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Strategies & Solutions for Your Career Success

A Note From Dave

Over the years, I have had a lot of people ask me how it is that the vast majority of our members still come to us by referral. My answer has always been the same — I think it’s because we have always tried to make sure that we understand the difference between a member and a customer.



I know that it goes without saying that if your product or service is not competitive in the marketplace, outstanding customer service is irrelevant; but I truly do believe that all else being relatively equal, customer service is the largest difference you can make.

We live in an age where there is so much emphasis on automation, robotics, scanning, chips embedded in our pets (and our kids?) that it often seems like companies are doing all they can to separate themselves from the customer with an electronic wall. And don’t get me wrong, I am all for technology as an enabler, but not as a substitute for customer care, both internally and externally.

Said differently, if you buy the argument that there isn’t a heck of a lot of difference in most products or services which are priced roughly the same, then the one thing that can really separate one from the other is how they deal with their customers.

All of us as consumers know all too well what it feels like when customer service is poor. It makes you more than angry, it makes you feel violated and taken advantage of by people who could care less once the check has cleared or card charge has gone through.

If you’d like to share your thoughts on this subject, I invite your comments at *Six-Figure Learnings* (execunet.com/davesblog).

Sincerely,

Dave

Dave Opton
Founder & CEO
ExecuNet

The Right Questions Lead to the Right Job

By Robyn Greenspan

When you practice and prepare the responses to interview questions that will demonstrate your knowledge and competencies, equip yourself with some questions you can ask the interviewer too.

With roughly 15 percent of newly placed executives failing in their first year, according to search firm and corporate human resources professionals, it’s important to determine as early as possible if you are the right fit for the position and the organization. And the company’s responses to your questions will reveal your likelihood of surviving — and succeeding — in your first year and beyond.

“Everything they [executives] do in the interview process is designed to get the company to offer them the job,” says George Bradt, founder and managing director/CEO of Connecticut-based PrimeGenesis. “This includes executives’ questions to the company. Those questions are not about helping the executive decide if they want the job. They are about helping the interviewer decide to offer it to the executive.”

“It is not about convincing them you are like them, but whether you have what they need. Otherwise they will have more of the same,” says Dan Coben, a career management advisor to senior executives in Manhattan.

“This is not necessarily a game of mirroring — it is not about trying to be like them,” Coben continues. “It is about being who you are authentically and seeing if that is the right fit. Someone who acts like a sycophant or chameleon is not going to get a lot of respect.”

Don’t Start with Salary

The one question executives frequently want the answer to during the early interview stages is about compensation. Executives have expressed reluctance to pursue a lengthy interview process without knowing what the position is paying, but Bradt says to hold off on asking salary questions until you — the interviewee — are asked.

“Sometimes the company doesn’t know what they want to pay,” says Coben. “The more time they spend with you, the more they will think they are worth. As soon as you commoditize yourself, you are no longer differentiating yourself; and when you demonstrate your value-add, they

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FastTrack Programs —
May 2006
Hosted by Dave Opton,
founder and CEO, ExecuNet

- 5/9 — **Market of One: How to be the Passive Candidate Everyone Seeks** — Karen Armon
- 5/10 — **Converting Interviews to Offers with DISC** — Linda Dominguez
- 5/11 — **Market Yourself: You're a Big Ticket Item** — Steve Conner
- 5/18 — **Winning Networking: Great Contacts Become Offers** — Bill Belknap

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- 5/3 — **New York City Sr. Roundtable** — Judy Rosemarin
- 5/3 — **Cincinnati** — Louise Kursmark & Mike Lynch
- 5/5 — **Parsippany, NJ** — Nancy Hutter & Linsey Levine
- 5/8 — **Miami/Coconut Grove** — Jeannette Kraar
- 5/8 — **Detroit** — Eileen Vernor
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- 5/16 — **Hartford** — Howard S. Bader
- 5/16 — **Irvine, CA (Orange County)** — Mark James
- 5/16 — **Wilmington, DE** — Russ Dunn & Rick Hays

Registration information can be found at members.execunet.com/e_network_results.cfm

:: Noteworthy

Working for a Boss You Can Love

By Robyn Greenspan

According to the results of a Yahoo! Small Business/Harris Interactive survey, two-thirds of the US respondents reported that they have considered starting their own businesses, and those aged 45+ were more likely to indulge their entrepreneurialism.

