

Take Charge of Your Job Search

Moving From Number 2 to Number 1

By Marshall Brown

Whether searching for your first CEO position today or thinking about it in the near future, positioning yourself is critical.

In a competitive association job market, it is imperative to develop a job search strategy that will help you outshine your competition. In the case of moving from a senior level position



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to number 1, you are not only competing with other senior level individuals, but also with current CEOs and possibly members active in the association who might have an insiders view of the organization.

Individuals that have made the transition from a number 2 to a number 1 have discovered that success requires both a plan and a strategy.

Know What You Have to Offer

It is imperative in a competitive job market to know yourself. Know what you have to offer and use that information to market yourself. This will help to separate you from your competition. Your marketability will depend on your ability to demonstrate, on paper and verbally, your skills.

Successful candidates are the ones who know what they have to offer and what makes them more effective than their competition. What do you bring to the table in the way of assets, strengths and values?

Develop Your Network

"Numbers 2s have to first start *thinking* like CEOs" says Pamela Kaul, President of Association Strategies Inc. "They need to build a strong network of industry advisors, leaders, key constituents, and other organizations. CEO candidates need to stay connected and pursue professional development opportunities so that they can continually contribute new ideas and approaches," she adds.

If you don't have a network yet, now is the time to develop one. Join associations, meet other CEOs, and build relationships with people that are doing the kind of work that you want

to be doing. Julie Coons, CEO, Tech Council of Maryland, recommends having a network strategy. "Be proactive in developing your network, create and tend to it," she says.

Get to Know Association Recruiters

In addition to networking, there are a number of recommended association recruiters who place individuals in CEO positions. Let them know the skills and accomplishments that you bring to the table. Don't be discouraged if you don't hear back from them right away. Keep in touch and build a relationship with them. Nancy Green, Executive Director for the National Association for Gifted Children, says, "Be a source of potential candidates when you get that recruiter's phone call or email. Use your network and rolodex to help them find candidates they might not know. Stay in touch in other ways before it's about you."

Don't Just be a Checkbook Member

Get involved with associations. When Henry Chamberlain, President and COO of BOMA International, wanted to move from number 2 to a number 1, he became involved in GWSAE (now GW Network) and ASAE. "My involvement in associations allowed me to pick up the latest information about associations and to learn how I could broaden my network. By being involved, I also enhanced my skills in public speaking and facilitating meetings," Chamberlain said.

Find a Mentor

Choose someone who will provide honest and effective feedback, someone that takes an interest in your development and will support you in your career progression. Perhaps they recently made the same type of move that you are looking to make, or perhaps they have been a CEO for awhile. Find someone that you can trust and talk with about your future plans and hear what suggestions they might have. Green says, "create a 'kitchen cabinet', a small group of people who might know your strengths in different ways. Further, don't be afraid to selectively seek advice, as long as you're specific about what you want to know, people are happy to help."

Develop Your Skills

By obtaining your CAE (Certified Association Executive) certification, you will not only learn the breadth of association management, but you will develop a supportive and nurturing network of like-minded individuals willing to help their peers. Also, by studying for the exam, you will be able to assess your strengths and areas where you might need further development.

Certification shows potential employers that you have general knowledge about various aspects of association management. Associations put a varying weight on the CAE. Professional societies who have credentialing requirements of their own are more likely to see the value of a CAE.

Develop Executive Presence

Pay attention to your reputation in the association community and continuously look for ways to enhance it. Look for opportunities to demonstrate your leadership experience so that people look at you as a leader. When it comes to interviewing, Kaul says to aware of "how you look, how you behave, what you say, and how you say it."

Hire a Career Coach

Coons and Kaul recommend a career coach in order to develop your job search strategy and to prepare yourself for the interviewing process.

"Working with a coach helped me to focus on my goals, develop my plan," says Coons.

"Before interviewing with the search committee, a career coach can help candidates build an effective interview strategy and role play that all important opening presentation. Any CEO candidate should be able to articulate a vision for the organization and how it will be better under his/her leadership," says Kaul.

Now is the time to put your plan together to market yourself. Spend as much time and effort as you would on a project for your employer, and don't wait for someone to tell you to do it. You are the only one that can take charge of your own career. ■

Marshall Brown, a certified career and executive coach. His new book, *High Level Resumes*, reflects his successful work with hundreds of job candidates.

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