

## Paper 3171-2019

# Stories from the Trenches: Tips and Techniques for Career Advancement from a SAS® Industry Recruiter

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## ABSTRACT

Emotional intelligence is having its moment. Research now confirms what we have long suspected. Likability matters. People hire people who they like, and people who they feel they can trust. It's the X factor. Years ago, having worked for one company for a long time was a sort of protection against getting laid off. That's not the case anymore. Jobs are getting outsourced overseas, and employers are hiring contract labor instead of employees. Whether you are a SAS® programmer, a statistical analyst, a data scientist, or a manager of SAS programmers, the advice covered in this presentation applies to everyone. We talk about the hidden job market, explore networking channels that work, and discuss trends in recruiting (including artificial intelligence and equal pay legislation). LinkedIn, social media, resumes, cover letters, interview tips and techniques, and all things related to job upward mobility are covered.

I have been working as an executive recruiter in the SAS marketplace for almost 20 years. As such, I have seen and heard it all! Let's have a laugh and share stories. Let's look at candidates who were offered the job or promotion, often against the odds. Let's look at qualified candidates who were rejected, and the reasons why. By the end of this presentation, you should have some new tools for getting hired in today's ever-changing job market.

## INTRODUCTION

The internet will tell you that there is currently a shortage of qualified job applicants. The unemployment rate has dropped to 3.7%, the lowest in nearly 50 years. Simultaneously, data analytics jobs are at an all-time high, and "Big Data" is one of the hottest buzzwords of 2019. According to Glassdoor's rankings, "data scientist" has been named the best job in America for four years running, with a median base salary of \$108,000 and 6,510 job openings.

Given these statistics, you would think that landing a new job, or promotion, should be as easy as falling off a log. This is not what my colleagues and I are encountering. Ironically, clients are more demanding than ever before with their requirements. It's not that IQ and technical skills are irrelevant, but what hiring managers really want, more than anything, is candidates who possess "excellent communication skills."

In other words, what most employers *really* want is professionals with high degrees of what has been come to be known as *emotional intelligence (EI)*.

## Emotional Intelligence

Some people are just born with it. Confidence. Beauty. We all know who they are when they walk into a room. We flutter to them, like moth's to a light. We can't help ourselves. But what is it about these people that makes them so darn likable? And is this something that can be taught, or are we just born with "it?" These people - the ones we all love - have high emotional intelligence (EI).

Emotional Intelligence is defined as the ability to recognize and understand emotions in oneself and others. This ability also involves utilizing this emotional understanding to make decisions, solve problems, and communicate with others. Components of Emotional Intelligence include self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill.

Studies have shown that people with high Emotional Intelligence have greater mental health, job performance and leadership skills. Some experts believe that EI, or EQ, Emotional Quotient, is a better indicator of personal and business success than IQ.

**Story From The Trenches – Emily**

*Hiring manager: “Sadly, I did not really enjoy my conversation with Emily. When she did not know the answer to the question, she did not just admit her lack of knowledge and move on. Instead, she tried to make things up or talk around it. She was very slow to answer simple questions and even was argumentative at one point in our conversation. In short, I do not think we should move forward with this candidate.”*

*Interpretation: If Emily had just been honest and authentic, she would’ve landed the job. People who can say, “I don’t know,” who are able to admit mistakes or show a sensitivity, are more likeable. Emily mistakenly chose to be dishonest. The fact that the hiring manager did not like speaking with Emily cost her an offer, even though she was technically qualified.*

**2019 SAS JOB MARKET TRENDS**

I talk to hiring managers and candidates every day, and I have been doing this for two decades. Here is my analysis of the current market:

**SAS Remains a Highly Sought After Skill Set**

Data Scientists, SAS Programmers, Statistical Analysts, Software Engineers and other technology professionals are in high demand. Companies are utilizing predictive analytics and machine learning more than ever before. Artificial Intelligence is hot. Equal Pay legislation will likely expand across more states.

**Data Science = America’s Best Job**

Online job and recruitment marketplace Glassdoor.com does an annual report, “America’s 50 Best Jobs.” They calculate their analysis by using internal data on the past year’s median base salary, the number of active U.S. job postings, and employee satisfaction ratings. With a median base salary of \$108,000, an average job satisfaction rating of 4.3/5 and more than 6,500 job openings, *data scientist earned the #1 spot for the fourth year in a row.*

Figure 1: The graph below shows rankings for the top jobs in America, according to Glassdoor.com.

