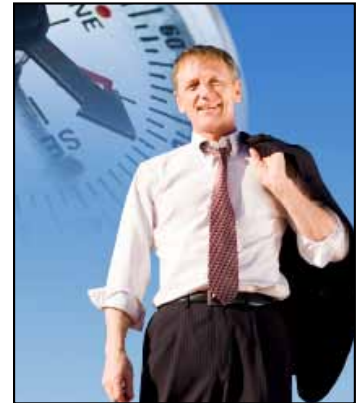


JOB SEARCH

Job-Search Basics: Cover Those Bases!

You've experienced the job search process from both sides of the desk. But to grab the opportunities you need *now*, follow this simple refresher course.

By Kevin Fogarty



WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT IT, job hunting is a lot like going to the dentist. Naked.

Not only do you have to expose yourself to the harsh judgment of strangers; you have to do it without complaining, in an awkward position, while they poke around with sharp things to find any weak spots or decay and comment objectively on parts of yourself in which you feel a very personal interest.

The bad news is that every one of those feelings is normal and almost everyone who goes through a job search experiences them at some point.

The good news is they're completely misplaced.

As a member of TheLadders.com, it's odds-on that you're not only experienced and competent, you've also been through the process once or twice before, probably as the hiring manager as well as the candidate.

Parts of the process may have changed since the last time you were in front of the desk, but you've done it before and come out well.

The insecurity is a natural part of job hunting, exacerbated by the tendency of competent mid-career people to be annoyed or uncomfortable when they think they might be miss-

Welcome to the Rest of Your Career!

By Matthew Rothenberg, Editor-in-Chief, TheLadders

REMEMBER YOUR FIRST real job search? Everybody goes through it, but I still wince when I recall how little I knew about selling my brand and setting my price – even tying my tie!

Every time I interview a very young person for a junior position, I think about what it was like to be on the other side of the desk. Even if the fit isn't right for the position I need to fill, I strive to leave the candidate feeling more empowered and better-informed about the way the job market works.



That's a gift we all deserve, no matter how many interviews we've given or received. After all (to paraphrase the old cereal commercial), today is the first day of the rest of your career – make sure you're wiser before the sun sets!

This adult-strength primer is written with that goal in mind. Ace business reporter Kevin Fogarty has scoured the teachings of career experts and your fellow members of TheLadders to create a tactical refresher for any senior job seeker looking to hone that competitive edge.

I hope it helps you take that next step, and I'm eager for your feedback on how else we can help inform your journey.

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What did you think of this package?

Got a story of your own to tell? Have ideas for future coverage? Please write Editor-in-Chief Matthew Rothenberg at matthewr@theladders.com.

ing something important.

Fortunately, there's a rich literature in job hunting, including **a clear set of best practices** you can use as a guide to keep your search on track. Here we've summarized the best advice, along with a quickie reminder list of the things you should be doing daily, weekly and monthly.

The first thing to do is put aside your impatience and insecurity. Both are natural; neither is an advantage. A long, frustrating job hunt can turn around with a single phone call, and there's no advance warning when that call is going to come. Keep plugging so you're always ready.

It's impossible to calculate a useful average job-search time. There are plenty of calculations, but they use data so broad-based that the number they come up with has little relevance to someone looking for a job in your industry, geographic location, seniority, salary level and individual skill set. A fast-food burger flipper might only take two days to find a new job; it took Barack Obama more than two years to get his. Figure your search will fall somewhere in between.

In the meantime, even on days it's easier just to surf the Web or not do much of anything, do *something*. Keep moving, and use best-practices recommendations like these to keep your efforts focused.

It's almost certain – no matter how good you are at networking or self-promotion or self-presentation or any of the other skills it takes to get a job – you're emphasizing the parts of the process you're good at and shirking the ones you don't like. Do them anyway; check your time log to make sure you're not skimping on those parts or overcompensating by ignoring your strengths.

In the next pages, let's review the job search piece by piece.

