



Executive in Transition Preparedness Checklist

The aim of this document is to help IERG members in transition know the steps they need to take to be ready for a proactive job search—beyond a mere resume update. If you are facing a career transition, you can use this checklist to prepare for job search success and assess your readiness and appeal as a candidate. More than a list of items to gather, it offers information to help you gauge the efficacy of your current tools and additional tools that you may wish to consider.

Should you feel that you need professional support in tackling any of the items listed, consider reaching out to a certified executive resume writer or career coach.

Target Identification

It can be incredibly difficult to position yourself effectively in your career documents if you have not given careful thought to what you want to do next. You will want to answer the following questions:

- What position titles, business challenges, organizations, and industries are the best fit for my experience, and which are the most appealing to me?
- What will be most important to the business leaders hiring someone for those titles and challenges or in those organizations and industries?
- Are my talents and qualifications aligned with the needs?
- What are my “non-negotiables” for my next position? What would I be willing to give up for the right fit?

Executive Resume

Rather than simply updating your resume with the most recent job experience, ask yourself:

- Is my resume an old-fashioned template or is it fresh and modern?
- Is it optimized for the applicant tracking software used to filter candidates?
- Does it feature a strong, compelling, and memorable brand that differentiates me from other highly qualified executive candidates?
- Does it precisely position me for the types of business challenges I want to take on next?
- Does it feature details of how I have added business value in each of my prior roles?
- Are my achievements and successes quantified?
- Have I told my story succinctly (max 3 pages)?
- Is it tailored to the geographic area where I am conducting my search?
- Has it been professionally proofread by a native speaker of the language in which it is written?

LinkedIn Profile

Your LinkedIn profile is a prominent networking and job search tool. To maximize the effectiveness of LinkedIn, you must be well connected, have a search-engine-optimized profile that is interesting to read and invites connection, and you must regularly engage with others by liking, commenting, and sharing.

To ensure that your LinkedIn profile is prepared for a search, ask yourself:

- Have I included a tasteful professional headshot? (Note: profiles with photos get 21x more views and 9x more connection requests.)
- Does my LinkedIn profile complement my executive resume and convey consistent information?
- Is my entire profile (in particular the Headline, About section, the last 3 Experience entries, and Skills section) keyword-rich and search engine optimized so that my profile will appear toward the top of the list when someone is searching for my expertise?
- Does it feature an information-packed Headline that positions me for the types of roles I want?
- Is my About section a compelling story of my experience and capabilities as related to my goals?
- Have I included all 50 skills?
- Do I have at least 3 recommendations from former colleagues, bosses, or team members?
- Has it been professionally proofread by a native speaker of the language in which it is written?

Executive Biography, Short Bio, and Micro-Bio

Standard executive bios (1-page length) can be used for websites and online portfolios, as a leave-behind for interviews, as a networking tool, or to offer someone who may be introducing you for a speech, presentation, or media interview. A shorter version (1-2 paragraphs) can be used to populate your IERG or other online profile, and a micro-bio (2-3 sentences) can be used as a byline if you publish blog entries.

To ensure that your bios are effective, ask yourself:

- Does the reader instantly understand who I am and where I fit in? (organizational level, industry, expertise)
- Does it offer a brief overview of my background, providing proof of my expertise as related to my goals?
- Does it convey my passion?
- Is it succinctly written, avoiding dense paragraphs and run-on sentences?
- Has it been professionally proofread by a native speaker of the language in which it is written?

Cover Letter or E-Note

Whether you are planning to contact companies directly in response to job advertisements, reach out to executive search firms, or simply leverage your network to obtain introductions to team builders, you will need to develop your message in the form of an email (or formal letter if asked to submit one). The most important thing to remember is that less is more. You will likely be attaching your resume or bio, so no need to get into details. The objective is to entice the reader to open your attachment or reach out to learn more.