Glassdoor 50 Best Jobs In America, 2018					
Ranking	Job	Median Base Salary	Job Score (5.0 scale)	Job Satisfaction (5.0 scale)	Job Openings
1	Data Scientist	\$ 110,000	4.8	4.2	4,524
2	DevOps Engineer	\$ 105,000	4.6	4	3,369
3	Marketing Manager	\$ 85,000	4.6	4	6,436
4	Occupational Therapist	\$ 74,000	4.5	4	11,903
5	HR Manager	\$ 85,000	4.5	3.9	4,458
6	Electrical Engineer	\$ 76,000	4.5	3.9	5,839
7	Strategy Manager	\$ 135,000	4.5	4.2	1,195
8	Mobile Developer	\$ 90,000	4.5	4.1	1,809
9	Product Manager	\$ 113,000	4.4	3.7	7,531
10	Manufacturing Engineer	\$ 72,000	4.4	4	4,241
11	Compliance Manager	\$ 96,000	4.4	4.3	1,222
12	Finance Manager	\$ 116,000	4.4	3.8	2,998
13	Risk Manager	\$ 97,000	4.4	4.2	1,209
14	Business Development Manager	\$ 75,000	4.4	3.9	4,060
15	Front End Engineer	\$ 100,000	4.4	4.2	1,222
16	Site Reliability Engineer	\$ 120,000	4.4	4.1	1,064
17	Mechanical Engineer	\$ 75,000	4.4	3.8	5,079
18	Analytics Manager	\$ 115,000	4.4	3.9	1,381
19	Tax Manager	\$ 110,000	4.4	3.7	3,309
20	Creative Manager	\$ 110,000	4.3	4.3	824
21	Software Engineer	\$ 102,500	4.3	3.6	29,187

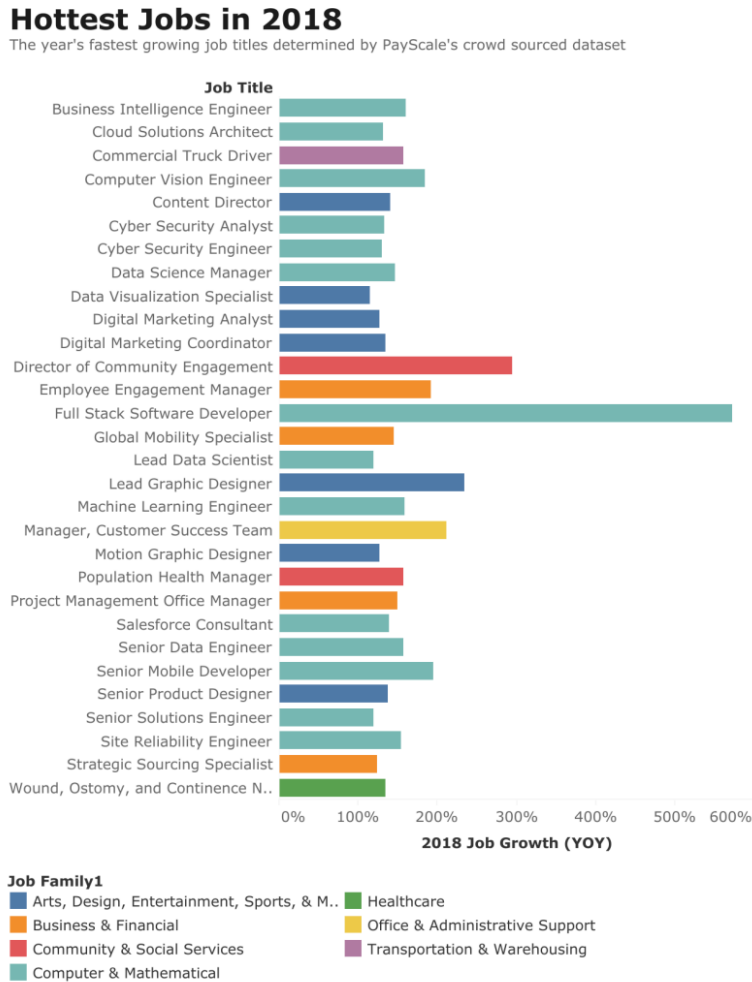
Figure 1. Data scientist is the best job in America for the 4th consecutive year, according to Glassdoor’s annual ‘Best Jobs in America’ report. Salaries for tech workers outstrips wage growth for non-tech roles.

### Hottest Jobs for 2019

Top jobs for 2019 tend to be clustered in two industries: technology and healthcare. SAS is used in the following jobs, which are all among the Top 50: Data Scientist, Analytics Manager, Database Administrator, Data Engineer, Data Analyst and Business Intelligence Developer.

PayScale released a report of its “hottest hobs of 2018,” and technology jobs dominated this report. In the diagram below we can see that of the 10 fastest growing jobs in the crowdsourced salary data, half were in technology professions.

Figure 2: The graph below shows rankings for the top 50 jobs in America according to PayScale.com.

