



Going direct to carefully targeted employers can be a fast way to get interviews.

Job hunting is all about getting your credentials in front of the right people... at the right times!



11 Make direct contact with employers

Contact all of your high probability prospects on a direct basis.

Why does direct mail work? Every day we all receive direct mail. However bad junk mail looks, the ones you see again and again are working; otherwise, the senders wouldn't be wasting their money.

Historically, a primary rule in direct mail is that long copy works best. That's what it takes to motivate all of us to action from *unasked-for correspondence*.

Here's an example. Let's say your local lawn mower shop wants you to come in and see a new product they're carrying. And you and your next door neighbor are both out cutting your lawns on a hot day. However, your lawn mower keeps stopping, and finally breaks down.

Then, the mail carrier arrives at both residences with mail that tells you all about a new lawn mower. It gives a long explanation of why it's superior. Now, chances are your neighbor will look at the mailing piece for two seconds and toss it. He isn't in the market for a lawn mower. On the other hand, because the mailing piece has reached you at the right time, you are apt to read it carefully, and perhaps make a purchase!

Now your position, relative to using direct mail, is really quite similar. Your interest is in reaching the right person who might be in the market for someone like you right now. No one else counts.

Why DIRECT CONTACT can be so important

It's important to fully understand the purposes and strategy behind direct contact with employers. Many people have misconceptions here. This discussion will help you understand the philosophy behind using this channel for developing activity.

Some people don't believe in direct contact. They think that anything you send to an employer is thrown away... whether it is by email, fax or first-class mail.

Certainly, this has some truth, since the great majority will throw away your materials in seconds.

But if you've ever really needed someone with a certain background or skills... then you will understand that you would want the easiest and fastest way to find a good candidate. And if a good resume or letter reached you at the right time, you would take action on it.

Years of experience have proven beyond a doubt that sending the right materials... to the right person... will get the attention of some decision makers. And, on a percentage basis, doing this works best with small and medium size companies. Remember, job hunting is all about getting your credentials to the right people... at the right time.

TIMING... is very critical

You need to reach a decision maker at exactly the time they might be looking for someone like you. Even if your timing is bad, companies scan the resumes of good candidates into their database. As they develop a need... this is usually the first place they turn.

“ You need to understand the purpose and strategy behind direct contact with employers. It can be a highly targeted way to reach the people who should know about you. //

The great advantage of contacting employers directly is in the large numbers of potential buyers you can reach quickly and simultaneously. If you want... you can reach the entire universe of all your highest probability prospects.

The DOWNSIDE? Is there a negative side to using direct mail to employers?

Yes... and that is the cost. But, professionals need to weigh that... against the cost of failing to uncover appealing opportunities... with which they would never otherwise connect.

Some also feel there is a potentially negative mental effect in getting a lot of “not interested” replies... or few responses at all. If you are contacting small firms, the facts show that good direct marketing is a remarkably effective way of quickly eliminating, from your “universe of potentials”... those who are not good targets during *this brief period you are in the job market*.

Might it make you look too desperate?... might it hurt your image?... might it make you seem too available? None of this is true from the point of view of the single person who receives your communication. If they don't need you, they will throw away your correspondence in seconds... or enter it into their database. In other words, it may do you some good... but it won't do any harm.

One thing is for certain... you will never generate more offers by having fewer people know about you. People seeking senior level jobs... and who don't realize this... are doing their careers a serious injustice.



The simple fact is that when more of the right people know about you... the more interest and offers you can expect to generate.

Now, you must realize that 99% of the direct marketing you do will always arrive “uninvited” and reach people who never heard of you. That is why you have to have outstanding materials and low percentage expectations... to make direct marketing work.



Realistically, how many people contact companies directly? Very few! And, most of them won't take the time to come up with superior materials. I mean materials that grab someone's attention... get them interested... and motivate them to contact you.

There is also the matter of objectivity. A significant percentage of even the highest senior executives... and the best advertising people and speakers, often have trouble when it comes to promoting themselves.

Direct marketing principles apply to selling yourself

What types of products or services are sold by direct mail? The answer is generally... the more expensive products and services. For example, high end real estate... limited edition leather bound book series... collectibles... financial services to high net worth people... major professional fund raising efforts—aimed at getting major contributions, etc.