Among executives, ExecuNet also found a strong consideration toward self-employment, with a higher preference for building over buying. The reasons executives cite for starting their own businesses run from the emotional (owning a pet store has been a childhood dream) to the practical (the owner is directly responsible for success, profits).

But the same analytical, methodical and strategic planning that applies to any business project doubly applies when developing a start-up, so the emotional factors could provide the impetus, while your practical side supplies the stamina.

Michael McLaughlin, principal with Deloitte Consulting LLP and co-author with Jay Conrad Levinson of *Guerilla Marketing for Consultants*, says in his ExecuNet FastTrack presentation that for some executives starting their own business is an ultimate goal. And some executives have such a strong professional network that they “can start a

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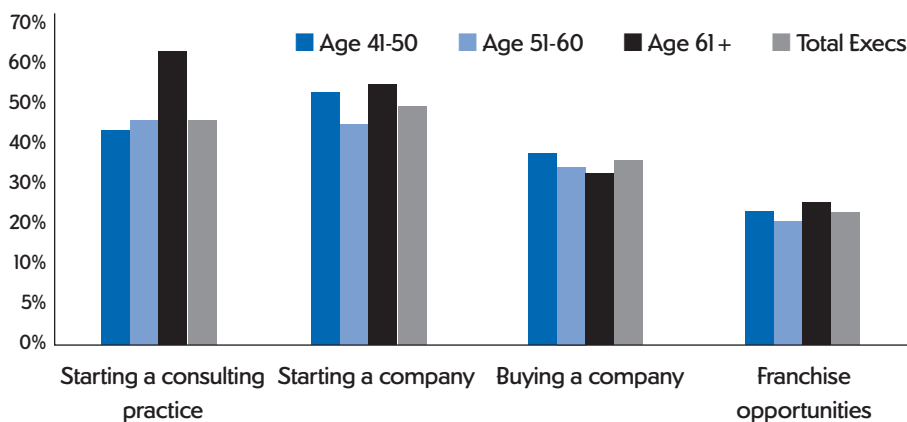
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business without difficulty by going back to those people,” says McLaughlin.

While buying or building a business is an individual decision, Dennis Krieger, former executive search consultant and now managing partner of The Entrepreneur's Source, says there is an advantage to buying a franchise. “The primary reason is that you're dealing with a proven business system. The mistakes have been made by someone else.”

Whichever you decide, there's always time for you to become your own boss: The Yahoo! Small Business/Harris Interactive survey found that 60 percent of respondents said you're never too old to start your own business — compared to 47 percent in the 2005 poll. ■

Executives Who Are Considering or May Consider:



Source: ExecuNet, 2006

Learnings from Landings

A Strong Network, Résumé and Resources Yield Short C-level Search

This 49-year-old member began his search in December of 2005, reaching far and wide into his network to land a CIO position in fewer than three months. “[The job search] went somewhat more quickly than I expected,” says Bernie Siryk. “I was anticipating at least six to eight months of job search activities as a minimum in light of the level I was seeking. I feel very fortunate that I was successful in just under three months.”

The Network

Siryk says he networked with many people ranging from family, friends, relatives to former coworkers. “Don’t underestimate the MANY contacts we all have as we look to tap our network for leads. As examples, our financial advisor put me in touch with a couple of recruiters who generated several leads; the folks who we bought our current home from directed me to others who in turn led to several other leads. We all have such contacts; the trick is to make the most out of them,” advises Siryk.

The Résumé

Before Siryk posted his résumé in appropriate places online or distributed it to potential employers, he said that he sought professional advice on how to craft a really powerful document that would lead to interviews.

“Spend the time and possibly the money required to craft the absolute BEST résumé you can, so that you do indeed stand out amidst the potentially hundreds of other candidates being screened!”

The Resources

Like nearly all job-seekers, the Internet figured heavily into the search for Siryk. “I used the Internet fairly extensively.

[Dice.com](#) is where I found my new position, but I also used [monster.com](#), [Bostonworks.com](#), and a variety of job sites for specific, target companies in my area (greater Boston area). [ExecuNet.com](#),

[TheLadders.com](#) also provided some good leads.”

“I read a lot of material on job searches, résumé writing, cover letter writing, interview techniques and the like.” Collectively, Siryk notes, the articles and resources subtly, but powerfully, made him think through the unique strengths he had to offer a potential employer and what his differentiators were, which bolstered his confidence.