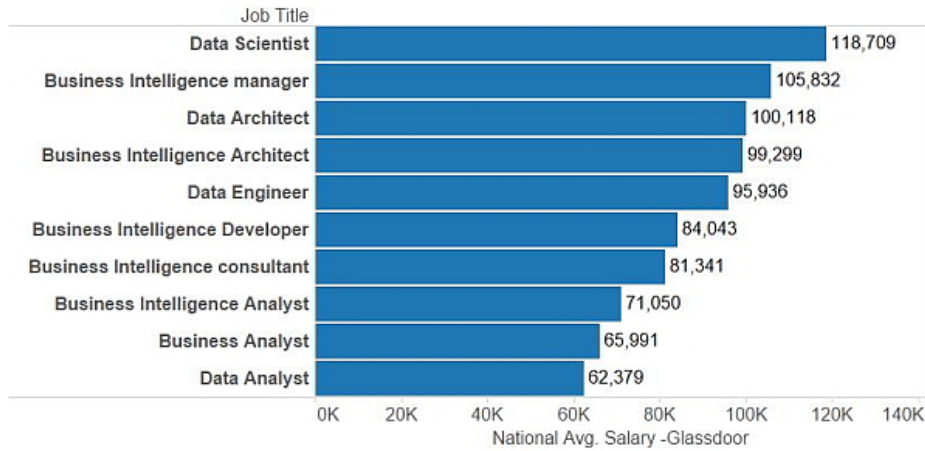


**Figure 2. In 2018, The largest increase in job postings was Full Stack Software Developers, with a 572 percent increase in respondents compared to 2017. Software Engineering had a record 29,817 open jobs.**

### How Much do SAS Programmer Jobs Pay Per Year?

According to Ziprecruiter.com: as of Mar 16, 2019, the average annual pay for a SAS Programmer in the United States is \$108,690 a year. ZipRecruiter is seeing annual salaries as high as \$154,500 and as low as \$55,500, but the majority of SAS Programmer salaries currently range between \$87,500 (25th percentile) to \$125,000 (75th percentile) across the United States.

Figure 3: The figure below shows salaries for Analytics professionals.

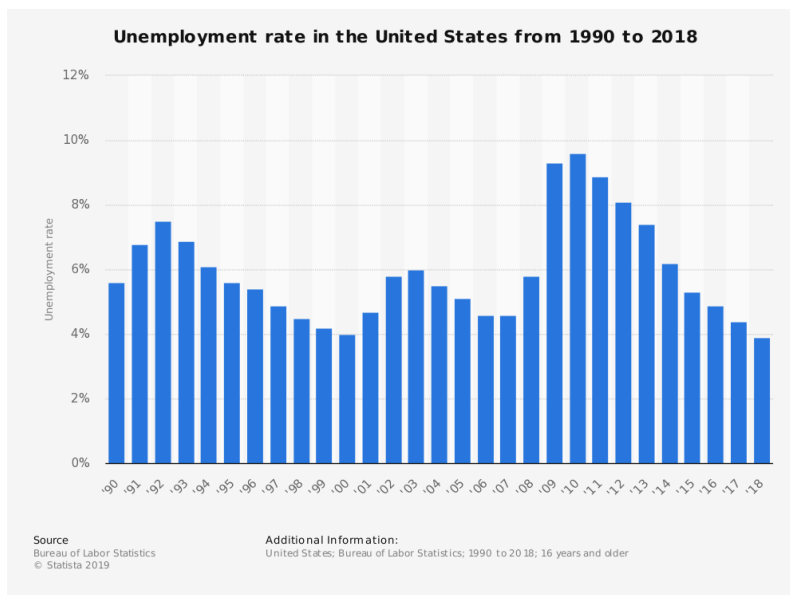


**Figure 3. Data scientists and Business Intelligence Managers top the list of tech jobs with the best earning potential, according to data compiled from Glassdoor.**

**Current Unemployment Rate**

The unemployment rate has been slowly dropping since the 2009 recession, and the pool of job seekers is shrinking. This means that high demand professionals like data scientists, SAS Programmers and SAS Administrators currently have more leverage than they’ve had in years. According to Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Data, overall employment of mathematicians and statisticians is projected to grow 33 percent from 2016 to 2026, much faster than the average for all occupations.

Figure 4: Unemployment rate in the U.S. from 1990 to 2018, according to US Bureau Labor Statistics.



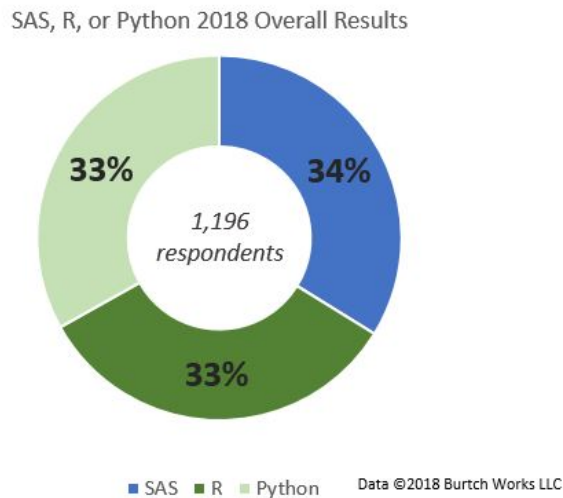
**Figure 4. In 1990, the U.S. Unemployment rate stood at 5.6 percent. It was 3.9 percent in 2018.**

**SAS vs. R vs. Python.**

In recent years R and Python have made their way onto the analytics scene. Many data professionals enjoy debating about which language is best - SAS, R, or Python. (Hint: SAS, of course!)

