



## NETWORKING: A "HOW-TO"

### Part 3: Leaving Messages that Bring Responses

By **Bob Olman**, President, **Alpha Search Advisory Partners**

I have received numerous inquiries regarding whether or not to leave a message when networking. This is not a minor issue to be responded to in an off-hand or incomplete manner. As one reader correctly pointed out, more than half of your calls may end up with a secretary or voicemail prompt. Thus, I will devote this article to a complete and thorough discussion—or, as my old philosophy professor might say (when he was not peaking from whatever hit of LSD he ingested that morning), provide a complete argument.

Each scenario may require a custom message and these should be prepared in advance. Do not fret though—there are only a few scenarios to prepare for, and all others are merely derivatives or combinations of these scenarios. You can't network if you can't connect to the target. In light of this fact, I'm going to have to agree with Machiavelli on this one: "the end justifies the means!"

#### Leaving a Message with the Secretary

You can leave a message with the secretary in any of the following scenarios:

- You are already engaged in an on-going dialogue with the target.
- You have been asked by the target to be in contact.
- You are related to the target.

Be sure to tell the secretary you are ALREADY in a dialogue with his or her boss. In this case, use any of the following:

- "I am returning her call"
- "This is a follow-up to an earlier discussion"
- "He asked me to get back to him"...or the like.
- "She is expecting my call."

The key is to let the gatekeeper/secretary know that you are not making a cold-call. By doing this, you can avoid the dreaded "May I tell her what this call is about" scenario, where you blab about looking for a job and the message is delegated to the round file with all the vendors and bucket-shop broker calls.

## Derivatives of the Above

- Referrals

If someone had referred you to the target, and you have permission to mention that name, leave the message that you were referred by so-and-so and the nature of the call (if the secretary asks) is confidential. Make sure you say the referral source name slowly and SPELL IT, or it may not even be noted on the message.

- Follow-up with an email

This is a two-step correspondence workaround that I use often. First, get the target's email address and send him or her an email. Then call and leave a message saying, "I am following up on earlier correspondence between us and, (again, if the gatekeeper asks), the nature of the call is confidential." Unfortunately, getting the target's email address is not always that simple. You can simply ask for it but 9 times out of 10, the secretary won't give it out. In this case, try the following: "I spoke with 'target' and he gave me his email address but it is bouncing back, can you give it to me again?" Hehe, it works!

If none of the above situations or their derivatives apply to you, avoid leaving a message with the secretary. Mostly, it will not be responded to and you are limited to how quickly you can call back, which is typically 2 days. By the third message you've become an amusement, rather than a business-related call requiring a response. Chumming up to secretaries is nice, but it will not get your call through to the target (after all, they generally like their paycheck more than they like you!).

## Leaving a Message on Voicemail

When the secretary asks to take a message, just ask to be transferred to voicemail. Most often, they will oblige you. Leave your message on voicemail and you can call back again in 2 days with the "correspondence" work-around mentioned earlier. The benefit to this is that you are mostly guaranteed the target will receive your message. Here goes:

1. **Don't wing it.** The first 10–15 seconds of your message determines whether or not the target hits delete immediately or listens to the message. You **MUST** give him a reason to listen to the whole thing. Prepare your message.
2. **End the message with a call to action.**
3. **Smile.** It **DOES** come across.
4. **Remember, less is more.** Brevity and clarity are key. Long-winded messages won't do you any good, because they are quickly deleted.

Here is a suggested outline (by the way, this is great for a cover letter in email too):

1. **Name.** Your name, title, department and company name (or previous company)
2. **Purpose of the call.** I like, "The reason I am calling is I am looking for a stronger opportunity than 'current company' is providing me." (5 seconds gone)
3. **The Sell.** (Here we go with the good stuff.) State your greatest accomplishments and your benefit to this company. Both are described in terms of how you made the employer money, how you saved the employer money and/or how you increased workflow or added new capabilities. Do NOT read him your resume!
4. **History.** Companies and dates of employment, just go back 5 years or 3 companies
5. **Education.** Enough said.
6. **Call Soon!** Create a sense of urgency. "I am talking to (name 1–2 top competitor companies) and wanted to see if there was a reason for us to meet."
7. **Follow-up.** Call to action or notice of follow-up. For example: "Please give

me a call (state your number SLOWLY) otherwise I will give you a call back on Wednesday."

