

# Nine Questions to Answer Before Making an HRD Career Move

By DAVID W. BRINKERHOFF

**Q.** How can I market myself?

**A.** Develop a planned process for your job search. The search for a new position should be treated as a full-time job. If you have access to career counseling or outplacement services, use them. If you don't have such services, develop a personal marketing plan like one you would use for a new product. Identify the market, make contacts and sell yourself.

Friends, relatives, ASTD placement services and recruiting firms might be part of your marketing support team. A good

**A.** Define what you want to be doing and where you want to be at a certain point in the future. Set career goals and make decisions about family, geography, education and salary appropriate to your goals.

Decide whether you want to become the best HRD practitioner there is or branch out to become vice-president of personnel. You also might consider entering the line organization, as a manager of marketing services, for example. This switch is becoming more common for HRD people, who now spend a great deal of time with members of the line management and who are well acquainted with the corporate culture.

Many HRD professionals impede their own long-term career progress by refusing to accept positions outside certain geographic areas. If this is your attitude, think it through again. Perhaps a relatively brief period in another city ultimately will lead to a position you really want in your preferred location.

Many former corporate practitioners have become consultants. If this is your long-term goal, plan for it. Don't become a consultant overnight simply because you are unemployed.

**Q.** What are typical salaries?

**A.** Accurate salary surveys are available. For example, *Training & Development Journal* published "Compensation in Training and Development: An

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resume is essential. Use the format with which you are most comfortable, and make it your own. No one else knows you as well as you know yourself.

**Q.** What are my long-term career goals?

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Update" in May 1983. In addition to looking at such surveys, you can ask members of the ASTD chapter in the area where you are seeking a position and review newspaper ads to get a general range. Also, most recruiting firms that work in HRD can provide an estimate of appropriate salaries.

If you are pursuing a position in your own geographic area, expect a 15- to 20-percent increase when changing jobs. If you are looking for a position that will require relocation, a good resource is the Bureau of Labor Statistics, which publishes cost-of-living and salary information for many areas in the U.S. For an international position, you may have to rely on information supplied by the company that is recruiting you. Don't be deceived by salaries that are inflated by special allowances and housing expenses, however. These additional funds may not be available if you return to the U.S. branch of the company, and your salary actually may drop.

**Q.** What positions are available in HRD?

**A.** Learning about the positions that HRD practitioners hold can be fun. Read ads, establish a job network and use others who are looking for jobs as resources. Give copies of your resume to business colleagues and friends to let people know that you are looking for a position. Also, most HRD professional societies have some kind of placement service.

**Q.** What are my skills and how competitive are they?

**A.** Rather than attempting to define the skills that an HRD practitioner needs, answer the question: "What skills do I have that make me good?" Consult ASTD's *Models for Excellence* (available through ASTD Press), and put together a list of your competencies. Also, describe your successes, what you did and why it was successful. Ask another person in a position similar to the one you are seeking exactly what he or she does.

Skills requirements vary from position to position and company to company. Put yourself in the recruiter's or HRD manager's place to determine whether your skills are appropriate for the position you want. After an interview, ask yourself, your fellow job hunters and your

recruiter how your skills stacked up against other candidates'.

**Q.** Which companies value training and trainers?

**A.** The authors of *In Search of Excellence* list the top U.S. companies and discuss the training programs many of the firms conduct. If you cannot work for one of the corporations Peters and Waterman list, look for a company that seems to have similar values.

Find out the size of the company's training staff, but remember that size can be deceiving. Is the entire staff involved in management training, or do they also manage skills, supervisory and customer training? In addition, investigate the turnover in the HRD staff and the company's growth potential. If the company is growing rapidly, you may have an opportunity to help create an excellent company.

**Q.** How do I find out about positions if I'm a senior trainer?

**A.** For the purposes of this article, the senior trainer is one who has been in the field for at least 10 years and who makes at least \$60,000 per year. If you are a senior practitioner, use your own network of professional contacts and societies, but be discreet. Make the HRD community aware of your accomplishments by speaking before professional groups and publishing in professional journals.

**Q.** What are the advantages of using an executive search firm?

**A.** Search firms can give you access to companies that do not advertise positions. Recruiters also should know details about an employer and position you are considering. Many firms also offer assistance with your resume.

**Q.** Should I look for a new position before I leave my present one?

**A.** Yes. It is difficult for a person who is working full time to look for a new position, but a large number of employers will not consider you if you are unemployed. To make the situation easier, try to arrange for interviews late in the business day or on Saturdays. Get references from persons outside your company, or choose confidants within the organization carefully. If you send out unsolicited resumes, be aware that the word will probably get

back to your company that you are looking.



## Resource Materials

### General Directories

**Middle Market Directory** (Dun and Bradstreet)—Lists American companies with net worth of greater than \$500,000 and less than \$1 million.

**Million Dollar Directory** (Dun and Bradstreet)—Lists American companies with net worth of \$1 million and more.

**Standard & Poor's Register of Corporations, Directors and Executives**—Alphabetical list of companies. Contains information on officers and directors of the companies.

**Thomas' Register of American Manufacturers**—Multi-volume directory listing information about manufacturers. Volume 7 contains an alphabetical list of companies.

### American Subsidiaries of Foreign Companies

**Directory of Foreign Firms Operating in the U.S.**

### Service-Oriented Companies

**American Register of Exporters and Importers.**

**Directory of Franchising Organizations.**

**Polk's Bank Directory.**

**Security Dealers of North America.**

**Standard Directory of Advertising Agencies.**

### Information on Companies

**Annual Reports to Shareholders.**

**F&S Index of Corporations and Industries.**

**10-K Corporate Reports filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission.**

**Wall Street Journal Index.**