Recruitment firm Burch Works surveyed 1,196 Data Science professionals and asked them about their language of choice. The survey showed something that hasn't happened before -- there wasn't a single clear leader. Respondents were split almost exactly evenly three ways with Python at 33%, R at 33%, and SAS at 34%.

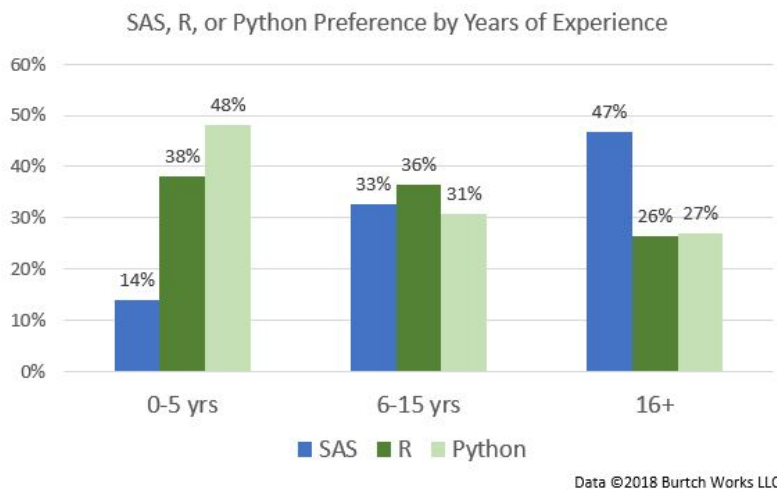
Figure 5: SAS, R, or Python results, according to Burch Works survey.



**Figure 5. Virtual 3-way tie between SAS, R, and Python according to 1,196 respondents.**

When you read about the comparisons between software, one area where SAS is the clear winner is customer support. SAS is also king when it comes to handling big volumes of data. Programmers with 16 or more years' experience have a strong preference for SAS.

Figure 6: SAS, R, Python examined by Demographic Factors



**Figure 6. SAS has strong support among professionals with 16 or more years' experience.**

## Equal Pay Legislation

In 2019, gender equality is a hot topic. Several states, including California and New York, have passed laws which ban any employer from inquiring, directly or indirectly, about a candidate's current compensation package. This includes salary, benefits, bonuses, or any other compensation a candidate may receive. It prohibits the employer from making a hiring decision based on salary requirements; they may only refer to the salary range given to the position.

This is a great move for salary equality, but leaves an open door for dishonesty among potential hires.

## Artificial Intelligence (AI)

SAS has been using AI for years, and the usage is only going to grow. SAS recently announced that they are investing \$1 billion in Artificial Intelligence (AI) over the next three years through software innovation, education, and expert services. AI is poised to be the next technological revolution to change the way we work. AI technologies can now identify objects, understand speech, translate languages, recognize faces and analyze sentiments.

Artificial Intelligence has also made its way onto the recruiting scene. AI is able to sort through resumes and social media profiles, keep candidates informed of their status in the interview process, and automate candidate sourcing. There is even software available now which analyzes vocal tone and facial expressions of candidates during phone or video interviews.

In many ways, advances in technology have made our lives easier - we can now shop online, bank online and verbally ask home devices for help when we forget how to roast a chicken. These technologies can understand speech, translate languages, recognize faces and analyze sentiments.

There is no doubt that AI is here to stay, but when it comes to finding a new job, AI is not (yet) your friend. In fact, applying to online job postings is the least effective way to find a new job.

## HIDDEN JOB MARKET

I'll let you in on a little secret. *Most companies don't publicly announce their job openings until they have exhausted every opportunity to fill them on their own.* Instead, they reach out to current employees of the company, internal or external recruiters, former colleagues and friends. A job posting on Monster or Indeed usually doesn't happen until after the hiring manager has tried every other possible vehicle for filling the opening. The term "*hidden job market*" refers to this phenomenon.

### Job Postings Are A Last Resort

Employers prefer the hidden job market over the visible job market for several reasons. For one thing, it's often cheaper than listing jobs online via a paid service. Sometimes companies want to keep their hiring decisions quiet because they are opening a new branch, for example, but do not want to share this information with the public just yet. Or maybe they are looking to replace a current employee, or someone that is getting ready to go on maternity leave. Companies also believe that they are more likely to get quality applicants from current employees, or from a trusted recruiter. Or maybe they just don't want the headache of sifting through hundreds of resumes.