Resume Writing and Presentation: Build Your Brand



WHO ARE YOU, REALLY? More, certainly, than appears on your resume. Unfortunately recruiters, HR professionals and hiring managers don't have time to appreciate the more subtle aspects of your sterling character. The whole application process is designed for the convenience of people on the other side of the application process, giving

you limited opportunity to make yourself stand out from the crowd or emphasize the things that would nail down that perfect job offer if it were obvious. How do you do that?

Show your value.

Everyone thinks first about their resume. But you shouldn't even open that file until you've gone through a certain amount of objective self-evaluation to identify what you like to do, what you're good at and what an employer would be getting when they get you. That's the advice of **Jim Villwock**, president of expense-management service **IEM Group Inc.** and author of **Whacked Again! Secrets to Getting Back on the Executive Saddle.**

Would you buy a car or computer without a clear idea of what it would do for you, or even something more subtle, like what using it said about you to other people? Think hard about who you are; what you like to do; and what is the most positive, powerful thing you offer. Then boil that down into a three- to five-word tagline.

Are you a CFO? So are a lot of other people. A CFO with

HIRED!

Lessons Learned from Success Stories

What did these job seekers learn from the hunt? Here are tactics from recent winners in the job race.

By **Kevin Fogarty**

WHATEVER CAREER EXPERTS may have to say about the job search, there's nothing like first-hand experience. These members of The-Ladders recently shared their stories and offered specific tactics from their own successful searches.

Focus your search strategy.

"The challenge is to find your niche. Three years ago, if you could fog a mirror, you could get a construction contract. Now it's a little bit harder." – OpsLadder member David Rosenof, chief operating officer and VP of Hunter Construction in Pompano Beach, Fla.

► Read David's story.

Demonstrate your value.

"There was a time during the dot-com boom when everybody wanted CRM or everybody wanted ERP and you were able to dump your solution at people. It is not like that any more. You have to be able to go in and

sales experience and a history of cutting costs in supply chain and operations? Try, “I’m a CFO focusing on streamlining operations and profit improvement,” Villwock writes. Lawyer with experience in international contracts and finance? Try “global business match-maker.”

Whatever it is it has to be short, memorable and demonstrate the unique value you bring to the equation.

Create your brand.

Brand is more than a name and a logo. It includes design of a product and the experience the consumer has using it, as well as all the marketing and advertising activity around it. Right at the beginning of your search, decide what job you’re looking for and what, specifically, you’re offering, including your unique value and approach. Then make sure your resume, references, background, job-searching techniques, and even your clothes and behavior reflect that. Looking for a marketing job in health care? Smoking outside the building before the interview might not be the diplomatic decision. Aiming at sales or product development in a tech company? Don’t walk in carrying a 10-pound day planner and talking about how your kids tease you for being a Luddite. Make sure the first impression you give in your cover letter, resume and personal presentation are all consistent to make the message you’re trying to convey as clear as possible.

Cut your cover letter.

Cover letters should only be two or three paragraphs at most, according to Marc Cenedella, founder and CEO of TheLadders. It should make one or two points about why you are perfect for the job and the company, why you’re

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Battening Down the Hatches for 2009

Recruiters point to pent-up hope, ambition as potential for turning hiring picture around.

By Kevin Fogarty

NEITHER THE ECONOMY nor the job market will turn around in January, according to recruiters, outplacement counselors and career coaches. In fact, the environment might get worse before it gets better.

The U.S. lost more than 2 million jobs during 2008, more than 500,000 in November alone, according to the most recent Bureau of Labor Statistics report available at the end of 2008. The U.S. lost another 100,000 during the first weeks of December, according to analyst reports that predicted as many as 600,000 total job-losses through December.



Sally Havers

Outplacement firms are swamped, according to Sally Havers, senior vice president for business development at

The Ayers Group/Career Partners International.

“We are anticipating some reductions in force in the first quarter of 2009,” said Ayers, whose group is bracing for an influx of the shocked and displaced who will be working for Ayers clients until layoffs scheduled for January and February. “There will be a lot of talented people looking around for what’s next.”

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understand specifically what the need is of each person within that organization. You need to be really consultative. You need to do your homework. You need to be able to show what differentiates you from other companies.”

– Linda Schroeder, a SalesLadder member who found a job working for a company whose products help other companies operate short-staffed.