To ensure that your letter or message is effective, ask yourself:

- Is it brief (no more than a half page)?
- Are my paragraphs short, crisp, and to the point?
- Can my reader instantly understand who I am and why I am contacting them?
- Do I provide enticing information that will make the reader want to learn more, such as a brief list of distinctions, qualifications, or impressive career milestones?
- Has it been professionally proofread by a native speaker of the language in which it is written?

Elevator Pitch

If you are ever asked to introduce yourself or to answer the question: "Tell me about yourself," in a job interview, you will need a strong, memorable, and natural elevator pitch. Although you will not literally be reading it to someone, it should be carefully drafted, rehearsed, and practiced until it becomes second nature.

- Is my pitch limited to no more than 350 words?

- Does it quickly inform listeners of where I fit in and what I am an expert in?
- Is it relatable to my audience? Does it identify specific business pain points that I can resolve?
- When I've practiced my pitch, does it result in questions, interest, and a desire to learn more?
- Does my pitch make it easy for people to introduce me to others and explain what I do?

Company/Organization Target List

A target list can come in handy for a number of “cold” and “warm” job search approaches. You can use it to monitor websites regularly for newly posted positions or to send direct letters to organizations—even if no position has been posted. You can also use it as a warm-lead-cultivation tool, approaching your network with it with the objective of identifying contacts and leads within the organizations on your list and/or building upon your target list. You can also identify internal recruiters within the organizations on LinkedIn and connect with them.

Networking Brief & Accompanying Note

This one-page document has some parallels to the resume in that it contains contact information and summary information about your background, experience, expertise, and career highlights. But unlike a resume, it also includes information about your preferred roles and functions, your target-market characteristics, and your target list of companies/organizations. Style-wise, it should align—in terms of look-and-feel—with the resume and other career documents in your portfolio.

You can send this document to your network, along with a brief message explaining how they can use it—primarily to help you identify new contacts within the organizations and markets you are targeting. It is best to ask for help in *expanding your network* rather than help in identifying job opportunities.

References/Reference Letters

While you may wish to wait until you have a job interview before asking for a reference letter tailored to the opportunity you want, you'll want to make sure you have the individuals identified whom you plan to use as references and have their prior permission and/or commitment to do so.

Online Identity Audit

Whether you need to build your digital image because you don't exist online, or you need to eliminate information that may cause an employer to reject you, managing your online identity is crucial and should happen before you apply for any positions. Ask yourself:

- What do employers find when they Google me?
- Are there damaging or discrediting images or information that I can delete on social media or other sites?
- Have I deleted all posts, shares, or comments that display controversial or extreme political, social, or religious viewpoints?
- Are there discrepancies in the information that I plan to provide on my resume or other career documents?
- Do I have content that supports my claim of expertise? If not, what outlets are there to create it?

Interview Preparation

Interview opportunities may arise at any stage in your job search, so do not wait to prepare yourself. Well before your big day, ask yourself:

- Have I thoroughly researched the challenges and opportunities facing the organization and its industry or market?
- Do I have an elevator pitch prepared so that I can ace the “Tell me about yourself” question?

- Do I have a clear idea of the value I can bring to the organization, and what differentiates me from other exceptionally qualified candidates?
- Do I have specific examples of CAR stories (Challenge, Action, Results) prepared that I can bring up in the interview to support my candidacy?
- Am I ready to respond to challenging, situational, or behavioral questions?
- Am I prepared with insightful questions?
- Have I drafted a post-interview thank-you letter that I can adapt to the opportunity and send within 24 hours of my interview?

If you have doubts about your ability to interview well or simply want to be as prepared as possible, seek the guidance and support of a career coach specialized in interview coaching.

Thought Leadership

It will be difficult to tick this item off of your list because it is something that *should perpetually remain* on your to-do list. Authoring articles, blog posts, and presentations at conferences and events, as well as building relationships and sharing knowledge with other influencers are ways to demonstrate that you are a reputable expert. Do not wait until you are facing a career transition to position yourself as a thought leader—and do not stop once you've landed a new role.

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