

HOBART  
AND  
WILLIAM SMITH COLLEGES  
*The Salisbury Center for Career Services*

**Establishing Your Unique Value Proposition**

Many job seekers tell me, "I'm open to any industry" or "There are many positions that fit me". Focusing on specific targets increases your perceived value. Imagine someone contacted MyCareer, Inc. and asked if they consult to the Widget industry. The stronger answer is "Yes, of course, here are our relevant successes. How are you handling the change in Widget regulations?" vs. "Sure, we can take on any client." So the more you know about your target, the more powerful your unique value proposition will be. To clearly define your target, you should include Industry, Position and Location.

Industry - Whether you are shifting into or staying in an industry, you need to understand its driving forces and latest trends. You will not only be ready to demonstrate intelligence and interest but this information will enable you to position MyCareer, Inc. as a solution to companies in that marketplace. If you do not have preferences, it probably makes sense to focus on who is growing fastest. This growth will drive hiring and increase the probability of casting a recruitment net outside its industry. Since change often accompanies growth, prior industry experience becomes less relevant.

Position - If you are pursuing positions with similar job titles as before, you often will have no difficulty presenting yourself as a viable candidate. You should examine, through job listings and networking discussions, how well your experience fits the typical desired candidates. If in any way your product does not reflect that of the ideal candidate (changing positions, too much experience, too little experience), your success depends on your ability to prove strong expertise in the underlying skills commonly associated with the product attributes you lack.

Location - You probably know this answer with certainty. It is important that you choose industries and positions that tend to exist with your geographic reach. Identify companies in your region and research open jobs on [6figurejobs.com](http://6figurejobs.com) and other job boards to confirm the viability of your search plans.

Armed with this information, MyCareer, Inc. can deliver a value-driven message because you will correlate your skills with the hiring manager's needs. Aiming at one or several targets leads to more bull's eyes than shooting many arrows in the air.

*Sixteen-year track record of exceeding goals while delivering marketing-based career consulting and leading recruitment projects for large corporations.*

**Value-Added Networking - A More Effective Approach!**

To overcome your reluctance to network, it is necessary that you first understand how sales professionals do it. The concept they use is quite simple: *you go first* ! What this means is that in a sales call, the sales person has to go first and has to demonstrate his value to the person with whom he is talking. In this context, value could mean many things but usually it refers to information related to market place needs, professional trends, target industry trends, industry gossip, etc.

There are two other names for this approach to networking: "gifting" or "acting like a consultant". The key question you must answer in the networking scenario is: Why should the person talk to you? The answer should always be the same: it is in their *business' self-interest* to talk with you. You possess information that they need and can put to profitable or personal use. It is in their self-interest to talk with you and pick your brain. The beauty of this networking strategy is that the networker no longer comes into the meeting with her hat in her hand. She is no longer looking for a handout. Rather, she comes to the meeting offering value (information) and just as importantly, she must go first.

Let me illustrate. For most people just picking up the telephone and making the networking call is the most difficult action because they lack confidence, they don't wish to be rejected and they feel they have nothing to offer. These uncertainties can be replaced with confidence by simply offering value to the person you're calling. For example:

Job Hunter/Steve Applegate:

Mr. Johnson, my name is Steve Applegate and your packaging supplier, Walter Howard of Pharmaceutical Packaging Corporation, referred me to you. I have been actively researching your industry: its recent technological changes, industry trends, personnel issues, etc., and am currently involved in a job search for a senior purchasing position. In addition, I have interviewed with two key competitors of your company (name them). I would like to share with you what my research has discovered and how it could benefit your company. At the end of our discussion, I would like to review my job search efforts and how you could be of assistance. I would need only 30 minutes of your time. May I suggest either Thursday or Friday afternoon next week?

Would Mr. Johnson agree to meet with Steve Applegate? The chances are high that he would because Steve went first. He started his call by making a connection to Mr. Johnson through a mutual contact. Then he offered value in the form of up-to-date business information on competitors in Mr. Johnson's industry. Like most executives, Mr. Johnson doesn't have the time to stay current with what is happening in his business. The opportunity to quickly catch up in a personal conversation where he can ask questions and doesn't have to do research or a lot of reading is very appealing to busy executives.

This strategy assumes a few key points. First, during your job search you should schedule your *interview backward*. That is, interview first with the "C" companies. Those you wouldn't work for but would interview with to get the experience. Then you would move up to interviewing with "B" companies. Those middle companies that you would consider working for if the circumstances were right. Finally, you would then be in a position to interview with the "A" companies. These are companies that are recognized as industry leaders and world-class organizations. One way to get this sequence of interview experience is to sort the ads you answer into A, B, and C categories, then answer them backward. Do this by waiting a week between mailings. In this way, your interviews with "A" companies will come last.

The second strategy you must use is to research the company and its industry in great detail. Always start by reviewing *Standard & Poor's Industry Surveys*, two volumes of up-to-date data for all major domestic industries. Updated quarterly, each analysis covers prospects for a particular industry, historical presentation of trends and problems, and sales, earnings and market data for leading companies. Also, use the Internet to review the company's web site and research the company including its 10Q & 10K if it is a public firm ([www.sec.gov](http://www.sec.gov)).

Once you are in the door for your meeting, the structure of this type of networking meeting is really quite different from the traditional approach. After the usual pleasantries, the person you are meeting with is anxious to have you discuss what you've discovered in interviews and research efforts. This will occupy most of the time you have together. Go into great detail. Ask questions. Demonstrate the scope of your research and knowledge of both his industry and company. At the end of your discussion, you should have:

- Impressed him with your knowledge.
- Provided much useful information and insights and made him think.

It is at this point that the person you are networking with will express his appreciation and make an offer to help you. Since "you went first" it is now his turn to reciprocate if he expects you to stay in touch with him and continue to "gift" him with useful business information.

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