

THE DIY HEADHUNTER

Taking a slightly different approach, former headhunter Darrell Gurney of Marina del Rey teaches his predominantly Orange County clients how to take charge and become their own headhunters.

"I help people brand themselves and empower them to manage themselves," Gurney says.

He calls his approach a "backdoor marketing campaign," which gets clients in to meet with potential employers without going in through traditional front-door methods.

Gurney's program [careerguy.com] involves six sessions and three phases that take between six weeks to two or three months (*depending on the client's needs and schedule*) and includes some testing and organic processes in which "clients can see themselves from a mile high."

He begins by digging into his clients' career past to see their patterns, particularly the things they enjoyed doing.

"You can mine your past for future potential," Gurney says. "Certain patterns and threads show you who you are, regardless of the industry."

After a career-review session, Gurney provides a written summary of what's working: What are the threads of success? What needs attention, and what are the next steps? What would you do if money or career were not issues? Gurney then develops a branding-and-packaging program, including a resume and elevator speech. He encourages clients to meet and do research by talking to others in their desired field, which may be vastly different from their current career.

"By meeting people this way, they often come up with ways to merge their skills with their passion," Gurney says. "I set them up into a campaign and work with them. Good opportunities come up all the time."



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KNOW WHAT YOU WANT - GET WHAT YOU WANT

Once you've done the work and identified what you want out of your career and your next position – and you've networked, applied or interviewed for your ideal position – you need to "close the deal," literally and figuratively.

Rick Hernandez, another highly sought-after Southern California career coach and the president of Syntesis Worldwide, echoes the previous advice and also grooms his clients in the art of the negotiation.

"After you've identified your personal brand, what you want and what you bring to the table, you need to go into negotiations knowing your audience," Hernandez says. "Every situation is different, and the worst thing you can do is come in unprepared. Everyone will be a little nervous, and even CEOs and HR executives aren't accustomed to negotiating for themselves very often."

Negotiations are always about win-win. Understand that the person you are working with has a budget allotted for the position,

but you must also know the market value of your position.

"Find out from friends and others what you should be making in the position you're interviewing for, independent of what your current salary is," Hernandez says. "Then reframe the discussion to 'What is my market value?' and don't sell yourself short, even if your last or current salary is significantly lower than the market value.

"Finding a job is a mental game," he adds. "We help ourselves by keeping our power and not allowing our past conditions to dictate what we're worth."

The ruins of the recession have left many on rocky or uncertain paths. There is no reason we need to stay on one that isn't serving us with our best, most productive work opportunity. If your compass just spins while your determination wanes, a coach can help you discover your real value and inspire you to seek out your true career identity.