“In other words, it wasn’t any one thing but the total effort that made me more confident and, in turn, successful. I honestly felt that if I could land an interview, I could sell myself effectively.”

Siryk’s ExecuNet membership proved to be a powerful resource where he could find a lot of job search information in one place. “ExecuNet provided the most in terms of a well-rounded set of offerings. Reading ExecuNet’s articles online, participating in ExecuNet webinars, reading job search books, all worked to improve my confidence as I prepared for interviews, and made me that much more effective in selling myself.”

Siryk cites the FastTrack programs that focused on specific components of the job search to be very valuable. “I would highly recommend ExecuNet to my colleagues. (In fact, I already have!” says Siryk.)

The Surprises

“I was disappointed by the general reaction I got from senior-level executive recruiting firms. Specifically, they demonstrated little real interest beyond a perfunctory, ‘Sure, send along your résumé and we’ll keep you in mind.’ I honestly expected considerably more having over 20 years of solid, broad experience in my field!”

Lessons for the Next Search

Siryk advises others to thoroughly prepare for interviews. “If possible, role-play with a colleague. Read about ‘the difficult interview

questions’ and come prepared with answers. Do your homework when crafting questions for prospective interviewers.”

As prepared as Siryk was, he knows that there are areas where improvement can be made. “I wasn’t as organized and/or diligent as some people I contacted and/or heard from, but I was very determined and persistent in my efforts.”

Next time, says Siryk, “I would be more organized in tracking my many applications, looping back to firms applied to, and the like. In addition, [I’d] do a bit more in the way of creating a target list of prospective employers to hone in on. I did some of this, but could have done more.”

What was Learned

Siryk outlines the philosophical structure to his journey through job search:

- 1. Keep the faith.** Trust that things will work out.
- 2. Continue to live your life.** Spend time with family and friends. Reach out and accept their support.
- 3. Honor ongoing commitments.** This is much more ethereal than all the above but I believe that the universe gives back to us what we give of ourselves to others. I lost my job during a time of year when all the usual appeals for assistance on the part of charities tends to peak. It would have been easy to claim, ‘I lost my job, sorry, can’t help now.’ But I made a point of doing the opposite.

“While my [charitable] contributions were not as generous as they might have been had I been employed, I made a point of honoring virtually all requests that came my way. In fact, all these appeals were a constant reminder that hey, things can be MUCH worse! And indeed that’s true. Losing one’s job can be shocking, stressful, depressing, etc. But there are far worse calamities one can be faced with!!” ■

Right Questions

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can pay you more than they thought the job was worth.”

Since compensation is not the prime motivator for accepting a job, it is often better to learn more about the other important factors that will aid your decision. “There are a million things you don’t know until you actually go through the interview,” says Coben. “How can you put a price on something you haven’t seen yet?”

Let the interviewer raise the topic of salary first, advises career and life coach Dilip G. Saraf of Career Transitions Unlimited in Silicon Valley. But if the subject comes up too early in the interview process, Saraf recommends telling the interviewer that you have not yet fully explored the role you would be playing and the value you expect to bring to the equation. “Your raising it, on the other hand, shows anxiety — even diffidence. A rule to remember about this topic is that the one who raises it first gets the short end of the stick.”

If low compensation is definitely a deal-breaker for you, Liz Ryan, CEO of WorldWIT and the workplace columnist for *Business Week* online, says you can bring up the issue on your second visit to the company. “Since they are imposing upon your time by scheduling you for a second set of interviews (and because this indicates at least a moderate level of interest in you, on their part), it is appropriate to check and see that your salary requirement is in line with their budget.”

If the climate feels right, Ryan recommends asking whether they can share some ballpark compensation figures for the position. “The best person to ask for this information is the hiring manager — your prospective boss. The second-best person to ask is the local HR chief.”

Questioning for Culture

“If you are a senior executive, it is not about getting the offer — you should be concerned that it is the right fit, or you won’t succeed,” says Coben.

“Culture is an often overlooked aspect

Questions that Can Help Determine Your Fit in an Organization

- Who was the last person holding the job? Why did they leave? How long did they stay?
- Knowing your culture what are some of the toughest aspects of this job?
- How well does the executive team work together?
- If you were to change one thing in the way the executive team leads, what would it be?

Source: Dilip G. Saraf, Career Transitions Unlimited

- What would the person who previously held this position say about his/her experience?
- Some organizations operate in silos and others more collaboratively. How would you describe your company’s operating style?
- What problems might I expect to encounter in relation to job function and personnel?
- May I speak with present and past employees to get their feedback?

