



DIFFERENTIATE! ADD VALUE! STANDOUT!

In a competitive world he who differentiates gets attention. This holds true for products, services and, dare I say, employment. You can do many things to get attention but the one that resonates with me is by adding value to the company. You, as an individual, need to deliver a return on the salary you are paid. You have to be more valuable to the employer than someone else. This means that adding value has to be explicit and clear. You need not necessarily demonstrate actual value – unless you can of course - but the promise of value.

Below are eight steps to open the door to a better job. It requires effort but you will get results. Doing this will separate you from the pretenders. Do the work, add the value and make a difference!

1. Your Skill Set

Make a list of all the things that you are really good at and have a passion for. Define your unique perspective on the issues. List your successes that provide evidence of your abilities and insight. We all have these and the best way to find them is to remember all the times you felt good about your work or your contribution to a project or a discussion.

2. Your Work and Environment

Think of the type of environment you like to work in. Imagine working there. Think of how people behave and how you like to be treated. How you interact and how people interact with you. Think about what sort of work you like to do. Think about the industries you may wish to work in and how they fit into your values and beliefs.

3. Your Vision

Think about your vision of the future and where you would like to be in 5 years' time. What would you like to be doing? It is not about being but doing. See yourself in the role(s). If you are not sure, find out what people are doing in roles you think you may be interested in. There are two basic streams – technical and managerial. You may think one is more preferable than the other because of status or money but don't be fooled. The status and money soon wane if you are doing work that you don't like in an environment that does not suit your style. Note that 60-80% of all workers don't like their job they are doing. You have a chance to ensure you like the roles you do.

4. Potential Companies and Organisations

Based on your skills, values and needs and your vision of the future find companies that may fit the criteria. Start with the areas that appeal whether they're profit or non-profit or have specific missions, or whether they're growth industries or stable industries which provide dependable services. Look for companies in these industries that have a reputation you can relate to. Study these companies and make a short list.



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5. Company Analysis

Research their websites and their news releases. Find out the main issues in their industry. What are their problems and their challenges? Who are their competitors and where does the company sit in the market place. How does the economic environment affect their business? The more you find out the better you can communicate your skills in the context of their problems and issues.

6. Your Value Add

Work through your skills and how these may have an impact on the company problems and where you may be able to provide solutions. Come up with as many ideas as you can that could solve one or more of the main issues and test them as objectively as you can. They don't have to be great or perfect, and they may be obvious, but if they are not being done already then they have potential.

7. Make Contact

Find out the names of people who work at these companies that you can talk to about the company and the issues. You can do this through friends, people who may have links to the company or through LinkedIn, Facebook or wherever. The key is to talk to one person and ask for introductions to others in the areas where you are interested in working. The point of the meetings is to find out about the company and how they go about their business, their values and what it is like to work there. You will also find out how they hire and the key people you need to meet.

8. Pitch Value

It is now time to provide value to the key people that you know could hire you. The best way is identify one problem that is high on the company's list and how your skills can impact that to reduce or solve the problem. Use the ideas you have generated and tested. Don't ask for anything, just leave them with the ability to contact you if they want to.

This approach has worked for people in both senior and junior positions. It works for businesses seeking to work for other businesses so it will work for you. It is better than a resume because resumes can be passive and sometimes misleading. It is more difficult to stand out with a resume. When many people apply for a position the reviewers spend only a few seconds scanning the resumes and the best candidate can easily miss out. You need to take more control and determine where you want to be and what you want to do. In addition and this is the key - you need to add value to your organisation. You have to be able to add more value than your salary and associated costs. If you can demonstrate that the company will get a return on their investment by hiring you then you will have their undivided attention for a lot longer than a few seconds.

In the end it is still a numbers game. The more companies you approach, the more people you meet, the more likely it is that you will get to work at a company that has a closer match to you and your values, work environment and aspirations.