▶ Read Linda’s story.

Tune your resume.

“I was willing not only to focus on

what I had been doing the past eight years, but what I did in my past by bringing back some of my older skill set to the table so that it would be considered as well. And that made a big difference.”

– “Pam,” a FinanceLadder member who used a free resume critique to focus and brush up her resume, which led to a job in a company that focuses on restructuring and distress and wanted someone with both legal and business skills.

▶ Read Pam’s story.

Follow the trends.

“Be as specific as you can. For example, the most current nursing trend today is wound care. Most people don’t know that. And that could be [open] to a nurse with a two-year degree or a LVN (Licensed Vocational Nurse) with a one-year degree. So if that nurse were to take one week out of his or her time and become wound care-certified, they are good to go for \$70,000 or \$80,000 right there. So the message is: Follow the trends.”

– Robert Nowicki, a registered nurse and UpLadder member who used his years of management experience to

► BASICS

different from all the other candidates applying to the same position, or what you’ve accomplished in similar positions in the past. It should explain any quirks or open questions, such as a reason you’re particularly interested in working for that company, whether you plan to move to the area where the job is located, or why you’re applying to an industry or job type that’s different from others on your resume. You should also tell the company when you plan to contact them and thank them for the time they took reading your letter. If you kept things short and efficient enough, they’ll be ready to give you a call, not take a nap after slogging through your application opus.

Write your resume.

There are a million contradictory guidelines on writing a resume, but they all boil down to two things: It has to be easy to read, and the message it conveys needs to be clear. It doesn’t have to include every job you’ve ever had or every accomplishment that made you proud. It should contain your unique value proposition, a summary of your skills and experience, a reference to your key stories, and a job progression that led up to your previous job and on to the position you’re seeking. All the information should support the goal you list, and the goal you list should match with the company or industry you’re sending the resume to. You should have a generic resume that can be applied to a number of potential jobs, but you should also be able to tailor your resume to demonstrate how your experience relates clearly to the functions or responsibilities the company is looking for.

Go one step further in your analysis of a job ad or notice, however, according to “Esther,” a financial-services attorney and member of TheLadders. Don’t just look at the require-

ments that are listed, **look at what those requirements indicate about the problems the company is trying to solve.** Then use your cover letter and resume to address those problems, not just the language used in the ad.

Resume formats are a lot more flexible than many people believe, though not as much as they’d want, according to Becky, resume writer with TheLadders. Most list jobs and skills and **don’t highlight the unique value a person brought** to an individual position. Rather than say “was responsible for budget of ...,” try, “cut operational costs by ...” or “increased revenue by focusing on ...”

Identifying how your work furthered the ultimate goal of the company is a lot more telling than listing your job functions. Accomplishments outside work can also play a role. **TheLadders member Laura Warren**, for example, ran her own global cosmetics company for nine years after a long career in shipping and logistics. Even after leaving the shipping world, she continued working in groups that represent the business community of Los Angeles or important non-governmental groups, often fighting for or against legislation she believed would affect the economy of Southern California. She’s now developing a career as a lobbyist for corporations and California state legislators and has revamped her resume to highlight all the top-level “extracurricular” work that’s now becoming her career.

A resume writer at TheLadders helped Jill Greene, a marketing manager for biotech and veterinary medical manufacturers, focus her efforts and sell herself after she and her husband moved to Texas to get away from cold Iowa winters. “It was all about specific ways you helped a company move forward,” Greene said. “And in the interview, too, you have to walk in and tell them exactly what you can do for them

land an executive job at MedicalEdge Healthcare Group Inc. in Dallas.

► Read Robert’s story.

Look for opportunities, even in down markets.

Some job opportunities come from cleaning up the mess other companies made. “[Dreambuilder is] going to clean up the mortgages and then resell them because they are going to put a payment in front of the customers that they are going to be able to live with. They have been in business for

six or seven years now, and they are ready to expand and take their business to the next level. Up until now, they have been a small Wall Street company, but today their business model is growing.”

– Rob Onofrietti, a SalesLadder member and new director of sales at Dreambuilder Investments LLC.

► Read Rob’s story.

Translate your effectiveness.