Source: Jacqui D. Barrett, Career Trend

- What kind of support can I expect from the board if I make decisions that are a departure from the norm?
- Where do you think I will encounter the most resistance? Why? And may I speak to those people?

Source: Dan Coben

- How are decisions made in the company?
- How much power and autonomy is delegated down to lower levels?
- How often does the executive team get together and collaborate?
- What’s the reward system? (meritocracy or by seniority)
- What are the avenues for bringing forth innovative and creative ideas?
- How accessible is the CEO to the executives?
- Is there an affirmative action program? (An executive relationship is like a marriage, and there should be a values fit.)

Source: ArLyne Diamond, Diamond Associates

of an interview,” notes Scott Hahn, senior managing partner at Jackman Financial Group, a Texas-based executive search firm. “I find that most interviewees fail to thoroughly understand the company’s culture prior to going to work there. It can be a very tough nut to crack but, in my opinion, a very important one. There are so many ways in which each person would think of and accordingly describe a company’s culture that it is a very difficult subject to objectively identify.”

Whether asked directly or just through general fact-finding during conversations with company representatives, Hahn recommends trying to ascertain key information that will help you to understand the culture:

- Company first or life balance? Its 3:00 on a Friday and I need to get home for my daughter’s birthday, but there is a meeting scheduled that I am supposed to be in. Which do I choose?
- What are the company’s performance

metrics? What about the departmental metrics? Individual metrics?

- It’s 8:25 on Monday morning. Are we talking about the big game yesterday or are we talking about the big meeting coming up?
- Does anyone telecommute now? Is anyone on flex time? What about job sharing?
- Does the company take a top-down management approach or is authority delegated?
- Office attire? Is it different for staff versus officers? (Think about the implication of that answer.) What about Fridays, is it the same?

“Do not rely on an interviewer to determine the fit from your perspective,” says Saraf. “Often, both sides can be distracted by extraneous factors that can obfuscate this key issue.”

In some cases, the culture can be so

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Right Questions

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deeply embedded that not even top leadership can cause it to shift. “Do not delude yourself by expecting to change the company’s culture, even if you are the CEO,” advises Saraf.

Bradt suggests a simple question that could reveal volumes about the company climate, expectations and the criteria for success: “Tell me about the difference between people who fit particularly well in this organization versus those who fit less well.”

Questions that Impress, Reveal

“We show our intelligence with our lively curiosity,” says ArLyne Diamond, Ph.D. and management consultant at Diamond Associates in California. “It is through your curiosity that you can demonstrate that you’ve done your homework, understand the industry, and have advance knowledge of the systems and processes that exist in that industry.”

“Your questions allow you to show your intelligence without a lot of ‘I’ statements,” Diamond reminds. “Ask the questions that will allow them to tell you all of their good stories. Once you establish the relationship, you can fit in some of your own success stories in anecdotal ways to show how you can further the success of the company.”

Questions that illustrate that you have done your research will not only resonate with interviewers but will reveal key information about the company and allow you to make the right decision if you are extended an offer. “Just because you are a senior executive, you are not exempt from doing homework. The best way to hit a target accurately is to do reconnaissance,” says Coben.

Any questions you ask that demonstrate your insight beyond the facts will be the most impressive, notes Glenn Gutmacher, recruiting research consultant for Microsoft and founder of Recruiting-Online.com. He recommends starting by going to the company website or reading industry information to find whether there have been any recent major

announcements, such as new product launches, expansion into new markets or strategic changes.

“Ask why it happened and what impact it will have on the division you’re interviewing for,” suggests Gutmacher. “Then pick up on whatever they say, adding any insights you gained from reading the analysts’ or reporters’ comments in the aforementioned related articles you read, spun against your own experience, to show how you experienced and addressed something analogous.”

Certain questions will reveal the organization’s longer-term goals; and with executive tenure slipping to just over three years with the same company, candidates can use the interview to envision whether they have a future within the organization. Master résumé writer Jacquie D. Barrett, president of Greater Kansas City-based Career Trend, suggests some questions that will help determine the company’s vision:

- What are the company’s 1-, 5- and 10-year plans?
- Why is this position so critical to the company’s immediate and long-term success?
- What are your immediate goals and priorities for this position?
- What different initiatives would you like the new person to undertake (compared to the person leaving the position)?
- How do you see me fitting into the organization?

