



This article has been prepared exclusively for the readers of the CII website and its job bank. Susan Shey Dvorch is a partner with Shey-Harding Associates and can be reached at sue@shey-harding.com or visit www.shey-harding.com.

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Where are the jobs?

As recruiters in the transportation industry, we've seen what we hope is the bottom of the job market. Our firm's founder, Deborah Shey Harding, a 30+ year industry veteran, said the past year surpasses all previous downturns from an employment perspective. We've already seen some encouraging signs of recovery, starting in Q3 2009, and are hoping (like the rest of you) that the trend continues.

In this article, we'll focus on where the industry jobs are today and how to get the attention of the recruiter or employer when you do apply for a position.

You probably wouldn't believe me if I told you that some jobs have consistently been impossible to fill in the past year. Well, it's true, but all the bad news of downsizings and company closures in the more visible and traditional segments of the marketplace have been overshadowing. We've found that 3PLs and freight forwarders are trying everything they can to attract qualified sales personnel to their firms, but the right candidates have been virtually impossible to find.

We've had many conversations with our client companies, their competitors, and other recruiters to try to learn why the talent for this sector is so hard to come by. A few key issues seem consistent:

1. Top producing sales professionals who work for stable 3PLs and freight forwarding companies simply aren't leaving their jobs in this challenging environment. The grass may not be greener and the next stop might very well be a risky one.
2. We all know many companies have shut their doors or have downsized significantly. However, some of our clients are still reluctant to look seriously at a resume that shows more than one short job tenure, even if it's easily explained by a company closure or reduction in force. They are concerned that if a sales executive was a stellar producer, why would the previous employer let him or her go?

3. Hiring companies want a very specific set of experience – candidates who have worked in the specified segment of the industry and have a least a few years experience in it. The majority are unwilling to consider training someone that hails from a different sector of the transportation business.

The good news is that if you have sales experience in a 3PL and freight forwarding environment, the jobs are out there. The bad news is that your job history and reputation needs to be nothing short of impeccable. Even with so little talent, our clients have shown they won't risk bringing someone on with short job tenures and too much movement.

Here are a few suggestions on how to get your resume noticed when you do apply for any job:

1. **Are you qualified?** Make sure your background meets the minimum qualifications for the position. No matter how strong your background is, if the employer requires a degree, a certain number of years in the business or experience in a specific sector (3PL, ocean carrier, freight forwarding, etc.), they really DO want that as a baseline.
2. **DO follow up:** If you do meet the criteria specified, absolutely follow up with a call or email to the employer or the recruiter. The volume of resumes HR departments and recruiters receive is daunting and your call may prompt the attention your application deserves. Believe it or not, few people actually follow up after emailing their resume. If you're a strong contender who really does fit well into the requirements specified, show your initiative and tenacity.
3. **Apply for jobs at the appropriate level:** If you have been a director or vice president and apply for an entry level position, you seriously risk your reputation by applying for a job for which you are so far overqualified. Make sure the employer or recruiter knows you and check in periodically, but maintain your professional integrity by applying for jobs that are logical for you and your career path.

We look forward to more opportunities to share our thoughts with you. If you have any ideas for submissions, please let us know!

Happy 2010!