



If you are an executive, your next job may very likely be one that is created for you.

You can develop offers, even when no current openings exist. You simply need to present yourself as a solution to a problem.



14 You can create your next new job

You can get a job created for yourself... one which is shaped to your talents.

The higher you go as a professional or executive, the more likely that the next position you accept will actually be created for you. Or, the position will be a situation that is reshaped to fit your talents.

Keep in mind this simple thought. We all hire top people when we are persuaded that the benefits of having them on board will sufficiently outweigh the dollar cost.

You can get offers, even if no job openings are said to exist. You simply need to present yourself as a solution to a problem. The “create a job” approach is for executives who want a job tailored to their best abilities, or who may have difficulty winning offers through other means.

A few examples might include an executive who can develop new products for a company, a sales executive with contacts in particular markets or a general manager who can start up a division in a specific industry.

Aside from executives, the “create a job” approach can also be considered by anyone who may have difficulty winning offers through other means. This includes those who have a narrow market for their talents, people who wish to change industries, or those who have been unemployed for a while or who want to stay in a specific geographic or industry area.

In these situations, to win the job you want, you may have to create it by making an employer aware of your ability to make contributions.

The following pages will give you some guiding principles as you consider this approach. You must focus on small to medium sized firms, go directly to people with the authority to create jobs, have a clear benefit proposition, take strong initiatives in your first meetings, and stir the employer's imagination.

1 Target the right organizations

The first principle to understand is that to have your best chance at creating a job, your highest probability targets are likely to be small to medium sized companies. This includes firms that are growing rapidly, bringing out new products, forming new divisions, acquiring other companies or reorganizing.

These are the firms that need good people, often from other industries. They are free to move quickly. Large corporations are the least likely to respond to this approach. Budgets are usually allocated far in advance, and hiring practices tend to be relatively slow and methodical.

Of course, there are exceptions. All you need to do is assess your talents and contact the firms most likely to need you, regardless of their size. And if you know a market well or have talents in a particular function, just consider the industries where they would apply.

13% of all \$100K+ job seekers have at one time gotten a job that was created or reshaped for them.

2 Reach the right decision makers...

The second principle involves your reaching the appropriate high level people. For example, you must be able to communicate directly with the person you would most likely work for, or that person's boss.

In small and medium sized companies, it would be someone at the senior vice presidential level or the president who would likely be involved.

Entrepreneurs, of course, can create jobs. So can affluent individuals who often have large staffs and interests in many organizations. In a larger company, be sure to choose the person who has ultimate responsibility for the area in which you can contribute.

When selecting the person to contact, aim on the high side. If you're not sure who to contact, start with the president. When you make contact at this level, you must be ready to communicate a benefit proposition.

3 Prepare a brief description of benefits you can bring

The third principle is to get across your benefit proposition. It must be an accurate, concise, and easily understood description of what you can do.

"Some years ago, I hired a football coach from a little known California university. The only reason I saw him was that he wrote such a good letter outlining what he thought he could do for us." —owner, NFL football team

Your conviction, passion and belief in the benefits you bring make the sale.

Your message has to hold the promise of tangible value on a scale large enough to warrant an investment in you. In that initial communication, you will also need to establish your credentials. Mention specific results you achieved in the past. They are the best indicators of what you can do in the future.

If you're a VP finance, you will obviously want to talk about how you can save money by cutting expenses. But if you want someone to get interested enough to create a job for you, you'll stand a much better chance if you cite tangible results.

For example, your cost cutting efforts led directly to a 5% increase in profits for your present employer; or your studies showed the firm was losing a million dollars a year on three product lines they could easily drop.

When you hold out the promise for potential benefits of that size, it is obvious to the reader that you might well be worth the investment.

Likewise, if you've developed many successful products, that is all well and good. However, if you expect someone to create a job, you'll stand a much better chance if you can state that you spearheaded development of three products now representing 20% of sales or that one now commands a 40% market share.

Achievements don't have to be large, but they do have to be significant. For instance, if you are an administrative executive, you might state that you managed a smooth introduction of new systems that lifted productivity 40%.

One key point to remember is that if you have an exciting idea to communicate, it may help if you can show how someone else has already used that idea successfully.

Dealing with opportunities is a key job for many executives. Most don't have enough time in the day and are predisposed to positive news from people who can help them. They will want to believe your message, so all you need do is make sure you provide positive reinforcement.

By the way, you can get your message across by phone or with a letter. Either way, make sure your "benefit proposition" is clear, easy to measure, and significant; and be prepared to quickly establish your credentials.

4 Take strong initiatives in your first interview

The fourth principle is to take strong initiatives in your first interview. Remember, your initial communication held out the promise of a benefit. What are your ideas? Why do you think they'll work? Do you understand the company's problems and opportunities?

Address these areas, but always remember to convey humility. Acknowledge that the interviewer has a better grasp of the problems facing the company than you could possibly have; this will help build positive rapport. There are any number of simple phrases you might use. For example, you might say:

"I hope you didn't find my letter too presumptuous. No doubt you've already given a lot of consideration to these areas."