Having an "in-demand" skillset does not guarantee that recruiters and hiring managers will be banging down your door and begging you to come to work. I rarely post an open position that I am working on. For one thing, there has been a large increase in "backdoor" hires in recent years, and I don't like to get bombarded with calls and e-mails from unqualified candidates or overseas recruiters.

The question arises, "How can you get clued in to hush-hush positions if they aren't posted?"

Here's the quick answer: ***It's all about connections.***

### **Story From The Trenches – John**

*I had been applying to job postings online for months, with very little response. I honestly thought that it would be easy to find a job since I know that my SAS skills are in excellent. Fortunately, Molly found me on LinkedIn and the timing was great. The position she had was a match for my background in healthcare. She suggested a couple of revisions to my resume, and then submitted me directly to the hiring manger. By the next day she had scheduled me for a phone interview with the VP, Analytics. Wow! I honestly couldn't believe how quickly I moved through the process once I started working with Synchrony. Within a couple of weeks I had an offer in my hands, and I accepted.*

*Interpretation: John was able to bypass the automated system because of my relationship with the hiring manager. He received a response on his resume within a couple of hours. I was able to get him to the interview stage -- but it was his likeable character and positive attitude (Emotional Intelligence), in addition to his adept SAS and SQL skills, that ultimately landed him the offer.*

## **NETWORKING – THE #1 WAY TO MAKE CONNECTIONS**

In today's world, networking is a necessity. A mountain of research shows that professional networks lead to more job and business opportunities, broader and deeper knowledge, faster advancement, and greater status and authority. Building and nurturing professional relationships improves the quality of work and increased job satisfaction. It is also the number one way to learn about unadvertised jobs.

Make networking a habit, not something you only do when you need a job. As powerful as online networking is, it pales next to the effectiveness of meeting people face-to-face. By including this practice in your normal routine, you'll automatically increase your chances of hearing about opportunities. Keep in mind that networking is about building genuine relationships, not asking for favors.

### **How to Network at a Conference**

Large conferences and events can be pretty overwhelming, so it is crucial to go into a mixer or networking event with the right mentality. I like to think of it as a chance to make new friends. Take a moment to scope out the scene. Then, if possible, warm up your networking skills by finding someone you already know. If you don't know anyone, don't fret! Most people at an event are in the same situation, and they don't know many people. They welcome ice breakers. This is your opportunity to step outside of your comfort zone.

SAS Global Forum is an excellent place to improve your networking skills. There are even several mixers and lunches designed specifically for socializing. When in doubt, just try the basics: ask what someone does or where they work, inquire why he or she is at the event, or even just reach out your hand and say, "hi." Most people are receptive and will warmly greet you and/or welcome you into their circle. Your opening line isn't particularly important, it's more about what you can do after that.

### **Ask Questions to Build Rapport**

Every person in the room has at least a couple things in common: The event you're attending, the place it's being held at, and the food or drink you're consuming. So, strike up conversation about what's going on around you. Try something like: "I can't stop eating these egg rolls. Have you tried them?" Or "What a beautiful venue. Have you been here before?"

An easy conversation starter is to discuss the setting or the event. Smile, relax, and be yourself. Be genuine. You can say something like: "Did you enjoy the opening session?" "Is this your first time attending the conference?" "I saw your presentation this morning and I was hoping that you could elaborate on..."

I also like the reliable: "How's your day going?" This works in almost any situation. It's simple, classic, and open ended. It is best to open with light, generic topics, and offer them with a smile.

### **Arrive Early for a Networking Advantage**

It is also a good idea to arrive to the event early, or at least on time. This way you have the advantage of being able to start a conversation, rather than awkwardly joining one already in progress. Plus, this is a built-in conversation starter: "Are you chronically on time, like me?"

Another great approach is to look toward the outskirts of the room and find someone who looks a little lonely. Maybe that person sitting by themselves at the table doesn't know anyone and is hoping that someone will come talk. Be that person, and try one of these lines. "These networking events can be so crazy. Mind if I join you over here?" Or "I'm trying to make myself meet new people here instead of just talking to the usual suspects. Do you mind me saying hello and introducing myself?"

### **Look for Ways to Help**

During your conversations look for ways to help other people. Perhaps you can provide a valuable contact, or the title of a great reference book, or recommend a great restaurant. When the conversation turns to you, be ready to briefly articulate what you are looking for and how others may help you.

In other words, Have an "elevator pitch." Describe what you do in 60 seconds or less (some say 30 seconds). A good pitch should answer three questions: Who are you? What do you do? What are you looking for? Your elevator pitch is a short summary of your service, product, or company and how it adds value to customers. It's a useful tool for communicating core information quickly that will hopefully yield you an invitation to have a longer conversation with potential clients down the road.