These are not mass market items. They are costly items that are rarely purchased... and it takes a lot of copy to explain them... to get a deal closed. The same is true when you as an individual try to sell yourself by direct mail. At the senior level, you may generate initial

interest with a letter, but to get the offer closed you will need a full story... generally an executive biography. **So, let's look at the principles of selling a person by direct mail.**

1

The first principle is far and away the most important point. What is it? ***It is to contact the right person... in the right company.*** If you disagree, just try sending your resume out to all sorts of the wrong people... in the wrong organizations. Remember, this is about using a laser... not a shotgun.

Now, the question for you is... can you identify all of the right organizations and the right person to contact? (The process for identifying the people and the companies is what we call “targeting.”)

2

The second principle is that, as already mentioned, it takes a lot of copy to conclude a sale. All you need to do is look at mailings you receive at home... and the amount of words it takes them to convince a small percentage to act. ***The firms that sell by direct mail are among the world's most sophisticated marketers. They do it because it works.***

We've learned that the best results are achieved by making initial contact with a curiosity-arousing letter... then having a long story available to close a deal. That's one reason why executive biographies or interview resumes need to be available.

“Products and services that are sold by direct mail are high end... and their marketing needs to be highly targeted to the right prospects.” //

About 3,000,000 positions from \$50K to 500K+ are filled annually as a result of direct employer contact.

3 The **third principle** amplifies what we just discussed. Letters usually work better than resumes. *Why?* When you write a stand-alone letter, you can be more personal... and avoid disclosure of any liabilities. They must have short paragraphs... 2, 3, or 4 lines... and be personal. We call these letter-resumes.

Sending a resume immediately says you are an applicant... so you are right away put in a subordinate position. But sending a letter is a “peer-to-peer” value proposition. *Which do you think someone on the receiving end would respond to the best?*

You also need to use numbers, preferably significant numbers, wherever possible. And, if you're thinking about changing industries or career fields, you might need to have a completely separate resume to eventually make available... because otherwise you won't be able to appeal to the distinctly different audiences that you will be reaching.

4 The **fourth principle** is that your writing needs to be very clear. *Everything you convey needs to be done with clarity, short sentences... backed up by impressive facts or arguments... that somehow say that I've done this before for others... and I want to do this for you.* This is not so easy to do... and requires many drafts.

Now the longer your letter or resume is... the more interesting your words and the benefits they convey... need to be. So your correspondence really needs to perform two functions. One, it needs to get across the information quickly... two, it needs to keep the person interested so they want to learn more.

If you genuinely have a great story to tell... the initial letter can be as long as you need. However, as you write longer copy, you have to watch out for revealing liabilities, becoming redundant or overselling... which can make you seem desperate.

Your initial correspondence needs to be all positives... opening no doors to potential negatives that may keep other executives from responding. When a reader receives your resume or letter, it has to work in the first 20 seconds to keep people reading. Like holding a feather in the wind, it could blow away... or the reader could hold onto it for some time.

How large should your direct mail campaign be?

Most people seeking \$100,000 or more need to send at least 1,000 letters... and if you are an executive, perhaps more. *Why?* Well, if you went to 200 organizations... how many are likely to need someone like you? Let's assume that you're looking for a job of which there is **only one** in each organization.

For example, let's say you want to be a General Counsel... VP of Sales... Director of HR... the CFO... VP of Operations... the CEO, etc. On the average, one company out of each 208 is likely to need someone like you at that moment.

However, they may be in the wrong industry for you. And, even with the best materials, they may not be as impressed with your background as you think they should be.

Here is why the previous paragraph is so true. The job market runs primarily on turnover. From the *U.S. Labor Department*, we know that professionals and executives change jobs at the rate of once every 4 years in the U.S. That means that the job they occupy becomes available once every 4 years... or 208 weeks. So, that's why we know that if you went out to 208 companies, you would probably only reach one which needs someone like you right now.