Questions to Avoid

Executives typically submit to a rigorous interview process, comprised of meetings with individuals at different levels, so it is best to avoid asking questions that can be outside the interviewers’ scope of knowledge. The goal of your questions is to gather information, not to embarrass the interviewer or show off your smarts.

“The kinds of questions you can ask are the kinds of things they can discuss with pride,” asserts Diamond. “The object of the interview is to have everyone feel good. If you really want a good interview, you want to draw the person out —

from both sides of the desk.”

“Test the waters by gauging their [the interviewers’] level of knowledge about the area you want to ask with less-provocative questions or even a safe, open-ended, ‘What have you heard about X?’ and based on their response, you’ll know better if they have the wherewithal to comment intelligently about it,” says Gutmacher.

“There’s nothing wrong with asking a question the interviewer may not be able to answer, so long as it doesn’t result in a ‘gotcha,’” says Howard Bader, senior vice president of TMI Executive Resources in Connecticut. “Be prepared to justify your reason for asking the question and how the answer might affect your candidacy.”

“If your interviewer fumbles with the answer, simply say, ‘No problem, may I ask you about X?’ Have several questions ready at all times, just in case,” says Liz Ryan.

Sensitive questions that might cause the interviewer to defend the company will not position you favorably either. For example, Saraf suggests that you don’t ask about the SEC investigation that was reported about the company recently. Instead, find out the results of the case on your own and decide if the company’s ethics match yours.

“Also,” says Saraf, “avoid any obvious questions about the company’s competitive failures unless the interviewer brings them up and avoid any invidious comparisons with competitor companies.”

Be Careful When Turning the Tables

Arriving at the interview with a longer list of questions than the interviewer is not going to earn you an offer, and executive recruiter Hahn warns against overdoing it.

“Asking lots of questions can be a very slippery slope. Many people can take offense to the ‘reverse interview’ and feel threatened. If the tone of the interview is clearly being driven by the interviewer, you may have to wait your turn to start asking your questions.”

The interviewer’s nonverbal cues and reactions to your questions will signal whether you should persevere.

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Your Career Advisor

The Blossoming Career of the Boomer

by Amy C. Baker

Boomers are aging, maturing or hitting their peak. However you want to describe this inevitable stage of life, it's happening at breakneck speed to millions of working men and women in the US. Every week we are bombarded by headlines calling our attention to the changes facing our unique demographic. As if that's not enough, broadcast advertising for long- and short-term insurance products and financial planning services feature the music of our generation. Bet you never expected to hear the Beatles as background music for a voice-over that's challenging your expectations with your retirement accounts.

Thanks to a host of reasons, we've been promised a longer, generally healthier and more active life than our forebears. With that come big questions regarding our work. How long? What? Why? Where? Individuals caught in the bursting high-tech bubble in the '90s, who found themselves with unplanned-for career changes and worthless stock options, also found themselves facing unprecedented issues when it came to their next job move.

For many, they now look back on that seemingly devastating layoff or job elimination with heretofore unexpected gratefulness, because they're now pursuing the career of their dreams, not just the job dictated by their circumstances or local economy.

It's a good time to be looking for work. The economic changes that signal better than recent opportunities for college graduates this year also bode well for those ready to rethink their careers at mid-life. What are some considerations and strategies for those boomers willing to take a look at their work? Are they willing to consider something new for the second half of their lives?

Figuring on Finances

It goes without saying that financial considerations are first. Are the kids almost

out of college? Is the stay-home mom ready to explore a return to the work world, dusting off her college diploma and returning to her long-ago studied and practiced field, or is she ready to launch one of the many home-based businesses women turn to for not just some pocket change but social opportunity as well?

Is the retirement nest egg to the point where it will eventually hatch into a comfortable enough retirement income to justify a career risk now? What about the homestead? Many boomers are downsizing, trading the once-full-of-teenagers suburban spread for a smaller, less expensive abode that lends itself to spontaneous trips out of town and a smaller water bill to keep the lawn green. These are just a few of the practical considerations to ponder when considering a mid-life career switch.

The bottom line — can you realistically trade a comfortable, or perhaps even executive-level salary and the perks that go with it for the freedom of pursuing a new path at this critical crossroad?

The next few issues to consider move well beyond the practical and into the heart and soul of who you are and what you do. To launch down this thought path, take the afternoon off, find a view of the horizon, hilltop or your favorite lake or tee. Bring a crisp, clean legal pad, a pen with plenty of ink and an open mind to reflect on where you've been and where you're going.

