

Why Recruiters Aren't Returning Your Calls

When the dot.com boom went bust, Sam found himself discarded like so many other executive casualties, and he needed to find a job quickly. Since he had been “headhunted” by an executive recruiter for his last job, he decided he should focus on contacting executive recruiters.

He went to a bookstore and chose one of the many volumes offering examples of executive-level resumes. He also bought a book that listed over 7,000 executive recruiters. He followed the suggestions in the books and sent out hundreds of resumes by mail and email. He also posted them on recruiters' websites. Surely, he thought, at least some of these recruiters would see that his management skills and industry experience would be a great match for their clients.

Sam felt pleased when he began to receive letters from recruiters acknowledging "receipt of his details" and stating they would "keep his details on file." He soon grew disillusioned, however, when no one phoned or returned his calls. Even the headhunter who had originally placed him at the dot.com company didn't return his calls, and his disappointment deepened.

Where did Sam go wrong, and what could he do differently?

Sam's first mistake was assuming that executive recruiters exist to help people like him find positions with companies. Unfortunately, it doesn't quite work that way. Instead, recruiters serve at the pleasure of the people footing the bill – the companies. A company initiates the process by hiring a recruiter to find candidates for a specific position. If the recruiter is retained, he or she collects part of the fee up front.

The recruiter then meets with the client's personnel and prepares the candidate criteria, such as: 1) must have 10 years industry experience, 2) must have three years' experience as VP of product marketing, 3) must have an MBA from a top university, etc. When employers insist on industry experience, they generally mean that it must be in their specific industry (e.g. fashion retail) and not the general industry (e.g. retail) or a different industry (e.g. office products retail).

Based on that information, the recruiter prepares a target list with the names and titles of executives who hold similar positions at other companies. The employer reviews this list, shares views and makes suggestions. The recruiter can now commence his or her search, matching candidates against the client's search criteria.

Employers are eager for recruiters to entice an executive from a competing or an admired company to leave their employer for them. Generally, employers don't look so positively at candidates that recruiters find on a job-hunter database. However, if a recruiter finds you on a database because you precisely match the search criteria and have outstanding credentials, you likely will be contacted.

You can improve your chances that a recruiter will pluck your resume from the thousands of others they receive if you clearly show the position title you seek and your specific industry experience at the top of your resume. However, since you only have a 10-percent chance of finding a job through a recruiter, don't spend more than that amount of your time sending them resumes.

Now go take charge of your career!

Carl Wellenstein is an employment and career strategist located in Southern California and is the author of [12 Steps to a New Career](#). He helps those in mid-career facilitate career advancement, expedite job changes, and pursue new career destinies. These stories reflect actual experiences, modified to protect the identities of individuals and employers. If you have a question you would like answered, contact Carl at carl@execglobalnet.com.