On the other hand, don't worry too much about making your elevator pitch while networking. Business networking is not just about swapping business cards or working a room. It is about building relationships with people. Use this time to make authentic connections, not sales. I've made genuine friendships at SAS conferences have become genuine lifelong friends.

### **Play a Long Game & Don't be a Pest**

This is where Emotional Intelligence fits in. Building relationships involves emotions. The ability to engage people while networking requires EI and EQ skills. How well you express, manage and control your emotions influences your success when meeting and greeting people, making conversation, exiting from people, and forming longer term partnerships and relationships.

Learning how to exit a conversation can be tricky. It is not my strong point. We've all been trapped in conversations for longer than we would've liked. A good rule of thumb at one of these networking events is to talk for 5 or 10 minutes – and then move one. Be kind, but assertive. Something like, "It's been great talking to you, but I need to say hello to a few more folks around here. I hope you have a great evening." Or, "I'd love to continue this conversation later. Do you have a business card so that I can follow up?" Leaving a conversation is a natural time to exchange business cards.

### **Follow Up**

Once you make some great new contacts, don't forget to follow up. It's a simple task, but most people forget to reach out to contacts they've made at the event. Try so follow up with a brief e-mail or connection request while it is still fresh in your mind. This increased the chances that you will stay in contact after the event is over. One great way to keep in touch is through social media – especially LinkedIn.

Keep in mind that networking is about building relationships and that can take a while. The best time to start networking is *before* you need a new job, or someone's help. Those who aim for fast results tend to network aggressively, and this can be off-putting. Playing a long game is more likely to pay off.



The connections we make while networking represent a gold mine of information, leads, and contacts. Try to enjoy the process of making friendships, without overthinking the process.

### **The Likeability Factor**

People with high emotional intelligence are likeable. EI also helps to put people at ease, and creates trust and respect. Likeable people are great listeners, are non-judgmental, and practice being present. These are good goals to aspire to, and these are area that which can be improved with practice.

In his book, *The Likeability Factor*, Tim Sanders notes these 4 characteristics of likeability:

- Friendliness: ability to communicate liking and openness to others.
- Relevance: capacity to connect with others' interests, wants, and needs.
- Empathy: ability to recognize, acknowledge, and experience other people's feelings.
- Realness: integrity that stands behind your likeability and guarantees its authenticity.

To sum up, EI and networking are directly related; a high EI translates into better networking, maximizing your eventual interaction returns. When it comes to first impressions, you don't have much time to get people to like you. You do, however, have control over your on-line persona. You should be on social media – particularly LinkedIn.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA FOR CAREER ADVANCEMENT**

The fact is that people – your colleagues, employers, friends and network – use social media. Social media is prevalent in just about every aspect of our daily lives. We use it to keep in contact with family and friends, follow public figures, share videos, and play games. Social media, especially LinkedIn, is also invaluable for job upward mobility and tapping into the hidden job market.

LinkedIn has long been known as the social media network for recruitment. Over the past few years, using LinkedIn to find work has gone from a good idea to essential. Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram are used by some, but we are going to focus on LinkedIn for the purposes of career advancement. LinkedIn has over 500 million users, and an estimated 95 percent of recruiters use LinkedIn to find candidates, so a strong profile is a must-have if you want to passively get informed about job opportunities.

LinkedIn is more than just an online catalogue of former employers and responsibilities. It's a tool that can have a significant positive impact on your life, especially in the business world. Some argue that having a sharp LinkedIn profile may be even more important than having a great resume.

### **Reasons to use LinkedIn:**

- Your LinkedIn profile is public, so it is viewed 100 times more than your resume.
- 9 out of 10 clients or prospective employers will check your profile on LinkedIn.
- Often jobs are not posted, but recruiters can find you on LinkedIn.
- Companies regularly use LinkedIn to find passive candidates.

Whatever your age, profession, or employment status, you are almost certain to benefit from learning to use LinkedIn. Use it to search for a new job, network with other professionals in your industry, establish an online presence, or learn about prospective employers.

When I look at a profile I'm checking to see: Do we have any mutual connections? Do you have a picture? Do we belong to any of the same groups? Have you shared any interesting content? Do we have any shared interests or hobbies? I'm also checking to see if information on your resume matches up to your on-line profile. The more complete your LinkedIn profile, the more impressed I am, and the more likely I am to reach out and interact with you to tell you about jobs in the hidden job market. According to LinkedIn data, users with complete profiles are 40 times more likely to be seen by other members.

