



PREPARING TO WORK WITH AN EXECUTIVE RECRUITER: THE TOP DO'S AND DON'T'S

By David S. Martin

Preparing yourself to work with an executive recruiter should be similar to preparing for any job interview. Look your best, and do some advance research. Showing up to the meeting uninformed or casually dressed demonstrates a fundamental misunderstanding of the role of the retained search firm, which is that they work for their organization clients. If you know the client (of the search firm) you are planning to discuss with the recruiter, demonstrate you have done some research on that organization. If it is a more general interview, do some research on the recruiter and the search firm. You want them to feel confident about presenting you to their client.

Top Do's and Don't's

Do:

- Have a clearly formatted and well designed résumé using reverse chronological format. Don't make the reader have to work to figure out what you do, or they will lose interest.
- Use bullet points to highlight accomplishments in your different roles.
- Have a well developed, concise cover letter (with no typos) to accompany your resume. This may seem basic, but you would be surprised how often people don't do this.
- Do develop relationships with executive recruiters with the long view in mind, not just when you are initiating a job search. It is not likely that the firm will have something that is an immediate ideal match for you.
- Have an idea about what you would like to do in your next move. For example, one executive I recently met described three "buckets" where he thought he might be a good fit.
- Be up front with the recruiter about where you are in any other search processes. You will not make any friends by becoming engaged in a search process only to tell them later on that you are about to receive another offer.
- Try to be helpful to recruiters when they call you about a search. They will remember that when it comes time to call you about an opportunity.

Don't:

- Barrage the recruiter with phone calls, continually checking in to see if they have any new assignments that might be a fit for you.
- Insist on having a “get to know you” meeting. If there is an opportunity for which you may be a fit, the recruiter will be in contact with you.
- Show up for your meeting with the recruiter in business casual attire. They will be discussing you with their client, so you want to look your best.
- Misrepresent yourself in any way regarding titles, dates, responsibilities, or compensation. It will usually come back to bite you.
- Show up for meetings 30 minutes or more early; it makes you look desperate. If you want to be sure you are on time, arrive at the meeting site early, and then wait in the lobby or at a nearby coffee shop until five to ten minutes before the appointed time.
- Check your cell phone or emails on your smart phone while talking to the recruiter. Put the phone on vibrate, or turn it off altogether.

By following some simple guidelines, the search consultant you meet will be impressed with your professional experience and demeanor. Remember they need to feel confident about presenting you to their client organization so go to the meeting prepared and looking your best. Be open and honest in your communications and focus on the long term. In so doing, you will develop a positive, lasting relationship with the search consultant.

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