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## Your Personal Marketing Plan: A **CAREER** Strategy

While involved in 'the challenging waters' of career transition, the same chaotic, jobless, trying times are very productive times. Don't waste them by floundering with lack of focus and direction, falling into the dark, depressive attitude of distractions and, worst of all, inaction...

When we are employed, we tend to function under the guidance of our employer's business plan, or, more specifically, our job description. Our 'routine' is defined by:

- **Personal accountability** to a labyrinth of responsibilities, some structured—some not structured at all—but all contributing to **productive work activities...**
- We create productivity and efficiency with our **sense of time management...**
- And as 'top talent' professionals, we often take initiative, make process improvements, and contribute to the Company's growth.

### Perfect Preparation:

1. Assessment
2. Set Objectives
3. Develop Collateral
  - Resume
  - Verbal
4. Coach References
5. Branding:
  - Correspondence
  - LinkedIn Profile
6. Research
  - Attractive trends
  - Targets
7. INITIAL Contacts
8. Develop Personal Marketing Plan

So, why not recreate all that with OUR OWN PLAN, a **Personal Marketing Plan**, to move toward job satisfaction, commitment, and appropriate compensation, for the rest of our careers... including any current, short term job search? But, before looking at what such a Personal Marketing Plan would look like, let's review the PREPARATION Portion of the 12-step Process Model (on the left).

If an individual is under-employed, seeking a change, or actually unemployed, they must be visible to potential employers who are seeking their services. Creating this visibility is strategic, personal market planning and execution—in can be marketability without rejection!

And, employed or not, **Modify and improve your Personal Market Plan's implementation model as needed...** As you move through your career transition or 'job search campaign,' make adjustments as you would a business model.

*Personal Marketing is a contact sport.*

Following the first three steps, it may feel like you're ready to take on the job market... but, THE Careerpilot encourages you to be totally prepared before you do.

## **“Coaching” Your Chosen REFERENCES...**

It is essential that you make certain that persons you use as a reference will respond in a positive manner. A good rule of thumb is to select four to six references, including supervisors, indirect supervisors, customers, peers, and possibly someone of stature in your profession.

Contact every person you are using for a reference, get their permission, discuss what type of position you are targeting, and send them a copy of your 'market-ready' resume template. There are times when you can actually negotiate what you want them to say.

Your reference sheet is an addendum to your resume and is taken to the interview, not sent with the resume. One way of looking at contacting your references at this point is that it marks the beginning of your focused networking, the first stage of your more active career transition efforts.

Practice your networking skills while you validate your RESUME TEMPLATE, tweaking as appropriate based on feedback from those that know and respect you.

## **BRANDING YOURSELF In The Marketplace**

Your “market-tested” RESUME TEMPLATE can now serve as the basis of your correspondence templates. Become familiar with the AUTO TEXT and MAIL MERGE applications within MS Word to create efficiency in the editing of your templates to meet the needs of specific opportunities that you are marketing yourself to.

Now it is REALLY beginning to feel like YOU are market-ready... but, THE Careerpilot encourages you to be totally prepared before you do. Let's not forget to be prepared for the digital face of the job market...

## **LinkedIn Task#1: INITIATING YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY**

The Careerpilot's high TECH-HIGH TOUCH philosophy comes into play with the explosive growth of using social networks to recruit top talent and for job seekers to build relationships, meet new contacts, and market themselves. While the Internet provides many choices, diving into the virtual meet-and-greet can represent a real challenge.

Which one is worthy of your start-up investment: learning curve time and actual ROI of your efforts... Where to begin? The Careerpilot encourages a choice that reasonably assures one's confidentiality, has a multitude of useful applications, and can serve as your focal point of networking decisions... LinkedIn.

## **INITIAL RESEARCH: To Create Focus**

Make a concerted effort to research trends and target organizations of geographies, industries, and functions that interest you. Access market research reports, the Internet, your own network... start with the resources with which you are already comfortable. Develop your research awareness and abilities.

Begin to assemble your **INITIAL Target Organization List**. Start your list of companies and industries that are attractive to you. Your targets are companies that utilize the functionality and RESULTS that you can bring to the table. A great start is to consider industrial trends in the marketplace that point to an organization's need for your services.

