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Listen to the Market

Position yourself for success.

Healthcare is a fast-paced and ever-changing field. Managing a healthcare organization has its share of challenges, so leaders are always looking for approaches and talent that will help meet these challenges successfully. In other words, they are most interested in recruiting effective problem solvers with the right skill sets to join their team.

How can you set yourself apart in a competitive and transformative industry? Many job search self-help books focus on identifying your five greatest strengths. While useful, strategies like these are not enough in a competitive market, unless they are connected with what the customer needs as well. Four other strategies also are key.

Focus on Being a Good Listener

It is often said that a good leader is a good listener. When it comes to positioning yourself for success in a competitive marketplace, listening plays an important role.

Most effective salespeople and business owners know they must listen to customers' needs. As a job candidate, you have to market yourself, so it's crucial to listen to what customers (or in this case, employers) want and need. As Jamey Power of J.D. Power

and Associates stated in an April 2014 *Fast Company* article, "There's nothing that is more effective for improving the quality of your product or service than listening to your customers."

Know Your Customer

Knowing yourself and your abilities is essential, but knowing what your audience needs is equally important when considering "going to market." For many, this mindset is a shift from what is often discussed in basic job-search workshops and articles. This is evident in many of the resumes I review, especially those from early careerists. Many resumes include an objective that focuses on what the candidate wants from the employer. Sure, a candidate needs to have this level of self-awareness, but in the context of marketing yourself that objective should come later in the interview process. Initially, you should focus on what gets you in the door.

Michael J. Corey, a partner with the executive search firm Phillips DiPisa and Associates, Oakbrook, Ill., and an ACHE Member, says, "It astounds me that some candidate resumes don't highlight relevant accomplishments with metrics and quantifiable outcomes. They need to demonstrate the impact they have made not only in their division, but also on their

organization as a whole. They should concentrate on demonstrating to the employer that they have what it takes to make a difference in a new organization."

Assess the Market

Take a snapshot of the healthcare landscape by trying a simple exercise I call "listen to the market." Go to job sites, such as ACHE's Job Center, and identify six to eight positions that match the types of jobs you're targeting. Print out the specific details for these jobs and highlight the key responsibilities, necessary competencies and major requirements for each listing. Look for common themes among these positions.

Next, reflect on your portfolio of capabilities. Take a look at your resume, cover letter and LinkedIn profile to determine whether you have these skills and experiences in your background. If you do, are you effectively communicating these skills and experiences to employers

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as part of the value proposition you put forth? If you do not possess the required skills and experiences, identify the gaps in your experience and focus on how you could better align with the qualifications needed. This gap-analysis process is key not only to enhancing your resume but also to building your professional development plan. This picture of the market may not be scientific, but it is a quick and easy way to improve your marketability.

Additionally, job seekers should stay abreast of industry news by reading major industry publications, attending educational programs that cover timely topics and using networking as a way to learn, not just to look for a job. You can review the following ACHE resources to help expand your look at the marketplace:

- *Top Issues Confronting Hospitals Survey* (2015 ACHE Survey)
- *What Healthcare Leaders Should Know About Recruiting Senior Executives: Lessons from Executive Search Firms* (2015 ACHE White Paper)
- *Healthcare Executive Competencies Assessment Tool* (2016 Edition)
- CareerEDGE® (ACHE's online career planning tool, located at ache.org/CareerEdge)

When you prepare to interview for a particular organization or job opportunity, your focus should shift to what is needed by that specific organization and the people to whom you would report. Dissect the job description, research the hiring manager and

then tailor your message to align your background and experience with the employer's needs, pain points and goals. In other words: Give the customers what they want.

"It's important to understand the hiring manager's frame of reference," Corey says. "There are differences generationally as well as culturally that can impact how that leader prefers to operate and manage. Knowing your audience—in this instance, the hiring authority—can affect how you present yourself and, ultimately, your fit with the organization."

Examine the company's website, search for news items mentioning the organization and review comments on sites such as Glassdoor.com to learn more. Also, do your homework on the hiring manager and try to

An Exercise for Listening to the Market

Use trusted job posting boards, such as ACHE's Job Center, LinkedIn and Indeed, to identify six to eight positions that match your expectations for a job. After you identify desirable job openings:

1. Print the descriptions and highlight common themes in job responsibilities and required experience.
2. List several positions you believe are appropriate targets for your skills, strengths and experiences and specify the key themes for each job from Step 1.
3. List the skills you possess that may align with the responsibilities and requirements you've identified.
4. Examine overlaps and gaps in skill sets and develop a plan for minimizing gaps, developing your resume and preparing for interviews.

Example

Market Segment	Position/Title	Key Responsibilities/Requirements & My Related Skills	
Medical Equipment Manufacturing	Marketing Manager	Key Responsibility/Requirement 1 Develop and implement marketing plans and strategies	My Related Skill 1 Spearheaded strategic marketing campaign
		Key Responsibility/Requirement 2 Serve as the consumer expert	My Related Skill 2 Acquired knowledge in prior role on client side

identify his or her needs and management style. You can accomplish this through personal networking, using LinkedIn connections to gain an insider's perspective and reaching out to colleagues at ACHE chapter events if your target is in the local geographical area.

Aligning Your Offerings to What the Market Needs

Healthcare leaders face many challenges; job candidates should focus on how they can help potential employers meet them. Aligning your assets with market needs is a great way to demonstrate your value to a potential employer.

Another way to boost your value in the job market and prepare yourself for new opportunities is to make sure your skill sets are current and relevant to the job. This strategy is useful for job seekers, professionals who want to be valuable in their role and individuals seeking advancement within their organization. You should make the relevance of your skills part of your personal brand. Your resume, cover letter, LinkedIn profile, networking message and interview presentation should all convey that brand and your ability to meet a potential employer's needs.

Healthcare is a dynamic field. Success requires being proactive and changing with the market. To stay ahead of the curve in a changing market, listen to the market and be prepared to adapt when the right opportunity presents itself. ▲

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