

Everyone knows how hard it can be to start and continue a search. My “top ten” list of job-seeking and networking “dos” and don’ts” won’t replace the tools that outplacement and career counseling firms have developed, but they do capture the things I’ve learned giving advice to people looking for work in both good and not-so-good times. – Brian O’Leary (brian.oleary@magellanmediapartners.com)

Do

Inventory your skills, honestly. Identifying what you’re truly good at can be harder than you think. To get at the things that make you unique, make a list of assignments, projects and initiatives that you really enjoyed. What ties those things together?

Think about problems you can help publishers solve. No one thinks they need another manager. Publishers do need solutions to lots of problems that require specific skills. Think about things like online marketing, cross-platform content sharing and improving internal editorial and production efficiencies. How can you help?

Ask questions. You want to understand the challenges other publishing professionals are facing. Develop a short list of five to ten questions you can ask anyone you meet. Keep it natural, and make it simple enough that you can refer to it without having a piece of paper in front of you. A common set of questions will help you find both trends and points of difference across firms and functions.

Research the target. When someone gives you a lead, refers you to a friend or just agrees to talk with you, respect the moment. Do some background research before you start a conversation. Come prepared, respect time limits and honor any individual's ability to help.

Give something back. After the interview, write a note and include a thought, a contact, an article... you name it. Show that the conversation stayed with you.

Don't

Get stuck on accomplishments (alone). It's about what you can do to help. Your track record is an indicator of your skills and experience, but stay focused on how it underscores what you can do to solve a problem or advance a publisher’s interest.

Expect someone to point you to a job. It’s a tough time, and anyone who spends time talking with you recognizes that. They may or may not know of an opportunity, but let them decide what to do next. Asking how and when you might follow up is good practice.

Start by talking about you. We have all been trained to sell, but the adage applies here: “Seek first to understand.” Ask informed questions and listen carefully. Try taking notes. Doing these things will help you connect with people as well as potentially good opportunities.

Get fixated on a role. Publishing is changing by the day, and opportunities aren't structured by the org chart (anymore). Think back to the problems you’ve heard people talk about. Those give you a path to getting hired again.

Try to go it alone. Ask your friends and colleagues to critique your skill inventory. Let them see your question lists, help you qualify targets and refine your approach. Feedback can be hard to give and to receive, but listen carefully to what they say. If it’s really not you, don’t just ignore it. Have a conversation and let them know why.