

All the right moves

Chris Mumford, HVS Executive Search, gives some tips on job-hunting in the hospitality sector.

In my role as an executive search consultant, it is noticeable how many more unsolicited CVs fill up my inbox in the first couple of weeks of January than at other times of the year. It is a clear sign that the euphoria and relaxation of Christmas has died down and people's minds are turning towards the year ahead and the changes they would like to make to their personal and professional lives.

New Year is typically a time when people review the previous 12 months, take stock and make plans for the future. Along with quitting smoking, going on a diet and vowing to drink less, a frequent New Year's resolution is to change job. This decision may be taken out of a desire to improve one's financial situation, to gain a step on the career ladder, or to escape an unhappy work situation. The resultant action of this resolution is often a frenzied updating of the CV and a firing off of emails to a multitude of job websites, recruiters and human resources departments. By mid-January, when everyone is settled back into their routine and fully occupied again with current work deadlines, this flurry of job seeking activity comes to a screeching halt and the CV gets filed in the bottom draw until next New Year.

A year-long exercise

Successful job hunting is unlikely to result from two industrious weeks of CV updating and letter writing each January. New Year is a natural time in which to reflect and to plan ahead, but managing your career effectively is a constant process which needs continual review. Indeed, many think that when you start a job you should also start thinking about your next move and where you want to be going from here. The point in your career where you are unhappy and desperate to make a move is too late to start plotting your next

CV do's and don'ts

DO:

- Keep your covering email/letter concise and to the point.
- Follow up an application with a telephone call.
- Name your file clearly with your name to ease filing and distribution by the recipient; do you know how many CVs recruiters receive with the file name 'cv1'? This is meaningless by the time it has been forwarded on to the sixth person in the hiring organisation.
- Include your contact details; despite sounding painfully obvious, we are constantly amazed by the number of emails and CVs we receive with no telephone number.
- Highlight tangible achievements on your resume.
- Get advice and opinion from family and friends on the layout and content of your CV.
- Write a thank you note after an interview.
- Keep a record of who you have applied to and when.
- Bear in mind when compiling your CV and cover letter that your file is probably one of hundreds being viewed this week by the recipient.

DO NOT:

- Send a CV as an attachment to a blank email or with the three word message 'Please see attached'; these get deleted immediately.
- Use colour or graphics on your CV.
- Have any typos or spelling mistakes; I estimate that nine out of every ten CVs that I read have at least one error; if you cannot devote the time to get this document accurate, how precise will you be in your work?
- Complete a job web board profile without giving complete and full information.
- Send your information to someone not involved in the hiring process; make sure you target the decision-maker. For example, it is often the department head and not HR who is initiating the recruitment of a new position.
- Use a gimmicky email address; beerguzzler@email.com or munchkin@email.com does not send the right message to a prospective employer.

career step. Very often I receive calls from hoteliers with a very specific time frame in which they wish to change jobs, due to the end of their contract, for example, and, as if by magic, they expect the perfect job to be sitting waiting for them at exactly the right time. Timing is rarely so fortuitous.

At HVS, in our function as headhunters, we target individuals who are happy, successful and comfortable in their positions. Why would a company want to hire someone who is actively looking to leave their current employer? The best candidates are those currently doing a good job for someone else, not those whose time, focus and energy is being spent on trying to escape.

Market positioning

Just as a hotel needs to position itself effectively in the marketplace to gain market share, professionals also need to position themselves within their industry sector in order to improve their chances of making that move up the ladder. Prospective job candidates need to develop their own personal brand, reputation, skill set

and contact network during their working life. Making yourself visible within your company and industry will increase your chances of being promoted, headhunted, or even simply recognised for what you do.

Networking and developing contacts and long-term relationships with others in the industry is vitally important. The hotel industry is one in which networking is particularly important, and this is relatively easy to achieve, thanks to the naturally social nature of the business and its 'global village' character. Good networking should also extend to maintaining a good knowledge of the industry as a whole and its trends, challenges and opportunities. By keeping up to date with the trade press and by networking regularly, you are able to identify opportunities early and to react to them quickly.

Whether you are responding to a specific opportunity or making a general introduction for future reference, the manner in which you approach a potential employer, job board or recruiter can greatly influence how successful your application will be. In particular, the advances in the use of electronic communication methods have resulted in a range of choices and means for making effective contact with a potential hiring power. The underlying

necessity of communicating in a clear and concise manner still applies, however.

A CV is a living document, one which should be regularly reviewed and updated. After all, you do not want to lose a job opportunity because it took you three days to update your file before sending it to the hiring authority. Similarly, make time on a regular basis to conduct an audit of your career, to assess your ambitions over the medium and long term, to consider your skills, talents and weaknesses, and to identify what gaps you need to fill, and against what deadlines, in order to achieve these goals.

Career management is not a two-week exercise for when you are stuffed with Christmas turkey and searching for a New Year's resolution to add to your list. Rather it is something which should always be in the background to varying degrees of intensity and you should always be prepared and in a position to act effectively. [hmi](#)

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