



# NEED LUCK TO MAKE YOUR NEXT CAREER TRANSITION?

**Nine ways to increase your odds of landing a job faster**

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**By: Gina Riley**

Wouldn't it be great if we could wave a magic wand and teleport ourselves into our next best job when we felt ready? If you are like me, you don't have a magic wand and haven't crossed paths with a wizard or fairy godmother, either.

**IF YOU'VE BEEN WAITING TO GET NOTICED AND PLUCKED OUT OF OBSCURITY FOR YOUR NEXT JOB, IT IS TIME TO PULL YOUR HEAD UP FROM YOUR DESK AND TAKE PROACTIVE STEPS TO ENSURE A FULFILLING FUTURE.**

If you want your next career transition to go more smoothly, create your own magical luck with the following practical steps outlined below.

### PLAN A FEW STEPS AHEAD

What do you want to do in three years? Five years? A decade from now? Would you like to move up the ranks? Gain exposure to multiple job functions?

Before you can plan to get where you want to go, you need to make a target. Make a list of jobs, industries, and target companies to provide the focus for your time and attention. Then, gather job descriptions and use them to make a list of the common keywords and phrases, skill requirements, and the outcomes the companies are seeking from qualified candidates.

Once you have a working list, conduct research and hold informational meetings with people who are working in your ideal jobs to find out the qualifications and experiences that have made them successful. Find out if you may encounter perceived skill gaps you'll have to explain or plan to gain experiences that will qualify you to compete for the jobs you want to target.

Stay focused on your goals and spend your time wisely so you benefit from the long-term strategies you put into place.

### PREPARE YOUR MARKETING AND MESSAGING

Create marketing messages that speak the language of future decision-makers. This may come in the form of your resume, LinkedIn profile, and what you write and speak about. Use the information you uncover in the research phase to update your resume and LinkedIn profile to increase the probability you will populate in searches conducted by talent acquisition professionals.

Remember, your resume and LinkedIn profile are not static.

**DON'T BE AFRAID TO TWEAK AND MODIFY THEM TO MIRROR THE KEY QUALIFICATIONS THE COMPANY IS SEEKING. YOUR CAREER IS EVOLVING AND SO SHOULD THE WAY YOU HIGHLIGHT YOUR SUCCESSES AND MARKET YOURSELF.**



### DROP THE "SPRAY AND PRAY" JOB APPLICATION APPROACH

The "spray your resume" and "pray for a response" approach is when you spend most of your time applying to visible opportunities on job boards or company websites, then wait for a response.



Applying to visible, posted jobs is a viable part of a job search, however, according to Steve Dalton, author of the *2-Hour Job Search*, as an outside applicant, you have only a one in thirteen chance of landing the job over an internal referral. Applying through job boards should be a small fraction of the time you spend on your total job search.

Before applying to a visible job, consider doing research to find connectors who can help you get your application materials in front of decision-makers for consideration (recruiters and the hiring manager). These people can be identified if you're willing to spend the time searching for them. If you choose to apply first, do not let the sun set before you do this work on the back end.

Additionally, avoid frustration by applying for jobs for which you are most qualified because decision-makers will first focus on candidates who closely fit the requirements.

### SHOW CONTINUOUS LEARNING BY ADDING TRAINING, EDUCATION, AND CERTIFICATIONS

Employers love continuous learners who stay on top of the latest skills. Make yourself a hot commodity by adding new credentials to your career portfolio and weave this into your marketing and interview stories. Need some ideas on what would be the most valuable way to spend your time? Conduct informational conversations with people who are doing the ideal work you would like to do and ask them what skills they use that make them successful on the job. You can also speak with mentors or coaches for this advice, too.

### ADDRESS PERCEIVED SKILL GAPS

#### PERCEIVED SKILL GAPS ARE THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM.

When decision makers are interviewing, they are trying to assess if you have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to do the job and if you'd addressed similar situations in the past.

**NOT ALL INTERVIEWERS ARE SKILLED AT ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS TO FIND OUT IF YOU HAVE THE SKILLS REQUIRED AND WILL WALK AWAY ASSUMING YOU LACK WHAT THEY NEED.**

If you have a few perceived skill gaps, then you will need to rely on a solid networking strategy to make sure you are equipped with the honest information you need to address these gaps. Do this by holding informational interviews with people who are doing the job you desire and asking them about the essential skills they use to excel at what they do.

According to Elizabeth Zeller, Chief Financial Officer for the Oregon Child Development Coalition says contributing to your network and overcoming perceived skill gaps is key "because that's when your network comes through for you" and you can "use it strategically" when considering key influencers to tap into. "Look at skills and experience gaps critically" and see if you "can fill out one aspect." Make a continuous learning plan which could include "pro bono volunteering in the community or taking on a special project."

### BE A VALUABLE CONTRIBUTOR IN YOUR NETWORK AS A CONNECTOR, VOLUNTEER, OR CONSULTANT

Contributing to your network in a variety of ways can increase your fortune. You could expand your network by volunteering for causes you believe in or align with your field or industry. By surrounding yourself with the right mix of people, you'll be exposed to multiple perspectives and diversity of thought which can lead to the generation of new ideas and insights.