### **LinkedIn Tips at a glance:**

- Complete your full profile, including past jobs, education, even hobbies and interests.
- Use a current, professional photo where you are smiling and wearing business attire.
- You are 14 times more likely to be viewed if you have a photo, according to LinkedIn data.
- Increase your visibility by adding connections.
- Improve your approachability by joining groups and participating in discussions.
- Get and give recommendations.
- Add a custom headline.
- Create a custom LinkedIn URL
- Add a summary

### **LinkedIn Keywords**

In order to be found on LinkedIn, it is important to complete your entire profile. You never know which piece of data about yourself will be the priority item that a recruiter will be looking for. AI, and recruiters, often use keywords in searches. One way to figure out which words to use to find a job advertisement for a position you seek, or one similar to the one you have, and use the words listed in your profile summary. Matching as many keywords to a job type as you can will help companies locate your profile.

### **Social Proof is Key**

Testimonials, endorsements and recommendations of your abilities that appear on social networks are greatly valued by prospective employers. If you don't have many recommendations in your LinkedIn profile, get some before looking for a job. I enjoy giving recommendations. It doesn't take very long, and it feels good to endorse people that I admire. This was a recommendation that I received from a client. It was unsolicited, and it is definitely appreciated.

### **Story from the trenches – Tina – LinkedIn Recommendation**

*Molly is exceptionally talented, determined, and holds herself to a higher standard than most in our industry. She prides herself on partnering with her clients, understanding the business outcome that needs to be achieved and she finds the right person. She is thorough, and has very high integrity. Many recruiters will tell you all about how they do find the right person when you need it, Molly just does it and doesn't waste time talking about it.*

## **THE RESUME**

Despite reports of its impending demise, a resume is still an essential tool for the job search. That said, hiring managers go through resumes very rapidly. You need to format your resume to be read quickly and in small bites. Studies say that a typical resume is scanned for just six to ten seconds.

There are many rules to writing a resume but it all boils down to two things: It should be easy to read, and the message it conveys needs to be clear. It is best to have a standard resume, in reverse chronological order. I prefer to receive resumes in Word Format, and I most likely won't click on the link if you're trying to redirect me to a resume website. Your resume should be something that you can attach to an e-mail and send to me.

According to TheLadders, Recruiters and hiring managers primarily look for six key pieces of information in the following order: name, current title and company, previous title and company, start and end date of previous position, start date of current position and education.

The top one-third of your resume is what a recruiter or hiring manager scans to determine if they will read the rest. Use of the word "Objective" is a thing of the past. Instead, write a great "Qualifications Summary." *Tip: This can be the same as the "Summary" section of your LinkedIn profile.* Use this space to highlight achievements, attributes, and technical skills.

### **Resume Writing Tips at a glance:**

- Include your full name, address (city and state), e-mail, and phone number.
- Use the correct format – reverse chronological.
- List quantifiable accomplishments.
- Liberal use of Key Words – find key words on the job description you are applying for, and distribute them throughout.
- Use targeted Job Titles – Use the same Titles as the job description you are applying for, if possible.
- Use bullet points.
- Be honest.
- List your technical qualifications in a 'Qualifications Summary' at the top.
- Include whether you are a US Citizen or require sponsorship.
- \*Make sure there is no typos or grammatical errors!\*
- Do Not call your resume file "Resume.doc" or anything else except something including your name.

You would be surprised how many resumes I receive that are incomplete. If your resume doesn't have a First Name AND Last Name, for example, I won't read any further. I understand if you don't want to include your street address for privacy purposes, but I need to at least know City and State.

If you have a long work history, include only information from the last 10-15 years of your career. Unless you have a particularly notable achievement from decades ago, that experience is no longer relevant and only makes your resume longer than it needs to be.

Eliminate filler words - but use keywords that match the job description. I might be scanning for "SAS Visual Analytics" for example, or "SAS DI Studio." Tailor your resume to each job listing to make your skills and qualifications more relevant to the position. When editing your resume, try to use the same terminology the company uses, and in the same order the company uses it in the job listing.

The resume should speak to what value you can bring to the organization. Try to demonstrate how you can help the company, and how it can expect to benefit. Keep in mind that most resumes are not printed on paper any more. The resume will most likely be read on a computer screen. Fancy graphics and non-traditional resumes are cumbersome. Keep it clean and easy to read.

## COVER LETTERS FOR THE WIN

So now you have a LinkedIn profile AND a resume. Do you still need a cover letter? Yes.

I like a cover letter. If we have an established relationship and we have worked together in the past then a formal cover letter probably isn't necessary. But if we only shook hands once, and it was 5 years ago, then I do appreciate some information in the body of the e-mail that tells me why I should open the attached resume. Ideally, your cover letter should no more than two or three paragraphs. Make one or two points about why you are a match perfect for the job or company, or what you've accomplished in similar positions in the past.

I get a lot of inquiries that say things like, "I'm applying to your job posting." As an external recruiter, I work with multiple companies simultaneously, and often have many job openings at once. It is appreciated when you are specific about which position you are applying for. Express a high level of interest and knowledge about the job. The cover letter is also a great place to explain any discrepancies or gaps in employment. Also, in your signature it's nice if you include your phone number, and the best time to reach you during the day.