The First Exercise is Retrospective

Evaluate your life in the work world, whether it has been multi-industry and filled with leaps back and forth and up and down, or whether you have stuck to your intended path and risen notch by notch to your current spot. Look back on all the roles in all the organizations and identify two things. One, what are the activities that you have enjoyed the most? What are the tasks that give you energy — as opposed to those that suck the life out of you! Put to paper a few things that have

brought life to your career experience. Remember to think “what” not “how.”

The Second Step is the “How”

As you look at those activities, how were you operating? Single-handedly? Part of a rock star team? Was it a freewheeling, get-it-done-at-all-costs time or a well structured, predictable season? Look at the behaviors that brought you energy and kept you jazzed, and ready to pull an all-nighter like the college days if you really had to.

Your goal in this second step is to identify those skills that are so hardwired into your being that you can do them with one eye closed and a hand tied behind your back. It's often useful to evaluate not just your paid work but also your volunteer and community activities as well. When the church committee or neighborhood association board needs something done, when do you raise your hand? Is it fund raising, event planning or project management? Technology systems issues or organizational change management?

Your overall goal is to honestly assess what gives you life at work. What you do and how you do it so you can identify a potential second-half career path that helps the boomer time be boom time from a career and lifestyle standpoint.

Those folks caught in the bust of the '90s? Some of them did just this. They took the time to evaluate what they really wanted to do from now on. Now they are developing technologies to help people, not just help people be productive. They are using communication strategies and skills to convey messages about heart and soul issues, not just bottom lines and legal filings.

These individuals' stories take you to the second stage of this mid-life planning — the future-forward thinking that helps you to define where you want to be in your coming decades.

While financial stability is of course still a consideration, there are others as well. Where will your kids land? How

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Ask the Expert

The Value of Coaching to Job Search

In this excerpt from a recent ExecuNet Forum conversation, a member who wishes to return to the US from an international assignment asks about the legitimacy of employment consultants and the services they provide. Responses are supplied from two expert sources — a fellow ExecuNet member and ExecuNet's San Diego networking meeting facilitator. [Some content has been edited.]

ExecuNet's Forum is the online community area of the site where members can meet and help one another network their way into their next assignment, or share information and experiences. [Access the Forum under "Connections" or go to http://members.execunet.com/e_eunnet.cfm]

ExecuNet member Derrick: I am an experienced international manager and business developer, and I am seeking to relocate back to the USA. Has anyone had experience with consultants that offer, for a fee, to search for work for senior executives utilizing their "network" of business and HR contacts? Has someone received "value for money" from such services?

ExecuNet member LaneC: I went to one of these types of firms and paid a nice chunk of money (I'll only say it was between \$5K and \$15K) for their career services. Here is what I got for it; but keep in mind this is my story, so I don't want to paint with a broad brush.

Résumé: I did a lot of work on it, got a lot of "help" and had the same résumé run through two different résumé services (one being the free review at ExecuNet). I ultimately ended up with a résumé not even close to what came out of it.

Contacts and Job Leads: Nothing, sorry hate to be blunt, but NOTHING. I even documented why I was the perfect candidate for one of the jobs they had posted and never got an answer other than they had not heard anything back from the company.

Interview Coaching: This was actually the best service I got from them. The candidate contact (coach) I had was actually quite good and really was on point with a lot of advice. Though to be

candid, I've since gotten a lot of the same advice here in the ExecuNet Forum for the membership fee.

I won't go as far as some others and say that these places are total scams (only because my mom told me not to stereotype). I would say that for the money I paid, I could have been on ExecuNet for 5 years, hired a résumé writer to redo my résumé several times, paid a coach by the hour to supplement the advice I get here; and if you factor in time, I could have attended at least 15 conferences or networking groups.

Again buyer beware, I would never lay money out-of-my-pocket to an "all-purpose" firm again; but I don't consider it a total waste, I just seriously overpaid for what I got out of it.

P.S. The coach I used actually sent me to a networking group and advised me to join ExecuNet, so I guess I should give them some credit for that as well.

Coach Mark: Finding a personal coach, whether you're looking for a "life" coach or "career" coach, is a little like finding a new dentist or doctor. Before you leap....here are 10 tips to think about when selecting a coach:

1. **Referrals work!** Begin by asking people you trust. Your friends and colleagues have probably heard of someone you might connect with.
2. **Trust your intuition.** Do you get a

good feeling talking to the person?

