SoftEd

A SOFTED CAREERPRO FIELD GUIDE

Job Search Is a Sales Process

A working job aid — stop applying, start selling.

PART 1 **Build the offer** — know the product and the market before you pitch

★ REFRAME IT
You are not a job seeker. You are **a business of one** running a revenue engine.

★ SELL IT
Relationships outsell resumes. Build them before you need them.

★ TRACK IT
What gets tracked gets moved. Momentum is the metric.

Features tell. Benefits sell.

Your resume lists **features**: skills, certifications, tools. Employers buy **benefits**: outcomes they can bank on.

- **"I cut onboarding time 30% in two quarters"** lands. A list of tools does not.
- Outcomes need not be revenue — satisfaction, attrition, quality, test scores, uptime all count.
- Translate every feature into the outcome it produced. **That translation is the product.**

Every job is measured by something. Find the measures your role was judged on and tell the story of moving them.

The four parts of your value

Four answers you can give without hesitating:

Problems you solve
The pain you remove from a business.

Outcomes you deliver
Results with numbers attached.

Proof you can show
Stories, artifacts, references.

Your difference
Why you over the next candidate — quantified.

People believe micro-expertise told through a story. Keep each story to 30 seconds: what you did, how, and the outcome.

Aim: your TAM and your ICP

TAM is everywhere you could work — useful for sizing, too broad to aim at. **ICP** is where you win: the slice where the problems you solve match the problems they feel.

- **20 target companies and 5 named decision-makers beats 200 applications.**
- Chase the **problem**, not the title. Titles vary; pain does not.
- Build the target list **before** you touch the resume.

Sell to the pain, not the process

- The **hiring manager owns the pain**. HR owns the process. Recruiters work for the employer.
- Build real relationships with gatekeepers — but never confuse the gatekeeper with the buyer.
- A well-matched contact that goes quiet is not a loss. Kept warm, it becomes the job you want in three years.

Your 60-second product audit

- **What outcome from your last 12 months would a hiring manager pay for?** If you cannot name it, your buyer cannot either.
- **What would your last boss say you are the go-to person for?** That is your positioning. Their words, not yours.

Hired
Referred candidates are more likely to get the offer

Paid
Referred hires start with a wage advantage

Kept
Referred hires stay with the firm longer

A relationship attached to your name changes your odds. Across nine large firms, referred workers were 10–30% less likely to quit and earned slightly higher wages. Spray and pray moves none of these numbers — it bets everything on the most crowded lane and builds no momentum.

Source: Brown, Setren & Topa, J. Labor Economics (2016); Burks, Cowgill, Hoffman & Housman, Quarterly J. Economics (2015).

Where the engine shows up

After a networking event

Five new contacts go into the tracker **same day** — or they are gone. The payoff usually lives on the third or fourth rung of introductions.

A recruiter calls

Build the relationship — and remember who they work for. Qualify the fit fast, and use every contact to open the next door.

The 50+ objection

The quiet worries: expense, runway, habits. Sell your ability to **teach, not just learn**. Consider fractional — it makes you easy to absorb.

PART 2 **Run the engine** — the offer, the routes in, and the pipeline

Your value proposition — four moves

Your offer = **value proposition + pricing**. Both take homework, not guesswork. Build the pitch in four moves:

1 **Who I help**
Name your ICP in their own words.

2 **The problem I solve**
The pain they feel every month.

3 **The outcome I deliver**
A result with a number attached.

4 **The proof**
Where you have done it before.

SOUNDS LIKE

"I work with operations leaders at mid-size manufacturers whose teams lose days every month to manual reporting. I build the process and train the team, and reporting time drops by half. I have done it at my last two companies — happy to show you how."

Five routes to market — W-2 is not the only door

ROUTE	USE IT WHEN…	ON THE GROUND
Full-Time W-2	Your ICP is hiring for exactly what you sell. Highest stability, slowest, most crowded door.	*The default — and the most competition.*
Fractional	They need the capability, not the headcount. Easy to absorb: no benefits load, no long runway.	*A company that needs a CMO ten hours a week, not forty.*
Contract-to-Hire	Both sides want to lower the risk of a bad match.	*Six months in the seat beats six interview rounds.*
Consulting Project	You need proof fast, or they need one problem solved.	*Leave with a result and a reference.*
Strategic Volunteering	You need positioning, access, or leadership proof. Deliberate — not charity.	*Lead an initiative where your ICP already gathers.*

Three lead sources feed every route: job listings (table stakes), networking (highest-converting — give first, ask second), and recruiters (build the relationship before you need it).

Run the pipeline — 5 stages

1 **Prospect**
Build the target list from your ICP.

2 **Connect**
Referral, recruiter, or direct. Point-of-view message, not a resume.

3 **Qualify**
Information interview. Real fit or not?

4 **Advance**
Interview rounds. Always set the next step.

5 **Close**
Offer, negotiation, decision. Log it all.

Track six fields per opportunity: company, contact, type of contact, last meeting, outcome, next action. A lost deal is never deleted — it moves to your career database and stays warm.

Four habits that build momentum

- **Track.** Every contact, every touch, every outcome.
- **Follow up.** Within 48 hours, every time. The first of six to respond often blocks the other five.
- **Advance.** Never leave a conversation without a next step.
- **Multiply.** Ten live deals beat one perfect one.

Get to no fast — and price with research

- **Hope is not a business strategy.** A stalled deal eats the attention your live deals need. Qualify hard, take the no, keep nurturing what is real.
- **Pricing is research, not feelings.** Know your market rate (ranges, total package) and your walk-away number — decided before the conversation, never during it.

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