## **INITIAL CONTACTS List**

Make a list of coworkers, bosses, customers, suppliers, associates, external consultants, etc. Make a list of family, extended family, friends, relatives of friends, neighbors, people you know from special interest groups like bowling or bridge, church contacts, former classmates or alumni, and professionals like your doctor, dentist, or hair stylist.



## **YOUR Personal Marketing Plan**

Your **PMP** is as unique as you are. While the elements that you must address in your Plan are similar in all well-documented Plans, your commitments to time and activities, and your interface with "real life" will bring said personalization to your Plan. Our 12-step process accounts for all necessary elements in planning...

### **PRODUCT ANALYSIS**

The first three steps: Assessment, setting your objectives, and developing your personal marketing collateral materials... What is your *communication strategy*? In today's digital world of recruitment, it is that set of keywords and concepts that comprise your story.

Your proven skills, areas of knowledge, and your actual, collective experience are the features of YOU, '*your product*,' and your collateral materials (think RESUME) is your 'story' of the benefits of employing you. Actual employment happens when YOUR *value proposition* meets an employers' needs.

If you are still unclear on the next steps along your career path, it may be appropriate for you to use your initial wave of networking with people that already know you, to ASSESS your strengths (think: market research).

## TEST MARKETING

Steps four and five are in place to provide you with confirming feedback that you have selected an appropriate approach to the marketplace. Coaching your references, then branding yourself in the digital world of recruitment will help you validate your initial decisions. This validation that the marketplace needs you and your value proposition helps you to have the necessary confidence in your story.

- Discuss your resume with your references... does your story capture the real YOU? Have you missed any key bits of supportive information?
- Use LinkedIn, your "*digital footprint*," to pull interest in you to your Profile, and to push your message out to the marketplace through your network of contacts and Group activity.

## DISTRIBUTION NETWORK

The next two steps, initial research and pulling together your initial contact list are in place to create focus to your efforts... What are the trends in the market that are attractive to you, and which target organizations are most needy of your value proposition? Your evolving contact list will take you through the A-B-C's of networking and the development of your distribution channels...

- A. Start with people you **a**lready know or have reason to "should know," as they are the most likely to be receptive to your initial efforts.
- B. As you develop your network, identify key **b**ridge contacts that can give you specific information or introduce you to key decision-makers and hiring authorities.
- C. Critical to your success is building relationships with people who **C**an influence your hiring. This 'must see' list of influential contacts and hiring authorities is the epicenter of your job search campaign!

## YOUR CAMPAIGN LAUNCH

**Have an implementation strategy and stick to your plan.** Your **P**ersonal **M**arketing **P**lan should evolve as you progress in your job search. I would recommend early on in your search you attend several events where other job seekers hang out. These are great places to meet new people, develop and practice your elevator pitch, and get some support.

However, within 6-8 weeks you want to begin moving AWAY from those kinds of events to places where potential employers and people close to potential employers hang out. The former of these events will usually be free.

The latter may cost you something. That's why you want to work out the bugs in your verbal and printed "brand image" in the early stages of your job search. So you can be more effective and efficient when you implement your **PMP**. Yes, this means you will say "no" to some things.

You want to be strategic! Remember that an occasional job search is the most predictable part of your career-long strategy!

Critical to the efficiency and productivity of your campaign is the regularity and frequency of the activities you are willing to commit to, and the uses of your time, that will create top-of-mind awareness of YOU (the product) in the desirable or chosen marketplace. In other words, what are you willing and able to commit to to get HIRED!...to LAND your next right employment?

**READY...** The first seven steps of the 12-step process are there to prepare you to be successful in a job search campaign. You are READY!

**AIM...** Steps five, six, and seven are there to help you focus your efforts. You're ready and have your targets in sight... you have the correct AIM!

**FIRE...** Anyone can pick up a weapon and fire it... most of us can push the button that launches a missile. But the practiced, prepared, and confident marksman is the one most likely to have the skill to actually hit their target!

Steps eight, nine, and ten are what most job seekers call an "active job search." I encourage you to develop your PMP before you need to, implement it wisely with a first wave to "get the word out," distributing your story to the widest possible network. By its nature, your first wave will identify target opportunities.