“As I wrote my resume, I really had to translate what I had done into value

numbers and how much I had saved,” said Suzanne Frawley, an HRLadder member who used the resume service to focus her pitch and land a job as learning and development manager at the local offices of German pharmaceutical giant Boehringer Ingelheim. For example, she was able to show how she had saved her firm more than \$140,000 by sharing pace-learning programs throughout the company at a global level. “That was one of my bullet points – or ‘accomplishment statements,’ as we call them – on my resume. Once I had figured that out

and tell about a time in the past that you did that for someone else. I told them once I had worked for a company that, among other things, made toothpaste and toothbrushes for dogs and cats. I said, ‘If I can sell a toothbrush for a cat, I can sell anything.’”

Planning and Process: Make Every Minute Count



Be efficient.

It’s the 21st Century, and job searching has changed a lot since you first learned the ropes. **Here’s a quick list of gotta-dos** from Marc Cenedella, who, as founder and CEO of TheLadders and a former senior executive with HotJobs, knows as much as anyone about job

searching in the digitized world:

- **Tune your resume.** Make it the best, most concise, most focused, most searchable document you can make it. Try a free TheLadders resume critique or look up the resume best-practices section of the **Career Advice section**.
- **Get your resume online and searchable;** it can take over the search for jobs while you’re doing other things.
- **Apply only to jobs that are right for you.** Don’t waste time tuning letters and resumes for jobs you don’t want, even if they’re the only ones you can think to apply to right now.
- **Save your searches.** Don’t retype the same queries

and put it into print, I thought: ‘Wow! That is what companies are now interested in.’”

▶ Read Suzanne’s story.

Overcome objections.

“I listed the things I was able to impact and the cost reductions and eventually the cost of goods sold and gross margins. Bringing that to the table allowed me to talk about the things I can do based on what I’ve done in the past. That made for a very clear picture. ... I

was willing to move, and I said that up front. A lot of people weren’t, so that was one advantage.”

– John, an OpsLadder member who landed the VP job he’d been searching for despite pressure to look for something more junior or accept much-reduced salaries. The key to overcoming objections was to quantify the value he brought to a company and clearly show what concessions he would make to take a job.

▶ Read John’s story. ■

several times a day.

- **Sign up for e-mail alerts.** Sites such as TheLadders let you create search agents and e-mail you when an appropriate job opens up — often at the companies in which you’re most interested.
- **Work with recruiters.** Find the ones who work in your area, and put yourself on their agendas.
- **Stay organized.** Use TheLadders’ My Jobs feature to stay on top of your search. That way, you’ll have specific action items each and every day to get you up and running, rather than floundering around for the first half-hour getting situated.
- **Don’t ever be offline.** Even when you are offline, don’t ever stop searching or thinking about your search. That way you’re always ready to jump on an opportunity for a job or a recommendation or a tip when it arises.

Create a ‘plan of attack.’

Random job searching doesn’t work any better than random weight-loss or investment strategies. **Evaluate the health of particular industries by evaluating the number of jobs available that are relevant to your skills.** At the close of 2008, the financial-services industry was underwater, but executives with expertise in auditing, managing debt and revaluations were sitting pretty.

Which job titles or categories that fit your background have the best prospects? What are the leading companies in that area, and how best can you contact them? Evaluate your finances; how much time do you have before you risk losing the house or other financial disaster?

Are you willing to relocate for work? **Change industries?**

Take a step back in either compensation or responsibility? Do you really need to, or is that the fear talking? How much can you network? Who do you know, and how can you contact them to see what they know about the job situation?

What professional organizations exist in your industry and specialty area that you can either join or work more energetically for contacts and job prospects? Who do you know who’s either been hiring lately or has been hired? How can you contact them to see how it happened and whether their experience is relevant to you?

Make a plan of how many contacts

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you aim to make every week – new contacts, job ads responded to, cold calls made, networking meetings taken. Set goals to keep yourself motivated and on track.