If you went out to 1,000, you would reach five. And, if you went out to 3,000, you would reach 15. And if you went out to 10,000, you would probably reach 50. But, because they would be in many industries... and because they would reflect many different personal preferences—they wouldn't all react well to your particular background or presentation.

Does anyone ever go out to 3,000... 5,000 or 10,000? The answer is yes... and quite often. Who are they? They are usually senior or aspiring senior level people who can move across many industries... like executives in HR... sales... accounting... CFOs... and people who are general managers... or simply executives who are specialists at building or turning around companies... or who can bring leadership ability to almost any organization.

Can you contact MORE THAN ONE EXECUTIVE in a firm?

The answer is yes—particularly when contacting larger companies. Let's look at 3 examples.

Example #1. Years ago, our firm had an executive come to us who had been a sales manager with the Pentax camera company. He had managed their American sales force when Honeywell distributed the Pentax line. Then he moved on to another company in the photographic industry. Some time later, Pentax had set up their own operation.

He contacted us with only one objective in mind. He wanted to be the national sales manager for their American operations. So, we wrote an initial letter... a short resume as a 1-page summary (a universal resume) and a full biography for him... and we had them translated into Japanese.

It presented a very compelling statement as to why he was the ideal candidate to run America sales operations. Initially, we sent that document to the head of Pentax operations in Japan. That didn't work.

Subsequently, we sent it to several other executives, including the CFO, the EVP and the CEO. Eventually Mr. Matsushita... the top executive... flew him over to Japan and some weeks later he got the job.

Example #2. Another executive we once handled wanted to live in Rochester, New York and had a specific interest in the Xerox Corporation. Over a period of ten weeks, we contacted more than 15 different executives... before an interview was secured. Surprisingly, it never came to light that we had contacted other executives in the same corporation. The same would be true of most large organizations today.

Example #3. In another instance, a client in New Jersey, who had both marketing and technical skills, sent his materials to the HR Department plus five other decision makers in different divisions of a large pharmaceutical company. The HR Department responded that they had distributed his resume throughout the firm and there were no suitable openings.

Over the next 10 days, he learned in follow-up calls that two other recipients were not interested, but one was and invited him for an interview. He also received two replies in writing. One said they might have an opening in the next two months. The other invited him for an interview right away... because he seemed to be a good match for a position they wanted to fill soon. Without direct mail, none of this would have happened.

“If you know of a large employer that would be a good fit for you, be sure to develop a strategy to contact a variety of people who might get you in the door for an interview. //”

CAN YOU GO BACK to the same executive?

The answer is yes. Let's take an example of a CFO who lost his job, but wanted to continue living in a medium size metro area like Denver.

Now, let's also assume the executive wants to earn \$200,000. So, we might start by looking at the size of companies in Denver... according to their number of employees... who might require a CFO and who would also be able to pay him or her \$200,000 or more. Listed below are the approximate number of employers in the Denver area... with a population of 2.7 million.

Less than 10 employees	=	85,000
11-20 employees	=	10,000
21-50 employees	=	6,000
51-100 employees	=	3,000
Greater than 100 employees	=	2,500

Chances are that we would need to restrict ourselves to organizations with more than 100 employees... or 2,500 organizations. So let's now apply the math that we discussed earlier. Based on turnover data, how many companies might have the job that we're looking for, become available this week? If you divide 2,500 by 208, you'll get about 12 companies.

However, keep in mind that we are referring to jobs becoming available (or needs evolving into jobs) this week. If our executive client is in the market for 12 weeks, there would be a total of 12 x 12... or about 144 positions available during this time period. That's why it pays to have your material good enough so it gets scanned in their databases!

We have learned that if we go back to the same organizations and executives... a second time within 90 days... that the response we get will range as high as 75% of whatever activity we got the first time.

Can direct mail create a job and be worth the expense?

The answer is yes to both questions. It is important to remember the higher you go, the more likely your desired position will be found somewhere in the unpublished market. And, the greater the chance that a job will be created or reshaped to fit your particular blend of skills and strengths... and the specific contributions you can make.

Here's an example. A COO with strong achievements in sales and marketing as well, attracted a lot of interest in the aviation, defense and electronic industries. At the end of his search, he had ten attractive opportunities to negotiate.