In the skilled implementation of your PMP, your second wave of networking your way to those target opportunities will naturally overlap your initial efforts to get the word out... in fact, as you grow in confidence with your networking abilities, you will create your own productive 'style' of networking for the rest of your career!

## Making IT Happen!

The ACTION PLAN element of your PMP is that set of activities and uses of your time that will produce the desired results. Let's start by considering the...

### Most Effective Uses of Time for a Job Seeker

- 1. PRACTICE your verbal skills and verbal collateral materials.** There is no substitute for practice in developing skill and confidence. Remember, perfect practice makes PERFECT
- 2. Spend at least 30 minutes EVERY DAY doing some form of physical exercise.** Go for a walk... at the very least, *walk your dog a mile a day—whether you have a dog or not!*

Go to the gym... it can be a fun place to network and practice your verbal collateral. Play with your kids on the jungle gym. Exercise is good for clearing out the brain and increasing energy.

- 3. Don't spend more than about 30 hours per week in the job search.** There are physical, social and psychological effects of being on a job search that make it unproductive for us when we go much past averaging 30 hours per week.

I know you are supposed to consider your job search to be a “full time job,” so for our purposes let’s consider 30 hours to be “full-time.” Give yourself needed breaks, but don’t get lazy and off track. Try not to change your well-established, daily habits.

**4. Don’t spend excessive time on the computer.** Think about it, if 80% of jobs are found through some form of networking, then you should spend at least 80% of your time networking:

- Research to uncover trends and opportunities and, importantly, target companies, attractive to you.
- Social media attention... commit yourself to developing your use of LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter—the acknowledged ‘Big Three.’ A great source of job leads! But the get on the phone and network your way to each opportunity!
- Mine the job banks for job leads... then get on the phone and network your way to them! Do not apply online until you are asked to.

Rather, GET AWAY from your computer...

- Attend professional meeting and trade groups—they come in ‘all flavors.’
- Find and attend appropriate support groups—develop your skills and accelerate your networking prowess... but spend MORE time with employed folks!

The internet will be there when you get home or off the phone... schedule face to face meetings over coffee or actual meals. Heck, you are probably going to be awake at 3:00 this morning anyway. If you spend the whole day online, what will you have to do when you wake up in the middle of the night?

**5. Have an implementation strategy and stick to your plan.** Your **P**ersonal **M**arketing **P**lan should evolve as you progress in your job search. In the beginning, while in the preparation mode (READY), attend several events where other job seekers hang out. These are great places to meet new people, develop and practice your elevator pitch, and get some support.

However, within 6-8 weeks, as your skill and confidence grows, start to focus and direct (AIM) your efforts... attend events or places where potential employers and people close to potential employers hang out. The former of these events will usually be free. The latter may cost you something.

And THAT’s why you want to work out the bugs in your verbal and printed “brand image” in the early stages of your job search. So you can be more effective and efficient when you implement your **PMP**. Yes, this means you will say “no” to some things. You want to be strategic!

Remember that an occasional job search is the most predictable part of your career-long plan!

While YOUR PMP will take on its own form... you may want to consider the following ‘strawman model’ that incorporates all appropriate time and activity...

<b>ACTIVITY</b>		Initial Commitment	Next Week	Week etc, etc.
<b>Assessment</b>				
<b>Collaterals:</b>				
Written				
Other				
<b>Practice:</b>				
Verbal Collateral				
Interview				
<b>Research:</b>				
Level 1				
Level 2				
Interview Prep				
<b>COACHING</b>				
<b>ACCOUNTABILITY</b>				
<b>Networking:</b>				
<b>New Contacts</b>				
Follow up				
<b>Target Org Contacts</b>				
Face2Face				
Phone Interviews				
INTERVIEWS				
<b>Traditional:</b>				
<b>Ads</b>				
<b>Recruiters</b>				
<b>Company Posts</b>				
<b>Internet Posts</b>				
<b>OFFERS</b>				

**Record and analyze your efforts**, adjusting as appropriate. Create a plan and work your Plan on a consistent basis.

**An accountability partner is a great idea!** Plan to check in once a week for at least an hour. Take notes and hold each other accountable for goals set at the previous meeting. Choose wisely. To be successful at this you need to choose someone who will kick your butt — not be your friend.