## INTERVIEW TIPS THAT WILL GET YOU HIRED

The things that we have been discussing thus far - tracking job trends, networking, having a great LinkedIn profile, having a fantastic resume and cover letter – have brought you to this moment. You have made it through the initial obstacles and you're invited to go on-site for a personal interview. This is the final step before you get an offer letter.

### Interview Tips at a Glance:

- Do your homework. Search online for resumes and profiles of people who work at the company.
- Research the company, and its competitors, before the interview.
- Dress professionally. Wear a suit, even if the company is more casual.
- Arrive on time (5-10 minutes early is on time).
- If the job is advertised, or you have a job description, analyze the required skills to figure out what you will be doing if hired.
- Have some prepared answers to common questions that tell a story about your accomplishments.
- Be aware of body language.
- Show enthusiasm for the job.
- Follow up with a prompt "thank you" note via e-mail the same day.

The fact is, unless you've been job-hopping every two years, your interview skills are probably out of practice. A job interview is a sales call. It's about selling you, your experiences, skills, and talent for the role. I am frequently asked, "What is the client looking for in the interview?" and "How should I prepare?"

Before your first encounter with anyone from the company, you should have read all you reasonably can about the business. Check out the on-line LinkedIn profiles of the people you are schedule to be speaking with. At this stage of the process, the prospective employer already knows that you have the required technical skills. Now they want to get to know your personality. They are trying to discern how you might handle stress, how you present yourself, and how you interact. Try to relax, smile, have positive body language, maintain good eye contact, and be yourself.

### **The 80/20 Rule**

When interviewing, remember that confidence is key. The hiring manager is determining not only if you can do the job, but also if you have the personality to get along with other members of the group. It is recommended that you listen more than you talk. The 80/20 Rule states that in an interview situation, ask questions 20% of the time and listen 80% of the time. Being overly talkative during the interview can make you come across as being desperate or aggressive. On the other hand, being too quiet during the interview might give the impression that you are distant and aloof – even if you're not. Although it can be confusing, try to understand the difference between confidence and arrogance. Be humble.

Without going overboard, show that you are excited about the possibility of joining the company. Be prepared with a good answer to the question: why are you interested in this role? Please note that first encounters and early interviews are not the time to talk about money or vacation time.

### **Body Language**

Be aware of body language. Folding your arms will make you seem closed off. Don't crack your knuckles, play with your hair, or fidget. Put your phone away and silence it. Don't lean back in your chair or get too casual. Don't invade the interviewer's space. Try to sit upright with a straight back and maintain good eye contact.

Universal turn-offs during interviews include: lack of enthusiasm, bad mouthing former employers, and generally coming across as a negative or curmudgeonly person. Try not to come across as a know-it-all. You should seem competent but not arrogant. I also suggest that you come prepared with some key stories. Before the interview try to think about some examples of times when you solved a problem, acted as a leader, or were the ever-sought-after team player. This will help you to nail the obvious questions and boost your confidence through any questions that you are less prepared for. The bottom line is that companies hire people they like, people they feel comfortable with, and whom they feel understand their needs.

## **CONCLUSION**

Despite reports to the contrary, the hiring process has been growing longer, with more steps and delays between the time people apply for jobs and receive offers. People mistakenly believe that being likeable comes from natural, unteachable traits – the good looking, the fiercely social, and the incredibly talented. In reality, being likeable is under your control, and it's a matter of Emotional Intelligence.

### **Ways to Strengthen Your Social Skills, at a Glance:**

- Become more empathetic – try seeing things from the other person's point of view.
- Pay Attention to non-verbal communication.
- Listen to what others have to say.
- Hone your persuasion skills.
- Ovoid office drama.

Emotionally Intelligent people are perceived as trustworthy, motivated, decisive and hardworking. They are also more likely to receive promotions and pay increases. Seventy-one percent of employers say that they value Emotional Intelligence over IQ, according to a recent CareerBuilder survey.

Many people assume that the job hunt is a quick process but the reality is that it can be upwards of six months. The elephant in the room, of course, is that the ideal way for a successful person to entertain further possibilities is through a relationship with a professional recruiter. Recruiters often have exposure to the hidden job market, and we can help you to find jobs that you might not otherwise know about. Networking is our full-time job, and we provide advice on your resume and cover letter. We know hiring managers personally, and know things beyond a basic job description, like culture and benefits. We can brag on your behalf, and many times we can negotiate a higher salary.

Regardless of whether you choose to work with an industry recruiter, or go it alone, try to have fun with the process. The best thing that you can do to bring your career to the next level is to remain proactive. Attend industry conferences, network, practice your “elevator speech,” have a solid on-line presence, write a great resume and have prepared answers to popular interview questions. Remember that every interaction is an interview, and always try to keep your sense of humor.

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