One of those was with a company that he highly respected, but the original position they had in mind was not big enough for him. Importantly, he did not allow the conversations to end there, because he liked the company.

So, he went the extra mile to go through three meetings with them. At the conclusion of those meetings, the job had been redefined to two levels higher... in order to take advantage of his many strengths. It also carried a base salary \$100,000 larger than the original job.

There is much more to marketing any professional or executive on a direct basis than can be covered in this brief discussion. It remains, however, one of the quicker ways for any person to uncover unpublished positions... that would have otherwise never been uncovered. In addition, you gain the long-term advantage of getting into the databases of organizations... and paving the

“ If you can afford it, large scale but well-targeted personal letters, sent by first-class mail and marked private and personal... can be the single fastest way to get a new job. But, there are no guarantees! //

way for an inquiry sometime in the future. This can be very important for young professionals who will have a number of career moves ahead of them.

Why go direct to employers... if you can get good response from published openings?

That is for you to decide. Interestingly, in the example above, several of the executive's 10 opportunities were from ads and recruiters... while the balance were from direct contact with board members and employers, including the one he eventually accepted. Of course, if you elect not to go direct to employers, you can only speculate as to what opportunities you left out there undiscovered.

What's the least expensive way?

Your choices are making contact by (1) email... (2) fax... or (3) first-class direct mail. Of these, going to someone's personal email is inexpensive, but sometimes offends people as an invasion of their privacy. Sending them a note through a corporate email address works best in smaller firms. Making contact by fax can be effective and relatively inexpensive... if you can get access to a fax that goes to them. (The problem in large firms is that your fax may never reach the right person.) Using the general fax number in a small or medium sized company has a better chance of working. Contacting executives by first-class mail... in an envelope marked "private and personal" is the best way... but is also the most expensive. As a rule, to have a mailing service do this for you will cost \$2.00 or more per letter if it weighs less than one ounce.



Granted, that means \$2,000 to make 1,000 contacts. But what is the value of uncovering those handful of senior executive openings... and having them be interested in you? Another way to look at it is to consider how much money you may be losing by staying unemployed for just an extra month. So, for many people, the value is high. And, of course, these job hunting expenses are generally tax deductible.

I asked a friend of mine, a CEO of a high tech company, what he thought of direct mail. His response was, "Well, I get a lot of resumes and even some from my board members who pass on candidates. It works if the person really comes across well." Another friend, a VP of Marketing at a Fortune 500 company, put it another way. He said, "I look at resumes that cross my desk. If something matches my needs at the moment, I usually respond directly. It's a matter of timing."

A third associate, the head of HR at a Fortune 500 company, sent me the following when I was updating this book. His comment was, "I would highly recommend direct mail. Third-party letters can be especially effective if the right person is writing for you. Just prepare a letter they approve for their signature. Make it easy for them to assist."

Direct mail actions that work best

Let's assume you were a district sales manager seeking a national sales manager's job. Here is a range of direct mail actions you might consider taking.

- **Most Popular.** Sent to CEOs. Takes good credentials in mainstream fields to work. Response will be low from large firms, but better from smaller / mid-sized companies.

- **Much Better.** Sent to SVP sales by personal name, selected by industry, size and location. Can be very good with follow-up to your “best-of-best” prospects.
- **Excellent.** Sent to SVP sales to whom you have spoken. Or, sent to SVP sales, by name, where a third-party mailing goes out under someone else’s letterhead.
- **Outstanding.** Sent to SVP sales, by name, to whom you’ve been referred or met or spoken to via phone.
- **Often The Best.** Doing continuous direct mail to organizations that are your **high probability prospects...** your best of best. For example, if no interest results from a first mailing, contact a minimum of five other decision makers in mid-sized firms and up to 12 in large organizations or divisions—spaced out over eight weeks (*with phone follow-up*).

Selecting your targeted list

Let’s review principles that have made direct mail successful. First of all, your objective is to reach the right person... who might be in the market for your talents—right now. No one else counts. As you approach selecting a mailing list, you want to compile a list of your highest probability targets. Take into consideration your industry and location preferences.

