



You Can't Get a Job By Applying For It

While consumer optimism appears to be up, the job market remains as difficult and competitive as ever. Many job ads continue to attract dozens and sometimes even hundreds of applications. Some are from those who are actively in transition, while others are now being submitted by people who already have a job but are looking for something better.

The crowds make it tough even to get noticed, let alone seriously considered by recruiters. According to urban legend, that's because they're lazy, inefficient or both. And, in the vast majority of cases, that's a bum rap. Thanks to the notion of "doing more with less" among many employers, there are now so few recruiters that each one is handling fifty or more open positions. They have too many resumes to review, too many candidates to interview and too little time to do either in the way they would like.

Simply applying for a job, therefore, is woefully inadequate, at least if your goal is to get hired. The more effective course is to see your quest for an opening as an election campaign. There can only be one winner at the polls, so your job is to ensure that the "voters" – the recruiter, hiring manager and anyone else who will have a say in the decision – pull the lever next to your name.

What does such a campaign entail? While there are a wide range of possible tactics, the three most important are:

- Identifying and connecting with your career constituencies;
- Developing and delivering a compelling stump speech; and
- Saturating the media with messages you approve.

Let's look at each of them briefly.

Identifying and Connecting With Your Career Constituencies

It's critical to have your core constituencies in your corner for the campaign, so the first step is to go through all of your past and present contacts, connections, friends and followers and identify any who currently work for the organization that posted the opening. These include but are not limited to previous coworkers, bosses and college and graduate school classmates as well as those individuals with whom you've worked (or are working) on special committees, task forces and projects. They are people you know and who know you. If you can't find at least one and preferably several such contacts, move beyond your core to your supplemental constituencies. These include people you don't know (and probably don't know you) but with whom you share an affinity of some kind. They include but are not limited to fellow members of a professional society, fellow graduates of an academic institution, or individuals who previously worked for an employer for which you also worked. Once these constituents are identified, reach out to and communicate with each of them, using your stump speech as the basis for your message.

Developing and Delivering a Compelling Stump Speech

Your stump speech is neither your resume nor your brand. It is, instead, a carefully crafted statement that integrates aspects of both the description of the opening in which you're interested and one or more key elements of the employment brand of the organization where the job is located AND matching aspects of your qualifications and experience. You use it to position yourself as an organization's dream candidate. For example, if its opening is for a senior marketing manager with experience in the high tech industry and the employer is one that prides itself on a collegial working environment, your stump speech might be as follows: "I'm a team player with a 15-year track record of success leading innovative marketing organizations in the high tech industry." Once that statement is set, you should use it on the stump continuously. It should be the basis for every communication you have with your core and supplemental constituencies and with the organization's recruiters and hiring managers. It is the signature rationale for your candidacy – why they should "vote" for you over all other candidates. The final step, then, is to make sure they do.

Saturating the Media With Messages You Approve

Thanks to the widespread visibility and easy access of Facebook and LinkedIn, an employer's voters are now likely to use those and other social media sites to evaluate employment candidates. It's critical, therefore, that you be present on such sites and that you make the best possible impression. Begin by removing any leisure time images or statements that might tarnish your standing as a professional in the workplace. Then, post a complete description of your work record and accomplishments and keep it up-to-date. Next, take advantage of LinkedIn's new Endorsements feature so friends and colleagues can attest to your qualifications, especially those listed for the opening in which you're interested. And finally, look for an online discussion forum or blog in your field where the participants include employees of the company to which you've applied. Given how long it takes to fill an opening these days, you may have enough time to influence the voters by making regular contributions that demonstrate your expertise.

In the past, you could actually land a job by applying for it. Today, you can't. The job market now resembles a fiercely competitive election, so the only way to capture a job is to campaign for it and to wage that campaign more effectively than others in the race.

Thanks for reading,

Peter

Visit me at Weddles.com

Peter Weddle is the author of over two dozen employment-related books, including *A Multitude of Hope: A Novel About Rediscovering the American Dream*, *The Success Matrix: Wisdom from the Web on How to Get Hired & Not Be Fired*, *WEDDLE's 2011/12 Guide to Employment Sites on the Internet*, *The Career Activist Republic*, and *The Career Fitness Workbook: How to Find, Win & Hold Onto the Job of Your Dreams*. Get them at Amazon.com and www.Weddles.com today.