Here's a sample:

*Hi Bill, this Bob Olman, President of Alpha Search Advisory Partners.*

*I am calling to explore career opportunities with (his employer).*

*While at Alpha Search, I initiated and led the development of a new consulting practice, which hit break-even within the first 4 months and netted \$8mm then \$12mm for the past two years respectively. I can build and manage an advisory service for you which will offer a new platform of services to increase revenue rapidly and add to the stickiness of your client base.*

*Prior to 3 years with Alpha Search, I was VP of Marketing for CMA Services for 2 years (state what the company did if not immediately recognizable), a marketing company targeting traditional asset management. And before that 5 years with Ernst & Young Advisory Services.*

*I have an MBA from SUNY Binghamton and an undergraduate degree from Cornell.*

*I am in talks with Capital Market Risk Advisors and Merrill Prime Brokerage, and wanted to see if there was a reason for us to talk as well.*

*Please give me a call with any questions and, otherwise, I will follow-up Tuesday. Thank you.*

### Rules of Professionalism

- Do not call back more often than every other day.
- Be upbeat, enthusiastic when speaking.
- **Don't take it personally.**

And there you go folks! Getting a job is the end goal, so make sure that the steps you take to get there count. Leaving a message sounds simple enough, but it must be thoughtfully prepared beforehand in order to warrant a response. Adequate preparation can make all the difference in getting a call back. After all, if you can't get through to the right people, you'll never get the job!

**\*Thanks, Bob!\***

**Bob Olman** is the President of **Alpha Search Advisory Partners**, a global executive search firm that specializes in building teams with P&L responsibilities for hedge funds and proprietary trading groups within investment and commercial banks.

### DOES MY RESUME STINK?

Hey folks, here's our latest installment of "**Does My Resume Stink?**"

As those of you who have been with us for a while know, here's how it works: you send in your resume to [stink@financeladder.com](mailto:stink@financeladder.com), and each month we pick one out of the hopper and have a professional resume writer do a "before" and "after."

Here are this month's: **before**....and....**after** by Louise Fletcher of **Blue Sky Resumes**. Before we get into Louise's comments, I'll also remind you that with your premium upgrade transaction code you can get a **free resume critique** from Louise, and an **additional \$50 off** when you purchase a resume re-write or other services package.

Now, Louise's analysis of Lindsey's resume:

This resume makeover provides some great examples of **common resume errors** and how to correct them:

### **No profile**

I recommend that you always lead off with a powerful summary to provide a strong introduction to who you are and what you offer. Notice how the profile on Lindsey's new resume shows clearly who she is and the type of positions she's pursuing. A busy HR manager or recruiter doesn't have to try and figure out what she's applying for—it needs to be right there at the top of the resume. Lindsey's key selling points are also right there in the profile, yet many of these great selling points were not even mentioned in her original resume. Work on creating a profile that encapsulates your skills and experience quickly and clearly—summarize your key skills so that the reader doesn't have to glean them from the resume. You will have 20 seconds to make an initial impression, so make it count!

### **No context**

If you only make one change to your resume as a result of reading this piece, please add context to your descriptions. Notice how Lindsey's new resume sets the stage for her accomplishments by providing the reader with information on why she was hired in the first place. For example, I wrote that Lindsey was hired into one position to "boost the company's competitive position by reducing costs and operational efficiencies." Saying this right up front allows the reader to appreciate the actions she took and the results she achieved. For this reason, context is key.

### **Few detailed accomplishments**

In her original resume, Lindsey mentioned implementing product costing at one of her employments, but she didn't say why this was necessary (the company had never done it) and what the results were (profitability improved by 15%). When you write your resume, make sure that an outsider can understand 3 things:

- **Why** action was needed
- **What** action you took
- **Results** you achieved

### **Too much information on old positions**

Lindsey wanted to emphasize her work with Xerox as she felt working for a "name" company had helped her in the past, but her resume drew attention to her age and was three pages long. By summarizing that experience under a section called "earlier experience", I was able to leave dates off the resume entirely while still including the company name on the resume. We all want to believe that age discrimination doesn't exist, but by doing this with earlier positions, you can avoid finding out whether that's actually true!

Lindsey's old resume has certainly been hurting her job search—but her new resume clearly presents a picture of an accomplished executive.

If you have any doubt about the power of a well-written resume, take a good look at both resumes and ask yourself what impression each one gives. I'm sure you'll agree she looks like a different person after the resume rewrite.

**\*Thanks Louise!\***

**Louise Fletcher** is the President and Co-Founder of **Blue Sky Resumes**. She is a Certified Professional Resume Writer who specializes in working with senior executives to develop compelling marketing materials.

### **WISDOM FROM THE SHERPA**

Our friends over at MarketingSherpa have sent us another winner, folks.

In "**Marketing Wisdom for 2004**", the able staff at MarketingSherpa have collected "real-life tips" from 105 marketers & agencies.

Some of my favorites:

- Anita Campbell of SMBTrends.com, has discovered that e-mailing on non-traditional days leads to consistently higher open rates—up to 50%!
- Karen Post of BrandingDiva.com snagged a writing gig with Fast Company. What complex strategy did she use to land this plum spot? She wrote a letter and asked!
- And Russ Novy of CNET found that offering a "hidden" coupon code for a simple 10% off accounted for a 20% increase in online store sales!

For these, and 102 other little gems, [click here to get your free MarketingSherpa Marketing Wisdom for 2005 guide.](#)

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