10% of your list should be your “best-of-best” possibilities, worthy of follow-up and repeat mailings. 20% should be “primary” possibilities and the balance “secondary” possibilities.

For senior executives, we suggest focusing on the CEO or board members of firms in target industries. Now, in a very large firm, you may be unsure whom to contact. People with varying titles, for example... Group VP, North American Operations, may be running several divisions or business units.

If possible, research the specific decision maker who would be most interested in your message. As an alternative, it can sometimes be appropriate to contact the CFO. He or she may be aware of opportunities across operations... and may have the ear of the CEO.

Direct mail response is best for small and mid-sized firms. In large organizations, you will want to consider multiple mailings to different executives. In one case, approaching an employer with 28,000 employees in one metro area, each week, for 12 weeks, we mailed to a decision maker in the firm—until an interview was secured.

In smaller firms, target owners or top officers. They can be decisive and make hiring decisions more quickly. Follow-up mailings after 90 days will generally produce 75 to 80% of the response of your original mailing.

Contacting board members is worth separate comment. When you do this, it has to be done in a dignified manner with the correct style and tone. Our approach is to send out custom letters under our letterhead each week. For each executive, we include a custom cover letter with a universal resume for a short overview and an executive biography for a more extensive recitation.

This lets board members have a thumbnail sketch and an extensive recitation of your credentials and abilities in your executive biography. This presentation is similar to a board briefing book that a member would receive prior to a board meeting.

A successful letter to an employer

Dear Mr. Perkins:

I was quite struck by the article about your new sales philosophy. My qualifications would seem to be a perfect fit for your type of organization.

As a District Sales manager, I set up a branch office for a company in the office products industry. Under my leadership, sales increased 23% and 58% respectively in the first two years of operation.

I believe I could do as well for you... and I'd like to try. My immediate interest is in obtaining a Regional Sales Manager's position that offers superior potential for a young person who can prove her value to Microsoft.

My background also includes administrative and supervisory responsibilities in the areas of hiring, training and motivating people.

I'm single, 29 years old and have a B.A. degree from Indiana University. There I was elected Student Body President and graduated third in my class.

May I have the opportunity to further discuss my qualifications during a personal interview? A more detailed summary of my background can be viewed at my website www.lreilly.com. I would look forward to speaking with you and will call your secretary on Wednesday to see if something convenient for you can be arranged.

Sincerely,

Lynne Reilly

Lynne Reilly

A successful letter to an employer

Dear Mr. Jones:

Can I help you build your sales? I've helped others as both a consultant... and as a full-time executive.

My skills are in sales management... recruiting sales organizations... personal sales production... and key account management. I can build sales organizations from the ground up... or take them to the next level.

My titles have included managing partner... executive vice president... and president of my own firm—but I value contributing, building sales and building profits.

Others have commented on my strong verbal and written skills, my personal nature, and my capability for working closely with top executives. All my life I've been hands on, but I'm very capable of handling small and large staffs... and budgets.

My industry experience covers real estate, HR organizations, commercial finance and non-profit organizations. The industry has never made much difference, it's the skills and fresh thinking I bring to the table.

With a BS in Business Administration, I've also been a strong personal sales producer. In closing, if you're looking to build your sales volume, I would enjoy speaking with you at your convenience. You can reach me at (201) 445-9182 or you can email me at henry@yahoo.com.

Very truly yours,

Henry Larimer

Henry Larimer

What some people say about direct contact with employers

■ *“I focused on firms in three metro areas... Dallas, Houston, and Denver. In 8 weeks I had 12 viable situations develop and two turned into good offers.”*

■ *“Highly targeted third-party mailings were critical. They went out under the names of close friends and the response was excellent.”*

■ *“Mailings went out to 1,000 companies in Dallas who were in consumer services. Response was low, but after six weeks yielded five good situations, and eventually two good offers. I also did fairly well with recruiters and VCs. I would recommend direct mail to people who can work in many industries.”*

■ *“I just took a position with NBC as a divisional marketing director. We did a very focused search within the music industry. The direct mail I did was the key. Nothing had come up through recruiters or ads in my industry, and very little from the trade media. My recommendation for your clients in a narrow industry segment is direct mail first, and networking second.”*

■ *“We did several thousand mailings in foods and pharmaceuticals. Results have continued for months. I had 12 interviews and accepted my first offer. I’ll be a divisional president.”*

■ *“I live in Columbus, Ohio and was not in a position to move. Because of this, my plan had greater emphasis on custom mailings, running down emerging opportunities and networking.*

“As part of the mailing strategy I sent out several hundred custom letters, staggered over a 12-week period. I followed up by phone on all of my best prospects. The search took 17 weeks, but I have joined a biotech firm in their Ohio manufacturing division.”

