

The ETP Network Career Management War Room

By Chip Hartman, March 10, 2008



Politicians do it. Business executives do it. Attorneys involved in protracted litigation do it. Professional sports teams do it with such finesse that they make politicians, business executives, and attorneys look like rookies by comparison.

What is it that these people do? They are masters at fighting high-stakes battles (those in which losing is not an option) using the time-tested military institution called the war room.

The basic premise of a war room is simple: Through meticulous planning, you gain an ever-increasing strategic and tactical advantage over an opponent by winning a sufficient number of individual battles to ensure victory in the war as a whole.

If you find yourself stalled in a directionless job search, consider using a career management war room. This has nothing to do with NORAD-style, Hollywood-enhanced command centers filled with monitors, consoles, and wall-to-wall high tech gadgetry. In fact the career management war room is not even a room at all; it's a behavioral model in which you make the decision to aggressively eliminate all obstacles that stand between you and a successful landing at your next position.

To help refine the analogy, let's use the following reasoning:

1. In the 21st century job search, you are in competition with hundreds, perhaps thousands, of other individuals for the same position. Just as a new company must differentiate itself from the competition in order to survive in the marketplace, a job searcher carries a similar burden in battling for top position on the resume pile. So yes, indeed, you are engaged in a form of warfare. It's time to start viewing it that way.
2. Anything you can do to achieve this differentiation will be well worth the effort once you begin unpacking your boxes in that nice new corner office. As long as you're willing to commit to its rigorous approach to success, the war room can help you achieve this differentiation in the following ways:
 - It will require you to get organized in a way you may not have thought possible. That's because there's no such thing as a disorganized war room. You're either "in it to win it" – or you're not in it at all.
 - It will force you to adjust your mental outlook to a higher plane of commitment to personal goals so that you will become relentless in your quest for success.
 - It will demand that your ETP Network career management skills (e.g., ABCs of the Job Search, Value Proposition Proposals, etc...) are fine-tuned to perfection.

- It will teach you the value of regularly assessing your status and making mid-course corrections to your originally charted career plan so that the ultimate goal (i.e., landing the position) not only remains in constant view, but actually gets closer each day.
- It will force you to learn, develop, and adopt mental toughness so that you are able to deal effectively and appropriately with all outcomes, even those that may be less than favorable.

The easiest way to describe the war room model is to set up a checklist of tasks, responsibilities, and objectives that collectively make up a "battle plan" for making dramatic improvements in your personal career management efforts. Think of it as a personalized plan for gaining a significant strategic advantage over the competition.

The following illustrative checklist contains examples of tasks that will add value to your job search. Each ETP Network member needs to decide which of these items (if any) should be included in his or her own personalized war room plan.

The ETP Network War Room Checklist

- ✓ Build structure into your daily schedule if it isn't there already and stick to it faithfully. For example: Up at 7am, lunch at noon, dinner at 6pm, an hour or two in the evening to finish up and then some time for R & R with friends and family. Don't forget a healthy diet, exercise, and restful sleep.
- ✓ Evaluate your skills, abilities, work experience, values, and work preferences in order to achieve good matches for advertised positions. Make sure you know what job title fits the work you've done and like to do, what you call it, and what the marketplace calls it.
- ✓ Have a written career plan and a written career backup plan.
- ✓ Know, understand, and internalize the ETP Network Paradigm: being the CEO of ME, Inc. The more you can see yourself as being totally in charge of your career management activities, the less dependent you will become on the nameless, faceless, and uncaring members of the Unknown Network.
- ✓ Be thoroughly familiar with the four key ETP Network Goals: 1) ability to secure employment options; 2) develop a job backup plan; 3) build a network of 200+ professionals; 4) secure multiple sources of income.
- ✓ Add an average of five (5) people a day to your LinkedIn account.
- ✓ Periodically check job postings on etpnews and thebreakfastclubnj Yahoo Groups. Check other sources and make inquiries to members.
- ✓ Practice the art of connecting (i.e., "being the connector"), how to do it properly, ensuring protection of the connector, bringing value to the connection, etc...
- ✓ Develop a plan for determining the W/N/D (wants/needs/desires) of others, the basis for making great connections.
- ✓ Develop a powerful 30-second elevator speech for networking events.
- ✓ Get a set of business cards printed for networking events. Maximize the message and branding of You, Inc. on the card.