**6 Reasons You Need An Accountability Partnership** A partnership can be you and one other person, like how we start at DFWCareerpilot...or it could be a group of 3 or more like minded individuals.

We start with each grouping being facilitated by a skilled and experienced facilitator. Having had a lot of experience with facilitating accountability teams and partnerships over the years, I offer the following reasons why such activity will boost your individual job search efforts, and help you to truly manage the rest of your career!...

*1) Someone to bounce around ideas with...* It can be productive when you're stuck and not sure how to proceed on an idea or maybe with a target organization—or an individual you're having trouble connecting with. Working so much online during job search can be lonely at times and sometimes spouses/family/friends just don't understand the type of help you need. Connecting with someone who does understand is a big deal.

*2) Get that extra push you need at times...* Sometimes you just need that extra little push. Maybe you're stuck on whether or not to move forward on a certain opportunity... or maybe you're not sure if it's even 'the right timing' to proceed. On a normal day, you would probably hem and haw over what direction to take and spin your wheels but an accountability partner will be there to help you make a decision and get things done.

*3) Someone to share accomplishments with...* Did you research and identify a great opportunity? Land that big interview? Get your first offer? An accountability partner is the perfect person to share those exciting times with.

As Corporate citizens, we are used to being on productive teams, surrounded by resources, and encouraged to succeed. However, as job seekers, it is easy to lead a very isolated existence and appropriate resources are not always available.

*4) Someone who can be totally honest with you.* There are times where you might feel that you are choosing the right course of action, or taking appropriate 'next steps,' but you're really not. In this case, you need someone who will be honest and who feels comfortable telling you like it is, in a nice but firm way.

*5) Someone you can stay accountable to.* In a typical Accountability Interaction, either by phone (when necessary to stay REGULAR) or in person (preferred) you will follow a set agenda:

- Practice your verbal collaterals in a variety of scenarios—provide feedback
  - Report and record last week's 'numbers,' tracking the correlation between specific activities and your success
  - Identify 'roadblocks' and/or make specific requests of your partner's time
  - Discuss and resolve the roadblocks... at least practice difficult situations
  - Set goals to accomplishment and commit to next week's recordable 'numbers'
- Again, it's really rewarding to have someone to tell when you have accomplished specific goals and/or tasks. Or on the flip side it's nice to have someone there if you're starting to feel overwhelmed and they can bring you back to reality. It's great to know you have someone there that is counting on you to take action!



6) *You drastically increase your productivity.* Like I mentioned above, having someone to stay accountable to makes you achieve more than you thought you ever could. You are focused on the most important tasks and are less likely to be drawn to all the mundane distractions, the “honey-do” list, time away from ‘all the stress,’ out of town visitors and visits—the list seems endless.



**ABOUT DFWCareerpilot... A FREE, WEEKLY WORKSHOP** event with a regular rotation of topical material covering a 12-Step Process **M.A.P. (MAHER Associates Process)** that will accelerate your job search success. Bob’s presentation style is highly engaging and interactive, so never be shy with questions and/or supportive anecdotes.

**BE PREPARED** for Bob’s two philosophies: Learn to Embrace The OTHER Job Market... and, fully optimize your efforts with a high tech/high touch approach!

1. His public Group on LinkedIn: **DFWCareerpilot**
2. **GO TO: [www.dfwcareerpilot.com](http://www.dfwcareerpilot.com)** and **FOLLOW** (register for) it to receive regular updates
3. Follow **DFWCareerpilot** on Twitter!



*Bob Maher created his online presence, [www.careerpilot.com](http://www.careerpilot.com), in 1994. He has over thirty years of successful experience in Corporate Recruitment, performance management and Career Management Services. He is an entrepreneur and innovator in the use of information technology in the recruitment and employment process.*

*On the Founder's Council of the Association of Career Professionals - International and quite active in their Professional Development, Technology and Chapter Growth initiatives--a frequent speaker at industry conferences and seminars. The Institute of Career Certification-International has him reviewing the portfolios of incoming applicants. Bob was presented with the prestigious LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT award by The Association in 2006.*