

Keep your head when dealing with search firm

By GJ. Harrough
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They hunt "leads," and if you're one of those that they capture, your career can get a major boost.

Getting nationally-ranked firms, or headhunters, and listing your resume on the web put you in a position to be offered prime assignments.

Since these search firms are paid by the companies looking for talent, capturing their attention can be difficult, if not impossible.

The key to getting noticed by a retained firm is to send your resume via e-mail, follow it up with a short phone call and do your best to impress a headhunter as much as you would any potential employer.

"Our job is not to help applicants find jobs, but we do appreciate hearing from them," said Scott Smith, the managing partner in the Phoenix office of Tower Hunter Group, a national retained search firm.

Like most retained search firms, Smith said his group is deluged by dozens of phone calls every day from eager candidates looking for the perfect position.

"There is no way we can return them all," he said.

The best approach is to leave a short phone message about your interests, followed by an e-mailed cover letter and resume. A concise letter is critical in capturing the attention of a recruiter at a busy headhunting firm.

"I like a brief cover letter telling me the important aspects of their life," said David Brown, managing director of CHS International, one of the largest search firms in the



Scott Smith, The Tower Hunter

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country.

He wants to know if a particular candidate is willing to relocate, his or her financial expectations and the bare bones about a candidate's skills.

"I don't read all of the other stuff," he said.

The resume you submit to a search firm should be short and to the point, he said. The

resume that's not in true chronological order or is filled with flowery prose about your responsibilities is going to be deleted quickly. It's also important not to overload your resume, Brown said.

"The resume is meant to get my attention and to make me want you to find out more," he said. "If you give me too much, you are going to lose

Getting captured

To further your chances of being picked by a headhunter, the experts suggest you:

- Find one who specializes in your field of expertise.
- Determine, if possible, which companies are retaining the headhunting firm.
- Make a brief call to inform the headhunting firm of your interest.
- Forward a concise cover letter and resume.
- Put just enough in your resume to pique a call to you.
- Prepare for a face-to-face meeting like any interview.
- Remember that the firm works for the hiring company.
- Keep in touch with the headhunter about changes in your search and career.

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If your qualifications and experience don't match with an ongoing or potential search, expect someone to contact you and arrange a face-to-face meeting, the experts said. That meeting should be treated like any other interview.

"First impressions count a lot," said Scott Brown, manager of the Deer Valley office of Intergroup. "We want to make sure you are ready to work in a business. You need to have an upbeat and positive attitude."

Retained search firms will comb through as many as 100 candidates just to find what a company is seeking. The list that is sent to the company looking to hire is whittled to three and seven candidates. The hiring company generally does the final interviews.