Networking: Don't Ask For a Job; Ask For a Reference



CALLING A FRIEND OR COLLEAGUE and asking if they know of a job can be awkward. It's much easier, and more effective, to ask whether that person would be willing to be a reference for you, Cenedella said. Friends are happy to help with a reference, and if they know of an opportunity, they

can bring that up, too. **And don't forget to ask if there's someone they can introduce you to or who you should talk to next.** That's how networking works and how you find out about opportunities as soon as they become available.

Reciprocate, first.

Networking feels like you're asking one person after another for favors, but it doesn't really work that way. Think of any professional gathering at which you've met someone who shook your hand and spent the whole conversation looking over your shoulder for someone better to talk to. Now think about the person who asked questions about you and your

situation and offered intelligent comments, even if he or she didn't have anything specific to offer. Which would you rather help when you got a call later on? When talking to either hiring managers or networking contacts, "Esther," who joined TheLadders.com after a layoff from her job as a lawyer for a major financial-services company, asks what she can do to help them. "Sometimes they mention something, but mostly I think ahead of time what I can offer – services, references, whatever. If they're going on a trip to India, give them pages of tips on where to eat, what to do. It takes a lot of research, but whatever I have, I give. So far this time around, I've gotten three other people jobs. That extends my network even further, and those people will remember me."

Make your competitors your allies.

Want to multiply your job-searching abilities 500 percent? Form a job-search support group with five other people looking for jobs similar to yours, Villwock recommends. Meet once a week or every other week to share tips on who's hiring, what openings might be coming up, what companies are laying off or hiring — all your actionable intelligence, and theirs. Sounds like inviting your competition to eat your lunch but, according to Villwock and several executives he's coached, it actually extends your reach far more than it limits your chances. No two people have identical skills and background, and no two hiring managers are looking for exactly the same things. So even if you end up losing an opportunity to someone from your group, odds are that person would

► RECRUITERS

Not all the news is bad, however, according to Bob Cozzens, president of the National Banking & Financial Services Network – a network that connects individual and boutique recruiters nationwide in the same way the Multiple Listing Service connects real-estate agents.

"There are pockets of activity that are strong; some of our members have had excellent years, even banking recruiters have had excellent years," said Cozzens, whose group represents more than 100 companies and about 300 recruiters who mostly focus on local markets. "Even when you see that XYZ bank is laying off thousands of people, our experience is that there are still hiring needs to be filled."

Smaller companies may also hire a potential job seeker on a contract basis, tiding him over a rough financial patch, and turn the arrangement into a full-time job when the economy improves enough to justify it, she said.

"Job seekers have to be a little creative in a market like this,"

Havers said.

Not only do companies need to replace the normal number of those who retire or leave for other reasons, they have to hire people to clean up the mess the rest of the economy made. Financial executives with skills and experience at "workouts" – negotiations between homeowners and mortgage holders to ease payment plans and avoid foreclosures – are at a premium right now.

Not that they'd be talking too much about that. "From a PR point of view, it's suicide for companies to lay off a gazillion people, then advertise they're hiring other people," Cozzens said.

The impact of the recession is so broad that, incongruously, it's not generating the kind of bitterness of previous recessions, which tended to hit one part of the economy or one class of workers much harder than others, according to Diane Grimard Wilson, a career coach who's president of

have been hired anyway because his or her qualifications and personality are a better fit with the hiring manager. In the meantime, you will have been benefitting from a potential competitor's knowledge, advice and support. And he or she will remember you afterward, becoming a valuable source for opportunities now and in the future.

Don't count anyone out of your network.

"You've got four networks," according to Lynne Waymon, co-author of *FireProof Your Career* and co-founder of career- and **networking-coaching consultancy Contacts Count**.

"Take a pencil and divide a sheet of paper in four: In one corner you have your worknet; these are the people you work with. Since you got laid off, they may have been too, or might be, so these are really tenuous right now. To the right is your orgnet; that's for people who work for the same company but not in the same department. Clever networkers build that orgnet so they know people in other teams and geographical areas that can be useful; you might end up working as the only one with your skills in a different department, for example.

"In the upper left corner is your pronet – people you know professionally who do the same kind of work, but not at your company. Those are very valuable for specific leads, even in a bad market," Waymon said. "In the last corner is your lifenet – your family and friends. Most people quarantine their lifenet, but that's the place the most unexpected opportunities come from. Your mother-in-law may know someone who should be in your pronet and who could connect you with someone with a great recommendation for a job. The best networkers are aware of all of these, and the magic is in the synergy."

