

If You Want to Stand Out, Join the Crowd

Trade-Group Activity Is a Good Way to Land On Recruiters' Radars

By SARAH E. NEEDLEMAN
August 14, 2007; Page B6

To find candidates for a senior finance job that opened up last month, executive recruiter Ed Kaye scanned the roster of a relevant industry association and quickly homed in on a longtime member. He placed a cold call, and the recipient, a manager at a similar company, agreed to interview for the position and was eventually hired.

Mr. Kaye, a senior partner at recruiting firm GSP International in Woodbridge, N.J., isn't alone in searching associations' membership directories to identify talent. The strategy is the most common way recruiters find potential candidates who aren't actively looking for a new job, according to a recent survey of 450 members of the Society for Human Resource Management.

"It never hurts to be involved in associations," says Nancy Grossman, a recruiter for Capital H Group, a human-capital consulting firm based in Chicago. "You become more visible to recruiters and it shows you are committed to staying on the cutting edge of your field."

Recruiters and company hiring managers say they also often seek out potential hires at the meetings, conferences and other events that professional groups host. "Trade shows are great fishing expeditions for recruiters," says Barry Shulman, a principal at San Francisco-based recruiting firm Shulman Associates Executive Search Inc.

To increase your odds of landing on a recruiter's radar, participate in association events instead of just attending them, advises Todd Weinman, a regional director at recruiting firm Lander International LLC. "If

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you're somebody who comes to chapter meetings and always asks outstanding questions, a recruiter will definitely take notice," he says.

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John Cronin, a managing director at Capital Finance Recruiters Inc. in Leonia, N.J., recommends nurturing relationships with the recruiters you meet and being placed a candidate he met 10 years ago at an association meeting into an information-technology-audit position at a large East Coast health-care company. "I kept in touch and finally it worked out," he says.

Another way to boost your exposure to recruiters is to get involved in a professional management team or local chapter, says Wendy Alfus-Rothman, an executive in New York. Run for a board seat, volunteer to be on a committee or offer to serve, she suggests. You're likely to get to work closely with the organization's leadership and have opportunities to showcase your skills, she says.

Ray Manganelli, a vice president and senior managing director at Tunnell Consulting Firms, says about his current job through his work as a board member of the Association of Consulting Firms. The group accepts companies as members, not individuals. Manganelli represented his employer at the time. During his tenure, he and other representatives got to know one another, and in 2003 the company created a program. Dr. Manganelli now serves as the AMCF's board program chairman on behalf of the company, which is based in King of Prussia, Pa.

Many associations post job ads on their Web sites, and some limit access to members. Corporate hiring managers and recruiters say they like to advertise on these sites exclusively, to target trade-group members. "All the good candidates seem to come from a particular association and the ones who aren't as skilled usually don't," says John Fox, president of Executive Network Inc., a search firm near Chicago that specializes in the technology industry. He estimates that 40% of the candidates he places into jobs are identified through trade groups.

Job seekers say belonging to a professional association also allows them to connect with others in their field, which often results in job referrals and provides useful information. If trade groups charge an annual fee, it is typically far less than the cost of a career coach, which charges between \$100 and \$250 an hour, according to Frank Fox, president of the Association of Résumé Writers & Career Coaches in St. Petersburg, Fla. Still, other costs involved in attending annual meetings and conferences, including travel, can add up.

Networking with fellow members is unlike schmoozing with professionals in nonindustry-specific settings, says Debbie Lew, a senior manager at accounting firm Young LLP in Los Angeles. "Members will spend a little extra time with you because of that connection," she explains.

Ms. Lew says she learned about her current position in 2004 after conversing with fellow members of the Information Systems Audit and Control Association. They tapped their knowledge about the accounting firm, several of them volunteered for a job referral.

Within a week, Ms. Lew says, she received a call from a practice leader at EY asking her to interview for a manager position she hadn't seen advertised. Several members were among those evaluating her candidacy, she says, and they acknowledged recognizing her from the group's events. Before leaving the interview, she had a job offer in hand, she adds.

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Ms. Lew says she pays ISACA an annual membership fee of \$120, plus \$25 a year in dues for the organization's Los Angeles chapter. "It's definitely a great deal," she says, adding that she also receives discounts on the group's educational events and certification exams and other benefits.

The cost of joining associations varies greatly and often depends on the type of membership. For example, the Public Relations Society of America charges between \$60 and \$225 a year for national membership, plus as much as \$80 annually to join one of its local chapters. The American Institute of Architects charges fees ranging from \$338 to \$819.

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