

Take The Long View As A Shortcut To Your Next Job

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Looking for a new job is a time for managing your career. When times are good, just applying for jobs will get you... another job. In downturns, applying doesn't work as fast. So you can't only apply. To have your career under control, you need to build mindshare among appropriate people. Dedicate your strategic and relationship management skills to an excellent product: you.

Career progress pivots on who knows about you, and what you are known for. Don't be a stranger. Over 75 per cent of the time, decision-makers simply ask their contacts - who do you know who's good? Business partners, sales forces, suppliers, consultants, trade media, association members, employees and recruiters all talk about companies and people in your field. Your next boss is part of that buzz. You can both gather intelligence and be a name he or she recognizes.

Introduce your distinctions and invite selected industry players to talk. Ask for information that will fast-track your search. Contact, discuss, repeat. See your professional reach grow.

More good news: you need not ask anybody for a job, ever. The basic career marketing tool is a researched, custom letter, sent without a resume, to individuals who could be your next boss and key people whose information could lead you to them. Send the letter by name, in small batches, so you can quickly begin voicemail follow-up.

Sample strategic career letter

AIDA is a proven sequence for convincing somebody to do something. It works beautifully in career communication. The four AIDA steps are attention, interest, desire, and action.

Paragraph 1 – Attention

Assure you have their attention before you start: talk about them first. Make an observation about their company's news or the business challenges they likely face. They are not interested in you yet, so echo something already on their mind to build rapport. Consider what your boss usually worries about and comment on that. Get information from their website or recent trade media articles about them.

Strategic Letter:

ConsumerProduce is a name known by marketers and consumers alike for nutritious heat and serve snack foods. Dinner Al'ready is a new direction for ConsumerProduce which is bound to hit the mark with time-pressed parents, and teens who eat on their own schedule. As VP Marketing of a leading foods company, you are continually focused on ways to build new markets and claim the #1 position. Several brands I managed have achieved category captain status by emphasizing consumer relationships, especially value-adds that make mealtimes easier.

Cover Letter:

Add where you saw the posting and why the position fits with your career plans.

Paragraph 2 - Interest

Now qualify yourself as credible. They need to decide whether reading on will do anything for them. Introduce yourself by briefly outlining where you gained your experience, your most distinctive expertise, and your major strengths. To show how you are a good fit, you may need to broaden the way you label your background or mention only certain parts. Note the writer does not sell her number of years experience - it is more informative to highlight her distinctions at this point.

Strategic Letter:

For YYZ Instant Pasta, I led the development of a pasta-express website and 800 line that featured daily 5-minute meal plans. With product management experience for two major packaged goods firms, my successes

have come from an ability to articulate brand business objectives to unify trade marketing and sales, plus advertising, digital and PR agencies for breakthrough business results.

Cover Letter:

Respond to every key point in the ad, giving examples. If you lack some qualifications, don't comment.

Paragraph 3 - Desire

You've shown you are a pro whose work is relevant to what your reader does. Now make them see how certain companies could profit from hiring you. Give two results you've produced, in terms of recommendations accepted, accounts retained, time saved, awards received or other measurables. Think about what it took to perform well. Use the WAR story formula: what was Wrong with the situation, the Action you took, and what the Result was for the company. Note the person sounds in control of her situation, and does not seem like she has an unemployment problem - this is reassuring.

Strategic Letter:

I am making plans for a career move and am currently meeting with leading people in our industry to gain feedback about where best to target my search. Examples of the type of accomplishments which I expect to contribute to a marketing-driven organization include...(2 WAR stories)

Cover Letter:

WAR stories about their top criteria or other any strengths the ad has not mentioned.

Paragraph 4 - Ask for Action

By this time this industry player has gone from zero recognition to an awareness of your abilities. Take the long view of this relationship. Don't blow it by asking for a job. People do not tend to know of jobs on a given day, and asking puts them on the spot. Ask for perspectives and information - which they clearly have -- rather than a job or job leads.

Strategic Letter:

I am interested in your perspective on where the best areas of opportunity are. I do not expect you to have a position open, or even know of one. However, I would appreciate meeting briefly to discuss prepared foods trends and industry changes. I believe it is always a good mutual investment to meet people across the industry, and I am certain your insights and experience will give me a broader sense of my options. Realizing you're extremely busy, I will follow up with you by phone within a few days to arrange a 15-minute meeting at a time convenient for you. Thank you in advance for reserving a few minutes to answer a couple of my questions, Ms. X. I look forward to sitting down with you shortly.

Cover Letter:

Express confidence you can contribute to their success and request an interview.

You voicemail follow-up is another commercial. Give one of you key achievements and say you'll call again. Don't make it about them phoning you. They would if they had time. This is your campaign, so you take the lead. There you have it: a better way to invest your valuable time when making a career move. Just applying for jobs will never assure you a strong career. Marketing, I tell my clients, is the answer to everything.

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