



The Delta That Makes a Difference

For Job Seekers

Employers are particularly risk averse these days, thanks to the uncertain economic and political environment. They need to fill critical openings, but they look for the safest and least disruptive way to do so. For that reason, a current employee is often perceived as the superior candidate. Their strengths, personality and fit with the organization's culture are all well known. They are, in short, the safe choice.

What does that mean for you if you're in transition? While every other job seeker is focused on meeting the stated requirements and responsibilities of an opening, you must do more. While everyone else is bent on beating out other job seekers, you must do that AND outshine the competition from within. Being better than the internal candidate is the delta that makes a difference.

Winning Out Over the Internal Competitor

A 3-step process is the best way to create the delta with a difference.

Step 1: Meet the precondition for selection. What's that? A good fit between your skills and experience and those specified for an opening. Since most employers of any size now use a computer-based applicant tracking system, your application can no longer be treated as a game of horseshoes. Close doesn't count, because the computer only recognizes those applicants who are exact matches as qualified candidates. There are obviously some instances when alternative, compensating capabilities are taken into account, but they are the exception that proves the rule.

Step 2: Characterize the likely internal competitor. Obviously, there's no sure way to know who will and will not be considered a viable internal candidate. Nevertheless, it is possible to uncover their key attributes. To do so, identify the current employees working in the unit where the opening is located. Your research should tap professional networking sites such as LinkedIn, Plaxo, Ryze and Ziggs; contacts you've made in employment site discussion groups; the member directories of appropriate professional societies; and social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter. Use the information you acquire to build a meta-profile of the internal candidate – their skills, experience and other credentials.

Step 3: Exploit the vulnerabilities of internal competitors. Compare your set of credentials to those in the meta profile and look for areas where you are the superior candidate. For example, your education may be more current or more extensive than that of internal candidates. Or, you may have an ancillary skill, such as the ability to speak a second language or use a new technology, that expands the range of your potential contribution. Or, there may be an aspect of your experience, such as the ability to work in diverse cultural environments, that makes you a better fit with the position. Identify these competitive advantages and highlight them in your application.

In today's tight job market, it's not enough to set yourself apart from other job seekers. You must also outshine the internal candidates who will likely be your strongest competitors. The best way to do that is to identify the delta that makes a difference – the capabilities you offer that internal candidates don't.

Thanks for reading,

Peter

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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 Career Fitness Workbook: How to Find, Win & Hang Onto the Job of Your Dreams*, *The Career Activist Republic*, *The Success Matrix: Wisdom from the Web on How to Get Hired & Not Be Fired*, and *WEDDLE's 2011/12 Guide to Employment Sites on the Internet*. Get them at Amazon.com and at the all new Weddles.com today.