are you hiring the right people, and what happens after the hire?

It's important to understand that the landscape has changed. No longer do employees anticipate a long-term career with companies. Corporate downsizing, "right sizing," mergers, acquisitions, etc. have all taken their toll on the "cradle to grave" mindset of yesteryear. Days of pension plans and longevity in employment are long gone. Today's employees are looking for quality organizations with corporate cultures they feel comfortable with and that they can advance in.

The culture of your organization refers to the shared values, goals, standards and beliefs that characterize the people who work for your company. The culture itself is rooted in your organization's goals, strategies and structure. Its framework is defined from the top down and is felt throughout the entire organization. To be a good "fit" for an organization is to be a good "fit" for its corporate culture.

How would you define your corporate culture? Is it collegial? Is it competitive — in a good way? Or are people pitted against each other? Does it foster a positive atmosphere? Is hard work rewarded? Are compensation and promotion policies administered fairly and consistently? Is the company mission clearly defined? It's important to take an objective look at

Executives' Assessments of the Cost of Losing Top Talent

When retention strategies fail and top talent leaves an organization, the knowledge and expertise these individuals take with them is difficult to replace. And the entire replacement process can be costly. Senior leaders offer these estimates regarding the cost to replace them as well as their key team members:

	Cost to Replace Self	Cost of Replacing Top Subordinate
CEO	\$630,370	\$325,836
CxO/VP	\$594,650	\$298,251

Source: ExecuNet/Finnegan Mackenzie 2009 Executive Retention Report

your organization and honestly determine who are the right hires and what's important in retaining them.

Ultimately, good people expect a quality work environment. No longer will your best and brightest allow themselves to be mistreated or stagnant their career growth for the sake of company loyalty. But what can you do as a leader to ensure that the environment is conducive to retaining your top talent?

Define Your Culture

Is your culture competitive? Does your culture thrive on ambiguity? Is it conservative and highly structured? Would you describe it as more fluid? As each person has a personality, so does each organization. Very often, the industry will help define an organization's culture as well as the management style of the senior leadership. Banking, for example, is a very conservative industry, and large banks will typically have a conservative culture. An Internet start-up company will be more entrepreneurial in nature. This type of organization would require people who function more effectively in a more fluid environment.

Determine Who Fits Your Culture

As we are not right for everything, everything is not right for us. A very entrepreneurial person will feel stifled in a very structured organization. Hiring people who are good cultural fits for your organization will go a long way to

retaining your top talent. Don't be afraid to pass on the best and brightest in your industry if the cultural fit isn't there.

What's Important to These People

What's important to your top talent is two-fold. First, what's important is dictated by the functional areas they reside in, as well as universally sound human resources policies as they pertain to all employees within your organization. This includes promotions, compensation benefits, etc. Life is not a "one size fits all." Continuing education may be most important to some, while others may look for flexibility in work schedules. Looking at your key people as individuals and creating programs and policies that treat them as individuals can foster a positive environment.

The investment top companies make in hiring the right people (i.e. search fees, employment advertising, costs of testing) pays off in the productivity and value these people bring to your company — so does the investment of strong and competitive benefits, sound compensation policies, training and continuing education. It's easy to forget the cost of replacement is more than the fees you spend to hire. ■

Cathleen Faerber is managing director of The Wellesley Group, Inc., a boutique executive search firm in Chicago. She can be contacted at WellesleyGroup.com

Executive Summary

Your Executive Portfolio: Effectively Communicate Your Brand

In today's tight job market, it's more important than ever that executive job seekers separate themselves from other job seekers. It starts with the understanding of what makes them unique and different from others competing in the job market, says résumé expert Louise Kursmark.

"If you can't communicate your brand — which is defined as your differentiated promise of value — you're not going to be able to set yourself apart from the other candidates," explains Kursmark. "You're going to blend together." The "differentiated promise of value" is comprised of several components: what you do, how you do it and the results you deliver.

To help identify their brand, executives need to explore what makes them different, says Kursmark. "Think about your on-the-job performance," she notes. Kursmark suggests answering these questions:

- What things can you say you have in common at every job?
- What kind of things have you done?
- What track record have you shown?
- What have you repeatedly been called on to do?
- What have you really enjoyed doing?

If you're having difficulty being objective, ask others what they think of you. "Your brand is what people think

Your Executive Portfolio: Effectively Communicate Your Brand

Presented by Louise Kursmark

Effectively demonstrating your unique value proposition can help you stand out from the competition in today's competitive job market. A portfolio of career marketing communications is one of the most important tools you can use to showcase your valuable brand. In *Your Executive Portfolio*, résumé expert Louise Kursmark shows executives how to effectively illustrate their brand through the key components of an executive portfolio:

- Executive résumé
- Career biography
- Online profiles
- Branding statements
- Cover letters
- Thank you letters
- Web portfolio
- Multimedia presentations

about you," Kursmark says. Ask people the following questions to help you identify your own brand:

- What do you think of me?
- What do you think are my strongest skills?
- What areas do I excel in?

Branding Your Documents

After identifying your brand, the next step is to communicate that brand through your portfolio of career marketing materials. A branding statement can be positioned at the top of a résumé. It can also be used as a story in the cover letter as a way in which to illustrate an executive brand. Branding statements in thank you letters can help executives reinforce the value they bring and their potential fit within an organization.

Getting Those Documents Read

Kursmark notes the importance of providing readers with materials that effectively communicate brand and doing so in a succinct manner. Readers need to be able to skim the documents and quickly learn about the main accomplishments of a job candidate. Focus on the highlights; avoid getting bogged down with unimportant details.

Kursmark suggests telling a story with the documents. "If you give people the context, it makes what you did much more meaningful," she says.

Overall, the brand and an executive's unique message both need to be communicated throughout all job search materials. "Whenever you can include information that relates back to your brand, it's going to reinforce the message," says Kursmark. ■

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