Grimard Wilson Consulting Inc. and author of **"Back in Control: How to Stay Sane, Productive, and Inspired in Your Career Transition."**

But the presence of so many mid- and senior-level executives among those laid off has created a kind of denial wave that will break during the first part of 2009, she said.

"A lot of the people who have been laid off this time around are not the type of people who get laid off regularly," she said. "Many of them may have unrealistic expectations of how long it takes to get a job, even without a recession, or no expectations at all. So we may get into a period after the new year where that reality sinks in and they may be in for a dark time emotionally."

That, and the inevitable new layoffs in January and February, may be offset by a wave of hiring by managers or companies who know they need the extra bodies but have "just not pulled the trigger," Cozzens said. "People are just flat afraid.

Interviewing: Make your Points



IT'S EASY TO FORGET when you go into an interview that you're there to press your agenda as well as satisfy the hiring company's, according to TheLadders' Cenedella. Think ahead of time about the points you want to make, and write them down. You could have 10 important things to say, but that number is hard for you to get through and hard for an interviewer to remember. Think three. Write up three key talking points that are relevant to the company and the job involved and make sure you address each one during the interview. And don't be afraid to refer to your notes during the interview; it shows you've prepared ahead of time, not that you can't remember what you wanted to say. HR professionals or hiring managers will appreciate your level of preparation.

Demonstrate your effectiveness.

There's a story behind every item on your resume – sometimes one with real drama. You can't tell every story about your past to a new employer, or you turn into white noise. **Villwock recommends picking your three most memorable or clear successes** and practice telling a short (very short!) story about each. The incidents might appear as a quick mention in the resume or cover letter ("saved \$100,000 in monthly operational costs ..."). The whole story should only come out in conversation, as a way to demonstrate your bona fides. Don't get into any of the other personalities; don't

For the positions that are open, employers are dragging their feet."

Waiting for good news.

It will take only a little positive pressure to push those companies into making the hiring decisions they know they have to make, Cozzens said.

A new presidential administration, a little good economic news or just a sustained lack of bad news might be enough.

"People want to believe that Obama's plans are going to help," Cozzens said. "Any change might do it. Look at all the money people have pulled out of the market and is just sitting on the sidelines. With a little bit of good news, that money could come back and the market could really pick up and give the market back some confidence. That will filter back to corporate America and cause more of those foot-draggers to make some decisions. It wouldn't take much." ■

assume the listener knows too much about the industry you were working in; don't overexplain the context. Do keep the descriptions high-level enough to be easily understood but detailed enough for the listener to know what you were facing. ("In the XX industry, YY costs are always a concern, and ours were rising. After investigating, I discovered that ZZ was making the problem worse, so what I did was ...")

Is it your age or your salary?

Lots of mid-career executives believe they've been passed over at some point because of their age. **Age may be an issue**, recruiters say, but more often it's the knee-jerk reaction of a youngish HR screener or the size of a candidate's required compensation that's the issue.



*Diane Grimard
Wilson*

It's perfectly fair to use a resume that only lists dates for the past 10 or 15 years rather than for every job you've ever had, according to **Diane Grimard Wilson, a career coach who is president of Grimard Wilson Consulting Inc.** and author of "Back in Control: How to Stay Sane, Productive, and Inspired in Your Career Transition."

Gray hair could surprise an interviewer who'd missed the possibility that a candidate is middle-aged, she said.

In those cases the candidate should focus on demonstrating that health, energy level or salary level are no more an issue for them than younger candidates, according to Sally Haver, senior vice president of business development at **The Ayers Group/Career Partners International**, a recruiting company that specializes in career transitions and outplacement.

"You want to convince them you're pass-on-able. If you are in this screening interview with HR, you want it to be as transparent as possible," she said.

Overcome objections.

The key to overcoming potential showstoppers during the interview isn't pretending they don't exist or hoping they don't come up, according to **Cheryl Palmer, a certified career coach and president of CallToCareer.com.** It's answering them before they're even asked, often during the first few minutes of an interview, which is more small talk than real discussion.