Or... *"I took a calculated risk in telling you I could cut manufacturing costs. I recognize that every company is unique, and what works well in one may not work so easily in another."*

Or... *"I'm sure you've talked to many people who thought they knew your business better than you do. I don't mean to come across that way. I have a number of ideas, but let me first pay you the courtesy of listening to your opinion on these areas."*

Comments like these set the stage for a cordial exchange of ideas. They can allow you to do the three things you need to accomplish in your first meeting: learn what the employer really wants; build rapport; and focus the employer's attention on the areas where you can help.

Your first goal is to find out how the employer views the problem. What does he see as the key challenges? What is the "hot button"? What are the priorities as the employer sees them? Have attempts been made in the past? And how much progress has already been made?

By asking a few questions and listening carefully, you will find out what the employer really wants. You will also be building rapport. Make sure you maintain a balanced conversation. Ask questions and make positive comments in response to the interviewer's remarks.

Most important, try to get the employer to share his innermost thoughts. Try to surface his vision for the organization. Only when he starts to think about this and the significant achievements he might realize, would he consider the possibility of creating a job.

If you are able to accomplish the above in the first interview, that is enough. State that you would like to give things some further thought and then clarify the benefits you might bring to the situation.

Show your enthusiasm and get agreement that a second interview would be worthwhile. If you've done these things, you're well on your way to having a job created for you.

Remember, in your second interview you must reinforce your value by drawing an unusually clear picture of the benefits you can bring. Then you need to build enough enthusiasm to get an offer or be asked to speak with others.

5 Genuinely stir the employer's imagination

The fifth overall principle involves your need to stir the employer's imagination. The employer should begin to anticipate specific benefits and be able to relate them directly to your talents. The entire focus of the conversation should be on the future, with the employer picturing a company already benefiting from your contributions.

"It was very rare. But any decision we made to create a job was as much emotional as it was intellectual." —Former SVP, AT&T

A dry recitation of proposed improvements won't be enough. You will have to convey enthusiasm and create a sense of excitement. Of course, to do this you will have to refine your thinking, clearly identifying those areas the employer sees as most important.

For each of them, be ready to discuss general approaches you would take to reinforce the notion that you will succeed. Your best way to do this is to tell stories about your past achievements.

If you build sufficient enthusiasm, the employer may conclude the meeting with a statement that he'd like to create a job for you. Or, he may ask you to meet with others in the company. If that happens, take the opportunity to build additional enthusiasm with every member of the team.

Keep in mind that if you're not getting interest, you might try the "report option." Here you need to make an offer to study the situation in more detail, perhaps to observe the company's operations or talk to knowledgeable outsiders, then to come back with a written report. The purpose? To make the entire subject more significant in the employer's mind.

"It is the same principle used by management consultants, advertising agencies, top sales producers, and others when they want to stimulate a company to action. The very act of a study, and the presentation of a report following it, builds an aura of importance. Your report doesn't need to be lengthy, and it doesn't have to require a great deal of work." —SVP HR with a major advertising agency

The report should, however, discuss areas where you would hope to make significant contributions. For each area, you would want to point out how you would proceed, demonstrating near term benefits for the company. If you get interesting input from outsiders or cite examples that support your points, it will make your presentation more compelling.

If you try the report option, be sure to stage it properly. Let the employer think it's important and ask for adequate time to present your findings. Your report, of course, would include a recommendation that a job be created. If the report is well received, you will have succeeded in creating a job.

What some people say

■ *"I am with General Foods. Creating jobs in our firm is rare. But our top executives do bring in people, and their decisions are as much emotional as intellectual. Also, when they have someone lined up for a new job, it's a way for them to get their added budget requests through quickly."*

■ *"I met a friend at the annual meeting of a charity. One thing led to another, and my ideas on the future of his company got him interested. They created a role for me that I had a major part in shaping."*

■ *"Getting a job created takes longer. In fact, it took six discussions. But the position you get is really shaped to your talents and what you can bring. These jobs are the most rewarding. The job I accepted was VP Operations of a new division."*

**No job is ever created out of thin air...
you have to surface the need that is
already in the back of someone's mind.**

Top executives, particularly in small to mid-sized firms, create jobs when they discover the right person.

“Find a need and fill it.”

—Ruth Stafford Peale



#14 RECAP

Create a job that is shaped to fit your talents

This approach is primarily for executives. The fact is that the higher you go on the executive ladder, the more likely your next job will be created for you.

The key point is to keep in mind that you can get offers, even when no job openings exist. It's all about presenting yourself as a “solution” to an employer's need or problem.

Quick action steps for creating a job

Make a list of all benefits you bring to an employer. And, make note of any contributions you are especially well equipped to provide, blending your skills, experience and knowledge. Follow the principles outlined, and make sure your contact comes across as highly personalized.