Take time to serve others by building mutually beneficial relationships and help provide people with access to opportunities. As HR pro Angela Shaw, SVP of Talent for Amplify Credit Union says, "It goes back to putting deposits in the bank." The work you put in upfront may come back to you in the form of new business, new customers, speaking engagements, or a new job opportunity.

Another way to create your own luck is to offer value as a consultant to prospective target companies. As Shantanu Gupta, CEO of Cascade Systems says, "Offer help without any expectations. Don't expect the outcome of your helping will result in a job offer. Have conversations. Offer your wisdom, your guidance and your brain. The job found me when the timing was right – following all the conversations that laid the groundwork for the opportunity to present itself. You have to keep your network up, even if you don't know if it will bear fruit. Do your research and listen first to show you understand their problems."





## Create Your Own Luck Success Story

“Two years before becoming a full-time coach I decided to focus my coaching (side hustle while being an engineering manager) on developing managers. I didn't look for a job in coaching, I booked a room and invited managers in my network to come for free manager coaching. 6 responded and for 3 months I coached them to success. I learned a lot about what it takes to run a cohort.

When a full-time role opened up - I could already show experience and testimonials!

Bottom line- don't wait for the opportunity to do the next thing. Start doing the next thing even if it's only 1% of your time. I still look back and I'm amazed how things turned out. I didn't plan the next opportunity; I did what felt like a good next step. I guess the universe always generates opportunities and we just need to be ready to see them.”

**Nir Megnazi, Leadership Coaching Program Manager, Intel Corporation**

You could even consider volunteering to take on a mission critical project internal to your current company. John Knotts, owner of Crosscutter Enterprises says, “If you are in a company now, look for what's broken and offer to fix that.”

### CREATE AND ACTIVATE A THOUGHT LEADERSHIP PLAN

**TO BECOME KNOWN AS THE GO-TO EXPERT IN YOUR SPACE AND TOP-OF-MIND WHEN OPPORTUNITIES COME UP, CREATE CONVERSATIONS AROUND A VIRTUAL “WATER COOLER.”**

Thought leadership could include speaking, writing, going to events, posting on LinkedIn or other business forums, and highlighting great people by shining a light on them. You don't have to be the expert at everything! Demonstrate you are a continuous learner by sharing what you know and by inviting others to join in on the discussion.

One of the best ways to share your knowledge and expertise with others is to create discussions on LinkedIn about topics related to leadership and team development, your industry or field, or the latest trends and advances in technology. Sprinkle in a balance of showing your human side with times of success and failures that afforded you an opportunity to learn. As Mary McDonnell, Director of Esteem Builders LTD says, “The quality of the content you share on social media indicates your commitment and engagement in current trends and research.”

### PREPARE A FINALIST PRESENTATION

**MY FAVORITE SECRET WEAPON, PARTICULARLY FOR EXECUTIVE-LEVEL JOB SEEKERS, IS TO PREPARE A “FINALIST PRESENTATION,” IN THE EVENT YOU BECOME ONE OF THE FINAL TWO OR THREE CANDIDATES WHO INTERVIEW OR PRESENT TO A BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND LEADERSHIP TEAM.**

The presentations I help my clients put together to showcase their career influences and leadership approach, explain their career history and unique value proposition, and how their values are tied to the company values. The presentation also provides candidate insight into what might be expected should they step into the role based on what they've learned during the interview process.

With a customizable finalist presentation in your back pocket, you will be in a position to offer to present and conduct a Q&A with the key stakeholders. It is unlikely the other finalists will be this far along in their interview preparation process, thereby giving you a leg up against the competition.

Channeling your unique value proposition into a finalist presentation will place you a cut above others. Simply going through the process of creating one, even if you never use it, will help you prepare for every round of interviews. According to Jennifer Davis, Chief Marketing Officer for Learfield, it is vital to understand “where you are gifted and skilled, and the problems you uniquely solve” so you can focus on targets who have those problems.

### AND FINALLY, BE RESPONSIVE

“A job search is a time-consuming and emotionally draining affair. I do not blame you for wanting to turn off the faucet of constant communication and hide under a blanket for a while. Unfortunately, that impulse is more likely to hurt your efforts than help you land your next job. *One of the best tips for getting a job is to be available and quick to respond,*” suggests Arpad Szakal, Principal Consultant at executive search firm Cormis Partners, “Be sure you are responsive to recruiters and prospective employers. In most cases, they are reaching out to multiple candidates at once. Those who take the longest to reply (or make the mistake of ignoring the messages altogether) will likely not get a second chance, especially at the beginning of the hiring process. Be on the ball!”

### REMEMBER, YOU ARE IN CONTROL!

In the end, it is up to you to put yourself in the line of sight for opportunities. Don't wait to be plucked out of obscurity and do not assume your hard work will be rewarded with a tap on the shoulder to move into your dream job. Instead, act with the nine suggestions above so you are ready when the opportunities come up. They usually present when you least expect it!

In closing, as *Shantanu Gupta* says, “Remember, you have the power to make your plan, control your time and attention, and can choose ways to help others and serve your network.”

You have got this. It is your time. Activate!



## CONTRIBUTING WRITER'S PROFILE



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