"If age might be an issue and someone asks, 'How are you?' or 'How was your weekend?' instead of the usual, you can go out of your way to say, 'I went hiking with some buddies of mine over the weekend, and I feel great!'" Palmer said. "Right at the outset you paint this picture of someone who's

energetic and raring to go. You've painted over those misgivings without even knowing if age would be an issue."

"If it's a salary question and you're talking to the hiring manager, you can cut to the chase and say, 'I can do everything you need done and more, and you're going to be thrilled,'" Haver said. "You will not find anybody who can do this job better than I can do it, so let's talk about how you can bring me on board in a way that's comfortable for you."

Be nice.

No matter how stressed you are, be polite to everyone you meet at the company where you're interviewing, Cenedella recommends. You never know who the hiring manager will talk to. Don't trash-talk your previous bosses or others in the industry; it only gives the interviewer a negative impression of you. Don't talk money until the end of the discussion; focus on the job and your capabilities. Thank the interviewer for his/her time and attention, then send a thank-you e-mail saying it again and reiterating the points you wanted to make about yourself. It acknowledges the interviewer's time and gives you one more opportunity to make a targeted impression.

Closing the Deal: Negotiating Compensation



Know your value.

BE PREPARED TO ANSWER QUESTIONS about your compensation requirements, Villwock warns. It's a touchy subject, but you can get a good idea of market values through your personal networking work, or by researching salaries online at **Glassdoor.com, Salary.com,**

Payscale.com and other sites. Even more accurate is information from professional organizations such as Financial Executives International, which poll members about compensation and working conditions.

Offer alternatives.

If the job is more junior than you're looking for, **or the salary is too low**, don't be afraid to offer alternatives, according to Palmer. You can take the job at the top available salary, even if it's below what you need, but ask for a salary review after six months and define the value you can deliver that would merit an increase. You can also take the job on a

Job-Search Checklist

Keeping ahead of your job search means staying on track. Follow this schedule to keep your career in motion.

Daily

- Create an activity log and note everything you've done today, this week and this month. Note opportunities, contacts and organizations you need to follow up with and schedule when you should do it.
- Check job ads on TheLadders.com; local job-ad sites; and the job boards of any professional organizations, alumni organizations social networks, or other clubs, referral networks or affinity groups to which you belong.
- Make and return calls.
- Make at least one call to a new networking contact; return a call to a networking colleague who has called you.
- Phone a former colleague to get an update on the market, gossip about the old crowd or just shoot the breeze. Talking to people who are still in the business keeps you mentally connected to the environment and reminds former colleagues you and your skills are still available.

Weekly

- Follow up on resumes you've sent or screening calls you've gotten. Don't stalk recruiters or hiring managers, but do make sure you're up-to-date on all your main prospects.
- Make a list of all your potential networking contacts and areas you might not have explored yet.

Monthly

- Evaluate your job-hunting strategy; identify areas that are most and least productive and those you haven't exploited far enough.
- Evaluate your collateral material — talking points for the interview, tag line for the resume and introductions, elevator pitch for the resume and opening conversations.

consulting basis with the potential to shift to full-time later on, Haver said. "Make the entry point as comfortable as possible for them."

Getting the offer you want.

Just as with selling a product, the key in landing a good job with **the right salary is demonstrating value**, Villwock said. Most executives can say they have 20 years experience, "but often it's one year of experience 20 times." The key is to show not just that you can do elegantly the kinds of things a less experienced person can't do at all but to show how your experience and value has grown and what, specifically, that experience can help you do for the company you're talking to. That requires research, though: talking to people inside the industry and the company and reading everything you can about it to know what problems it's facing and how it prefers to operate. Don't focus on how you manage people or issues within your own department; focus on how a department you lead will save money or generate revenue.

"If I'm the CEO or CFO or COO, I care about return

on investment, cost savings, how you're going to help me increase revenue, not how you're going to train people in your department," Villwock said. "That said to me you're not a commodity and, to me as the CEO, that you can do things to solve the problems I'm worried about." ■

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