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Identifying Target Companies

For a number of years, MDL Partners has recommended that active clients assemble a list of 30-50 target companies. We have found that clients with a target company list appear more focused, open doors more quickly and easily, and receive more introductions as they build their networks.

There are three primary reasons for this increased probability of success. The first is that your target list can serve as a door opener, a Trojan horse of sorts. If you go charging on your white steed toward your networking contacts with a resume in your hand, you will generally be dismissed with, "I don't know of any opportunities, if I hear of anything, I'll let you know." If you approach people saying, "I have an interesting list of target companies, and would like to get your observations," you have a much greater chance of entering a meeting.

Second, in marketing, there is a term called assisted recall. If, for example, you say to a networking connection you're interested in venture capital firms, you may get a contact or two. If you show them a list of 30 venture firms, the probability is that you will receive 3-5 times as many introductions. Take full advantage of this assisted recall concept as you do your networking.

The third reason to have a target list is that people tend to organize their contact database by industry and company. If you say to a potential networking contact that you are interested in any small company with growth problems, you will typically get a blank stare. If you can name a couple of industry sectors, and companies within those sectors, you are much more likely to get an introduction.

So how do you build a list of target companies? First, select three or four industry sectors based on your past experience, personal interest, perceived growth potential, and presence in your geographical area. Then check industry association directories and websites. For example, if you are interested in medical devices, visit the Mass Medic website which lists its members.

You can also use LinkedIn's advanced search capability and select from a number of sectors in the industry dropdown menu. Of course, you can always simply string together a few key words in a Google search.

MDL Partners has access to Hoover's online, one of the best searchable databases of companies available. As you refine your career focus, work with your consultant and use Hoover's "Build a List" capability to narrow down from over 86 Million companies, screening by company location, industry, size, financials, people, or key words, among others.

Remember, your purpose here is not to build a perfect list of 50 companies where you would work, but to get into play in your search, and more rapidly expand your network of connections.

Social Media and The Job Search

Whether you like it or not, social media is becoming an increasingly important component of your career management and job search activities. Business and economic trends, industry and professional discipline updates, company information, career and job opportunities, and job search support tools are increasingly available through social media. At the executive level, it is still unlikely that you will find, apply for, and land the golden opportunity via Twitter, but social media, used properly, will increase your probability of success.

MDL Partners still strongly believes that the best source of potential opportunities is through a structured networking strategy, building your own network, and tapping the MDL Partners network. However, you cannot ignore the power of social media. Remember that most social media activities can be done after hours and after making network appointments. Don't fall into the trap of spending all your time online.

Most clients are active users of LinkedIn. Recruiters and companies will find you, and do a preliminary assessment of your background through your LinkedIn profile. You would like people to be able to easily find you and build a positive first impression through LinkedIn. Here are a few LinkedIn tips:

- "Reverse Engineer" your LinkedIn profile with a number of keywords that you find in the job descriptions of interesting positions.
- When you make changes on your profile, turn off your "Activity Broadcasts" before making any changes. You can turn them back on after you are done.
- Make it easy to reach you- Include job search contact information in your summary section.
- Follow more- Follow influencers, companies, and groups that are relevant to your career and search efforts.
- Get Active- Start writing and posting as much as possible, including to the MDL LinkedIn Groups.

Think carefully about your LinkedIn headline; don't use the LinkedIn default header, your current title and company name. Include in your headline titles of jobs you would be interested in, industries that you are targeting, and possibly a core marketing message. A couple of examples:

- "Social Media Expert driving successful campaigns on a shoestring budget. 800% ROI in 12 months."
- "Procurement and Contract Specialist/Treasury Manager"
- "Account Executive/OEM Sales/Field Sales/Territory Manager"

To make life even easier, you can now download a LinkedIn app for your smartphone and apply for jobs by sending your LinkedIn profile.

Twitter is also becoming a more important job search tool. There are over 500 Million tweets per day, all archived by the library of congress for your future reading pleasure. Within that huge haystack, you can increasingly find career and job information. There are thousands of jobs posted every day, and that number is growing. Some of these jobs are posted on Twitter first, either directly, or through Tweet My Jobs or Tweet A Job. If you haven't joined, it's probably about time.

You will need to consider two things: Keywords and Hashtags.

Your keywords are words that best tie to your job search goals, such as job title, location, industry and company names.

Hashtags, which are words beginning with the # sign, are tags that you will need to help index and sort the tweets that are coded as job postings. Look for #job or #jobs. Simply enter your

keywords and hashtags in the basic search box on the Twitter homepage, and hit enter. This should help you reduce the 500 Million tweets to a manageable number.

