

Job Seekers Should Focus Efforts - Recruiter

Out of a job? A recruiter specializing in the chemical industry offers a few words of advice

THIS WASN'T supposed to happen. You're a highly respected chemical industry professional, complete with impressive credentials and a great education. You picked the best companies. You chose your favorite jobs. You've been in complete control of your career. Until now.

Suddenly you're documenting unemployment benefit eligibility, polishing your resume and wing tips, all too aware that many other chemical managers are doing the exact same thing, clicking on the same job postings as yours.

It's all a little reminiscent of a Little Leaguer, tentatively reapproaching the plate after being beaned by a wild pitch, like Casey in Ernest Thayer's baseball poem Casey At The Bat. Nonetheless, it's time to get back up to bat. Yes, the game has changed. You still need to keep your head, learn the new rules and give yourself the winning edge. Need some coaching? Here goes.



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FIRST UP: THE RESUME

I am screaming at you through a bullhorn: Your resume must be polished, professional, compelling and up to date. If all you have is a rolling update of the document you've been saving on every hard drive since its initial creation on your 486 PC, get rid of it.

An outdated resume with no style can destroy your efforts. In fact, if you have any doubts about your resume, start over. Make it shine. And just as importantly, make sure it includes the appropriate content for both human readers who want to know about your accomplishments and resume scanning systems, which will parse your text looking for certain keywords.

The resume's role has changed. Just a few short years ago, applicants for chemical industry jobs were much harder to find. Employers' fingers tapped impatiently, awaiting responses to their carefully crafted postings.

The few viable applicants were interviewed, with the finalist quickly being offered the job, for fear a competitor would snap up the endangered species.

Fast forward to 2010: In a formidable stack, each resume represents someone who needs work - and may be a viable candidate.

In the 2010 edition of Richard Bolles', 10m copy seller, *What Color is your Parachute?*, he writes: "It only takes a skilled human resource person about eight seconds to scan a resume (30 seconds, if they're really dawdling), so getting rid of 50 job-hunters takes only half an hour or less."

Bolles reminds readers that a resume's primary purpose is to elicit an invitation to an interview. To avoid being one of the discarded 50, every word must help. So outline your skills and experience and most importantly accomplishments, but then go deeper.

Your sales figures were good? How good? Give details about the 25% increase.

Tell about the \$300,000 (€221,000) cost reduction, or the project completed 90 days ahead of schedule.

Quantify accomplishments in percentages, dollars and numbers. Give evidence of your prior success doing exactly what this employer needs done.

Demonstrate that you're the one who can help the team launch a huge winning streak.

Once written, it's tempting to send your resume far and wide, like our nine-year-old ball player swinging at everything. Resist the urge. Sudden unemployment may seem the ideal time to recreate yourself in a new position or an entirely new field.

Back when employers were frantic to grab their piece of the candidate pool, this strategy had potential, but no longer.

Now inundated with qualified applicants, the candidates receiving consideration are those who have either a) held the identical position for a competitor, b) worked for a supplier to this organiza-

tion in a compatible role, or c) distributed products for them, giving you insider knowledge. Save your best swings for the really good pitches.

Focus your activities and efforts where you'll enjoy the highest batting average.

A specialized chemical industry recruiting firm can be one great resource in your search - especially if they focus on the types of roles you have experience in, too. They can give you more pitches to swing at.

In addition to the job boards you and your competitors log onto each morning while gulping that first cup of coffee, you'll have ongoing access to a hidden jobs market.

Many employers delegate the task of slogging through those stacks of resumes to search firms.

Others want to keep their staff unaware of impending personnel changes. Good executive recruiters develop trusting relationships with their client companies. So make sure you're in the right recruiter's bullpen when you're needed on the mound.

NEXT STOP: BATTER UP

Once you get an interview, consider who you'll be meeting. Two distinct groups of people are interested in what you have to say, and their ears are tuned to completely different information. Understand and consider the perspective of each, gearing your interview accordingly.

Chemical industry jobseekers typically prepare their interviews with the hiring manager in mind. It's natural because we innately understand the needs and motivations of their positions, as well as the benefits our contributions will provide.

Hiring managers are the ones who will be duly impressed by those percentage decreases and increases.

Make sure they hear exactly what you'll bring to the party in terms of productivity, capability and successful experience. But be aware that this isn't the sole decision-maker standing between you and your next payday.

The human resources manager also needs to believe in you.

Often viewed as annoying gatekeepers hell-bent on keeping candidates from ever getting in the door, they perform an important function for their employers, and their input to the process is highly valued.

Often not as interested, or comfortable in assessing the details regarding the hard skills you bring to the table (they typically count on the hiring managers to judge those), HR managers usually consider your fit within the culture of the company you would be joining. Do the employees wear pocket protectors, or Birkenstocks? Is the organization dedicated to diversity initiatives?

Is it an atmosphere of individuality where no position is above questioning, or is there deference to the organizational hierarchy? The HR manager knows the answers; when you know them, too, you can be sure that you fit into their lineup.

Beyond cultural matches, HR is also charged with evaluating overall employment risk. If you were making \$105,000 in your prior position, but are now willing to accept \$75,000, will you remain onboard, or will you sign as a free agent once the playing field greens up?

If you previously held the title of national sales manager, are you likely to be satisfied in a regional capacity for long? Be objective. Are you a good risk? If so, make it crystal clear.

The HR manager is eager to be a hero too, and if you're the ticket to the post-season, then both the human resource and hiring managers will be raving fans.

And you'll be back in the big leagues in no time, as promotable employees are valuable everywhere.

It's time to get back up to bat. And don't forget to send a thank-you note - that's one autograph that can make a real impact.