■ *“Mailings were more important for me because I did not want to rely on my contacts. First, it took me two months just to get over the emotions of being ousted by my board. Then the search took six months. A total of 6,000 mailings went out under the names of three close friends.*

“The materials involved one-page letters along with three different slants on the biography. During the search I had three attractive offers: CEO of a division of a large firm, Dean of an up and coming graduate business school in Wisconsin, and Senior VP for a growth firm in an entirely new industry—which I have accepted.”

A successful letter to an employer

Dear Mr. Walters:

For a number of years I have been associated with a firm that is somewhat related to your industry. In line with this, I thought you might be able to direct me to an appropriate executive in your firm that I could help.

I am an experienced corporation lawyer. My career has spanned a broad range of legal functions involving substantial responsibility and sensitivity.

Most recently, I assisted in a major acquisition, and in the restructuring of a company under Chapter XI. In the course of my work, I uncovered millions of dollars in credits that had been unrecognized.

Prior to this, I developed the Budweiser franchise agreement. It is the standard against which all agreements are measured. I have a BA from Hobart and a Law degree from NYU. I am a member of the New York Bar.

I have more than a passing familiarity with your business. Furthermore, I want to find a new position where I can make the best use of my expertise. I am willing to travel or relocate as the situation might require.

I would appreciate an opportunity to bring my qualifications to the attention of your senior executives who might benefit from my experience. I will call you next Monday to see if you can suggest the right people for me to contact.

Sincerely,

Thomas Singleton

Thomas Singleton

A successful letter to an employer

Dear Mr. Pepper:

P& G's leading position in the food industry has been of great interest to me for some time. This, along with your well known reputation for attracting the best marketing talent, has prompted this letter.

In my current role of a Marketing Manager for General Foods, I launched a new breakfast product. I am sure it is familiar to you, and it succeeded despite fierce competition. Under my direction, it captured 13% of the market. The brand is now well poised for additional growth.

Having accumulated 9 years of similar successes, I now feel ready to assume broader responsibilities as a Vice President of Marketing.

While I am happy with General Foods, such growth opportunities will not be possible because of organizational reasons. However, recent articles have left me with the sense that my timing may tie in well with your plans.

Of additional importance, I have always had an interest in living in Cincinnati. In fact, last month I spent a wonderful week competing in the Lake Caldor classic. This, along with some close friends, convinced me that we would like to relocate to your beautiful city in the near future.

On Monday I will call your secretary to see if a convenient meeting can be arranged.

Very truly yours,

Mitch Watson

Mitch Watson

Direct marketing yourself is like selling any high end service. It can work... but it takes a lot of numbers!

The response here is just like the U.S. income pyramid shown elsewhere in this book. The more you seek in income, the more connections you need to make, and the lower your percentage response is going to be. The best response comes from custom first-class mail. Fax distributions are second most productive... followed by email.

"Life is an echo. What you send out—you get back."


—George Santayana

"Progress always involves risk. You can't steal second base and keep your foot on first."

—Frederick B. Wilcox

"You'll always miss 100% of the shots... you don't take."

—Wayne Gretzky



#11 RECAP

Contact the right employers directly

When you contact employers directly, your goal is to reach the right person who might be in the market for someone like you. No one else counts.

Large scale efforts, as well as small custom mailings, can be effective. The right targets, materials and timing all play important roles.

Quick action steps for direct employer contact

Our clients can take advantage of the many databases available through JMAC. On your own, you can use other sources. Follow the guidelines to contact the right decision makers with employers who are high probability prospects for you. Follow up on the phone with your best targets. Contact board members and venture capitalists, if appropriate.