Through Twitter, you can learn from your peers in your discipline, follow industries, and most importantly, follow your target companies.

As you become more comfortable, use Twitter as a platform to share content so that you can build awareness of you as a professional, possibly as a thought leader. Use Twitter as a jumping-off point to your more detailed online profiles- a personal blog, or LinkedIn profile, for example. Build followership. The average Twitter user has slightly over 200 followers.

This article summarizes more extensive information, which you can find by [clicking here](#).

Become a Networking Hub

One of the best strategies you can use in an executive job search, and more importantly to enhance your long-term career, is to become a networking hub. As a respected and recognized hub, you will gain access to information and contacts, become an insider, have greater influence and impact around you and have the feeling of satisfaction from helping others.

You will also find that people will be more willing to help you. Don't expect an immediate payback, but if you go out of your way to help others, they will come back to help you.

A hub is someone who helps people connect with other people and may have great influence, clout and a platform for communications. To use a technology analogy, you would actually like to be a router, smarter than a hub or switch because you understand and appropriately route networking traffic. If you can "think and link", proactively identifying whom to connect to whom, you are on your way.

A number of MDL Partners clients come to mind as networking hubs. Norman Strate, Charlie Faron, and Eric Walters have all built extensive networks. Charlie has grown Hotshots into an active, respected organization. Eric is one of the founders of the New England Health Executives Network.

Their suggestions on how to become a hub are consistent. First, get out of your comfort zone. Even if you regularly say to yourself, "I'm not a networker," become one anyway. Learn and practice networking. Push yourself to attend events, be willing to break into groups of three people or approach single individuals. Have a 10-30 second pitch, but don't use it until after you have listened, probed, and offered help or contacts. Always ask, "What can I do for you?" Identify, shadow, and learn from good networkers at networking events. Watch how they work the crowd.

The easiest way to establish your reputation as a networker and become a networking hub is simply to return calls and emails, and offer connections. Build your range of connections and particularly focus on building divergent connections, again, more out of your comfort zone. Learn also to connect electronically through LinkedIn, Twitter, possibly Facebook and YouTube.

As you do all of these, you will begin to connect with other powerful networking hubs, will become an important influencer, and will certainly enhance your career.

Success Stories

Stephen Beard is Vendor Manager with Celertek in the Washington, DC area.

Tim Bennett is Program Manager at U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Michael Brown is an Enterprise Recruiter with State Farm Insurance.

Mike Charland is SVP/ Chief Operations Officer at Owens, Rentz & Lee Company.

Marie Chery is SVP Human Resources at Mizuho Capital Markets Corporation.

Susan Chodakewitz is CEO at Nathan Associates Inc., an employee-owned economic consulting firm.

Chris Clark is Vice President of Technology at SCORE Association in Herndon, VA.

Charles Collier has been hired as Vice President of Financial Services Business Development at PARTNERS+simons, a brand communications and integrated marketing services firm specializing in healthcare and financial services.

Matthew Davis is Consultant - Finance Executive at Chase Braxton Health Care.

Alvaro Diez is completing his Executive MBA at MIT's Sloan School of Management, is acquiring a company in the food processing business, and is expanding a software company in the North American Market.

Karl Dinkler is now Senior Manager Business Development at General Dynamics Mission Systems.

David Hofmann is owner at FirstLight HomeCare of Gaithersburg.

Eric Jeglum was recently brought on to Scitor Corporation as a Senior Business Continuity Planner to lead their work within their federal services contracts.

George Keches has taken a position as VP, Operations and Administration at UGC, a rapidly-growing services company.

Aleksey Kurochkin is Chief Operating Officer at Federal Professional Solutions Inc.

John McAndrew is now COO at Phoenix TS in Columbia, MD.

Gus Mocas is Director, Risk Management for a NYC based Global Asian Bank.

Donald Myers is now Vice President, Chief Accounting Officer at Sungard Availability Services.

Leo Nadolske is Trade Show Development Executive at Crossmark Media LLC.

Karyle Thornton is Chief Marketing Officer at Commonwealth One Federal Credit Union.

Michael Umana has joined Spartan Race, a company that organizes and sponsors extremely challenging Mudder competitions. He will be a partner and CFO for this rapidly-expanding business.

Philip Whitebloom is now Vice President - North America Channel Development at Imagine Communications, a global leader in video infrastructure, advertising systems and workflow management solutions serving the media networks, broadcast stations, digital media, communication service provider and enterprise markets spanning 185 countries.

Thought for the Day

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