



How to be a professional job-seeker when looking for your next leadership position



So, as a successful leader you want something different now: a new position somewhere else. Perhaps a promotion and more responsibility. You think it's time for the next step and to take the helm somewhere else.

So, you call a few headhunters and you expect them to meet with you and then you wait to see what they will come up with. You know some of them well and now it's time for them to help you. After all, you have an excellent track record as a successful board member, so the right role must surely be waiting for you. This may very well be the case, but it may not... There can be a number of reasons for this.

The Career Pyramid

You have worked your way up through the years in what we call, here at EMA Partners, 'the career pyramid'. The pyramid is wide at the bottom; narrow and pointed at the top. When you were still in the middle of that pyramid you looked up, left and right and you saw a great number of opportunities for someone with your position, skills and capabilities. Over time you managed to go further up the pyramid, and you achieved an impressive career over the years. Well done.

And now you are somewhere in the small top triangle of that pyramid and that is much different from, say 10 or 15 years ago. You have now passed all those desired options you were once looking at when you were in the middle of that pyramid. But now you find out that in the top of the pyramid there are many less options than before (maybe just one position) and the competition for these positions (or just that one position) is fierce because everybody wants to be in that top chair or Boardroom. You're playing in the top league and the person next to you is also outstanding. It's probably a matter of just inches but this is the difference for win or lose in the top league.

At the top of the pyramid, the competition for top positions is fierce and everybody wants to be in the top chair or boardroom.

Different Relationship with Headhunters

First of all: this time they don't work for you. They work for their clients. Second: headhunters only work on exclusive mandates. They don't go shopping for you. And if you really want a serious change like changing sector, it is even more difficult. Because it is very very likely that you are not able to articulate well enough what you really want. Maybe all you know is what you don't want.

So how do you approach your job-hunting?

You want to take control of one of the most important events in your life. You have to take the lead and you have to take it very seriously. It's funny that when we lead a project or process at work, like for example an acquisition or an investment, we do that very carefully and professionally with deadlines and proven process technology and with a ton of leadership skills and solid assessments about risks and chances. I notice a change in the same people when they are looking for a new job. They just think it will be handed to them because they are so great and experienced etc. Because it's always been like that for you. This time it is different, though. You should show your leadership and manage that opportunity to a maximum chance and minimum failure. Like you did in your job, right? Where is the careful planning and solid process about assessing chances and risks, like you do as a professional? It's seems forgotten when you are actively looking for a new position or career while this may the most important change in your life next to your kids, partner, friends and family? Think about that.

But getting a job is a serious job in itself. Let us assist you in how you could approach this.

The approach to professional job seeking is a serious job in itself.

Author



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Hans is a former owner and Managing Partner of a national premier league boutique and has led the Dutch office of Korn/Ferry International being responsible for its European Advanced Technology Practice.

Prior to this, Hans was a Board Member at KPN Telecom NV and CEO of the Business Market Division with more than 3,000 personnel where under his leadership, a large reorganisation was carried out. While at KPN, Hans was a member of the Corporate Accounts Group, responsible for large contracts in the government area, and was a key player in creating the global AT&T/Unisource joint venture.

Also at KPN – Telecom, he was CEO of a joint venture between KPN – Telecom and Getronics Holding NV, where he successfully acquired a contract for a national mobile network for the Dutch government. Hans has worked with UNISYS for 8 years in various commercial management positions. He was also a non-executive Chairman of a Venture Capital Fund.

He has earned a Bachelor of Science from the Hogeschool voor Economische Studies Rotterdam (HES) and studied Computer Sciences at Columbia University, New York. Hans is also a member of the Board of the Amsterdam Sinfonietta Orchestra and a Member of the Advisory Board of Massive Capital in London.

Since 1988, EMA Partners has been serving local and international businesses across all industry sectors. The firm has been instrumental in helping its clients recruit thousands of leaders who have made a deep impact in their organizations and society at large.

With access to intellectual property through our association with Decision Dynamics AB, EMA Partners is a provider of leadership assessments and other advisory services to our clients.

Our expertise lies in assessing, hiring and developing leaders at the Board, C-Suite and Senior Executive level across industries. Our clients include global corporations, local companies and not for profit organisations.



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