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PR Job Security in Recession? Now May Be the Perfect Time to Brush up Resumes



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As recessionary fears spread, what many recruiters are seeing in the PR space in particular is that many people are reluctant to look for new opportunities or leave existing jobs because they're not sure where they'll go next. What's more, many are understandably focused on job security—particularly those who recently arrived in new posts and have the least amount of history with their current employers. The upshot is uncertainty across the board.

That said, down times may actually be the best time to seek new opportunities—if only for reasons of protecting oneself against potential downsizing or simply getting a better picture of one's market value. In addition, a slight downturn doesn't mean there aren't significant opportunities available for smart, savvy professionals in PR—especially for those who want to work with recruiters to get the jobs they really want.

On paper, it's often a perfect fit. Candidate A's background and experience exactly match the job requisition. He or she has a strong academic background, and as recruiters, we can't wait to meet in person and introduce the candidate to our client. So we schedule an interview and see the process through to the offer. Sounds simple, right?

We wish it were always this easy. Candidates often ask us, "What's the best way to work with a recruiter?" The answer is surprisingly quite simple and boils down to a few best practices—regardless of boom or bust cycles—as outlined here:

- **Be honest about your experience, education and salary expectations, among other things.** The best way for us to successfully represent a candidate is to have all the facts, and then we can act on behalf of that candidate's best interest. Being completely honest with a recruiter enables the recruiter to approach you with more relevant opportunities, and that are more in line with your background and experience. Be honest about your salary history and requirements so that a realistic offer (that's on target) can be made.
- **Treat a recruiter's interview as you would any other.** All too often, we hear, "I need to reschedule because an interview came up." I can't help but wonder what that candidate thought we had planned to do for the hour! From our perspective, this interview is the initial step in our relationship, and a critical one where we first determine a candidate's ultimate fit with our client's culture and climate.
- **Don't waste time—your own, the recruiter's or the company's.** Unless you have some real interest in a position, don't accept an invitation to interview. It's especially bad form to accept out-of-town trips for possible relocations unless you really think you'll move. You may not have initiated the contact, but if you agree to an interview, treat it with the same level of courtesy as if you had.
- **Prepare, prepare, prepare—it can't be said enough!** As recruiters, we are more than happy to assist you in the preparation process. In fact, we expect to. But the candidate must still do the homework. At the bare minimum, reviewing a company's website and recent news activity is a must for any PR or communications candidate.
- **Communicate clearly and quickly, as you would with a PR client.** We rely on timely feedback from both candidates and clients to keep the process moving smoothly. While we realize that people are busier than ever these days, it's embarrassing to have to tell our clients that we haven't yet heard back from a candidate. It shows lack of interest on a candidate's part, which we assume is not the message that most candidates want sent. It's also vital to let us know if you have other opportunities in the works and status, especially if you are expecting another offer. This helps us to keep our clients on track, and allows them to fast-track something whenever possible.
- **Keep the door open and be courteous.** Politeness is also greatly appreciated. What should you do then when a recruiter calls, but you're happy in your current position? Listen to what they have to say. You never know when a recruiter might present a better opportunity. Top candidates should *expect* that they'll be contacted—it's the main way that recruiters build relationships. Even if you are happy in your position, it's in your best interest to know the top recruiters in your field and to build a relationship with them, whether your need is immediate or future.

We all remember the years of 2000 and 2001, right? Having people you can call on who are "in the know" is a very good thing to have in the event that a layoff occurs. And, recruiters have extremely good memories. We remember those who helped us, even when it wasn't directly beneficial. And when that "dream job" arises, who do you think a recruiter will call first? Keep in mind that recruiters can be invaluable resources to you and have a wealth of information, whether about compensation comparison or getting a behind-the-scenes-peek at a company of interest.

Candidates and recruiters can't exist without one another—a truism that becomes even more apparent during down times, when some churn can be expected in terms of talent. A recruiter may have dozens of fantastic opportunities at any time, but without the candidates to fill them, they might as well have none. At the same time, a candidate may have a great background, but won't be called unless a recruiter has an opening that is appropriate. Changing jobs—whether you're simply researching opportunities from the enviable position of already having an enviable position or not—is one of the most stressful activities an adult can engage in, and when the two parties work together, the outcome can be beneficial to all.

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