3. **Reflect.** Ask yourself what you'd like to get out of a coaching relationship.
 - What changes do you want in your career or life right now?
 - What expectations do you have about coaching?
4. **Prepare questions in advance of meeting with a potential coach.** What these are will depend on what you want out of the relationship. How will you and the coach know that the coaching relationship has been successful? What could you learn?
5. **It's always a good idea to ask a potential coach what qualifies them to be a coach.** Not all good coaches are certified and not all certified coaches are good. Regardless of credentials, a prospective coach should be able to tell you what training and experience has prepared them for this role.
6. **Get references.** Your potential coach should have the names and contact information of people he or she has worked with successfully. Contact these people and ask them what the relationship has done for them.
7. **Ask the potential coach to tell you about their coaching style and methods.** A career-coaching model should be clear and direct.
8. **Ask yourself if the coach's background, expertise and experience match your needs.**
9. **Ask specific questions about fees, confidentiality, policies, etc.** Rates for services vary depending on the experience level, geographical area, credentials, etc.
10. **If you are comfortable about the potential benefits of working with this coach, ask for a free coaching session.** Most coaches will offer a free 30-minute session with a potential client. Although it's not the same as a "regular" coaching session, it will give you an idea of what to expect and what the coach's style is like.
Good Hunting! ■

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Right Questions

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“If all goes well, your line of questions will not only demonstrate that you understand the business and your prospective role, it will help you better understand what your future role will be like,” says Hahn.

Final Points

Ideally, an interview won't strictly be a volley of questions and answers lobbed across the desk between the hiring decision-maker and the candidate, but instead, a natural dialogue where information is shared between two parties. Hahn notices that conversations are far more relaxing than interviews, and to make that the goal.

Expert Resources:

- Howard Bader, senior vice president, TMI Executive Resources (TMl.com)
- Jacqui D. Barrett, president, Career Trend (CareerTrend.net)
- George Bradt, founder and managing director/CEO, PrimeGenesis (PrimeGenesis.com)
- Dan Coben, principal (DanCoben.com)
- ArLyne Diamond, Ph.D., principal, Diamond Associates (DiamondAssociates.net)
- Glenn Gutmacher, recruiting research consultant for Microsoft and founder of Recruiting-Online.com
- Scott Hahn, senior managing partner, Jackman Financial Group (JackmanFinancial.com)
- Liz Ryan, CEO, WorldWIT (WorldWit.org)
- Dilip G. Saraf, principal Career Transitions Unlimited (Career-Transitions-Unl.com)

“Each of the ensuing discussions will not only demonstrate your experience, knowledge and insight, but should tell you quite a bit about your future boss, the company and potentially the culture,” says Hahn.

George Bradt reminds that the questions a candidate asks should be geared toward demonstrating the

strengths the company is looking for in a particular role. “If it's a strategic role, the interviewee should probe strategy. If it's a marketing role, the interviewee should probe marketing positioning. If it's an analytical role, the interviewee better ask deeply analytical questions. And so on. The interviewee's questions themselves are data for the interviewer.” ■

Your Career Advisor

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engaged do you want to be as a future grandparent? Consider not just physically where you want to be, but how flexible you want to be, how engaged in you community, how free to take on short-term gigs as compared to a long-term commitment to a business or organization.

Finally, Connect with Your Passion

Our society today is not short on issues that demand our attention to create a better world. Spirituality, education, the environment, literacy, healthcare, the list can go on and on. Surely there are few of those hot topics that are also hot buttons

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for you. Or perhaps it's a specific demographic — a target audience you feel passion for: foster kids, the homeless, the underemployed, runaways, unwed mothers. Who or what pulls at your heart strings the most.

Considering these four key areas: what you do, how you do it, where you want to be and what sparks your passion, can you create your future opportunities? You are at an unprecedented stage of life, boomer. Your career experience can pay off now to make an impact on your com-

munity in a way you never imagined when you started out in fresh wing tips and pumps thinking you knew it all. Now that you know you don't know everything, you have the wisdom of life experience to fill in the gaps.

Your potential for contribution is immense. Perhaps now is the time to let your life experience, hard-wired gifts and passions blossom into a boom-time career that makes your past achievement-studded résumé fade in comparison. Boom and bloom. It's your time. ■

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