- ✓ Develop a well-organized and up-to-date roster of professional references, and make sure that those individuals can be counted on to give you glowing reports at any time.
- ✓ Read and absorb the articles posted in the etpnews Yahoo Group and also on the ETP web site. Got questions? Send them out to the group.
- ✓ Read the books that Rod has recommended over the last few months of conference calls (e.g., The Power of Positive Thinking, Social Intelligence, Networking Magic, Endless Referrals, Never Eat Alone, The Speed of Trust, Your Career - How to Make It Happen, 7 Habits of Highly Successful People).
- ✓ Actively participate in Rod Colón's conference calls. Ask questions, offer responses and opinions. Interact with the conference call team. View the calls as an opportunity to pick up ideas that can make a difference in your career management efforts.
- ✓ Demonstrate a responsibility for giving back to the group in some small way, or some large way, or some occasional but ongoing way. In other words, leave your mark on the team, and in so doing garner the recognition and support of fellow members as they gradually begin to associate your name with good, productive, team-centered efforts.
- ✓ Actively seek out individuals who would benefit from ETP Network membership; in doing so, strengthen not only your own network of contacts and connections but that of the team as a whole.
- ✓ Become adept at reading and translating job descriptions, and learn to separate job requirements from core skills (in preparation for developing effective Executive Summaries). The newly formed Value Proposition Team will soon be able to help you with this task.
- ✓ Prepare cover letter templates using your best writing style and formatting for those instances in which a rapid response to a company or organization may be necessary.
- ✓ Develop two or three versions of your resume and be ready to transform any one of them into a "relevant resume" (i.e., targeted for a specific position) to package with an appropriate Executive Summary in response to a particular job description.
- ✓ Know the ABCs of the Job Search inside out. Test your knowledge of it in this way: Could you teach it to someone else? Could you quiz a new member on its components and be confident in knowing the correct answer (e.g., "What is the significance of the 70% Rule.")?
- ✓ Become an expert user of LinkedIn, Indeed.com, Manta.com, and a wide range of other online tools. Use the ETP Network Toolbar and customize it for your most common search criteria. If you need help with toolbar customization, contact Carl Reid (creator of the ETP Network Toolbar). Commit to staying on top of technological trends.
- ✓ Register on the ETP Network Global Community, an area where you can practice some hands-on networking with other ETP Network members.
- ✓ Do what many others forget to do: Send thank you notes and cards. Recipients seldom forget who took the time out of an otherwise busy day to pause and say "thanks."

- ✓ Make your war room mobile; get comfortable operating it (safely!) while in transit. There's no need to feel chained to a desk if you have a reliable means of communication available to you.
- ✓ Consider building an online resume and/or an online portfolio. Many people are starting to see the value of having their resume available in HTML (web) format and some even decide to go for a full-blown online portfolio of their previous work (e.g., samples, exhibits, extracts, reports, etc...)
- ✓ Build a world-class schedule-tracker and contact-management database and maintain it with such precision that you can instantly track things like target dates for follow up calls, upcoming appointments and interviews, and logs of important meetings.

The Battles You Must Win

In general terms, these are the high-stakes battles you must win for which the war room approach is unquestionably helpful. Each of them requires a plan - a battle plan - in order for you to win the war (i.e., secure the position you seek by defeating your competition).

1. Battle #1: Adopt the CEO of ME, Inc. Paradigm
Don't underestimate this as a battle to be fought and won; there are still many ETP Network members who struggle with the concept simply because "old ways die hard." Incidentally, there's a good reason why this is listed as the FIRST battle. Have you figured it out?
2. Battle #2: Master the "ABCs of the Job Search"
Every step in the "ABCs" must be thoroughly understood and followed to the letter. The plan will not work if it's followed out of sequence or without a full personal commitment.
3. Battle #3: Master the "Value Proposition Proposal"
Reminder: Job description + Executive Summary + Relevant Resume = Value Proposition Model. This is the battle in which you make your case to the hiring manager for being the one candidate who is the most qualified for the position. It is here that you lay the foundation for truly differentiating yourself from the rest of the pack. The good news? If you win this battle, you've given yourself a formidable advantage over other candidates by positioning yourself as one of the select few who will move on to the interview stage.
4. Battle #4: Ace the Job Interview
The ability to "ace" a job interview doesn't come easy. You need to be focused, totally on point, nimble with your responses, and careful with your questions. You must appear relaxed at a time when your nerves may be in overdrive. Your body language, tone of voice, mannerisms, gestures, and many other factors need to function together seamlessly. If you win this battle, then victory in the war for landing the position is within your grasp.
5. Battle #5: Land the Position
Wait a minute! If you land the position, how can that be yet another battle? Haven't you just won the war? While it's true that you've won the war for the position itself, a new type of battle must be fought to prove to your new employer that you are everything - and hopefully a lot more - you said you were in the resume and interview stages. If you don't

prove that soon enough, you run the risk of accumulating undesirable "markers" that travel with you throughout your assignment and remain associated with you once you no longer have the job. So just because you've landed, don't think you're "out of the war." It may feel as though you are but that's just an illusion.

6. Battle #6: Keep Networking Alive!

After fighting for and landing a new position, many individuals make the tragic mistake of letting go of their networking efforts because they believe they've reached some type of finish line. But ETP Networking fundamentals remind us that today's global business environment no longer ensures long-tenured positions or guaranteed security. Sadly, you are just as vulnerable the day you accept a new position as the day you left your last one. The best strategy? As soon as you settle in to the routine of your new assignment, make it a point to reconnect with the network that helped you to land and re-engage the connection machinery that helped you get to your destination. In short: There should never be any networking lapses or time-outs. Along with eating, breathing, and personal hygiene, networking is something you do every day.

Go For The Jugular

Using a war room approach may sound extreme, but consider this: Others who are competing with you for the same position will not hesitate to do whatever it takes to advance their cause; why would you consider doing any less and still expect a fair chance of getting the position?

But the real question is this: What holds you back from an aggressive posture in your job search? Shyness? Depression? A sense of being overwhelmed by it all? Give the war room approach some serious thought and begin thinking and planning like a 4-star general. Then go for the jugular.

You have everything to lose.

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