

JOB SEARCH

Change Your Industry, Change Your Luck

Job seekers frustrated with their progress in one market can migrate skills to another, if they go about it in the right way.

By **Kevin Fogarty**
November 17, 2008

WHEN AN INDUSTRY'S JOB MARKET CRASHES as hard as financial services has recently, top recruiters see a flood of applications from people eager to get out of a tight market and apply their skills in another.

It's a good tactic, and one that can enrich and extend your career, according to some veteran industry switchers. Switching industries tends to be easier for more junior people, career experts told TheLadders, and smoother for those who have moved from one industry to another throughout their careers than for those who have worked in only one market.

But it is doable, even for senior executives with a long history in one industry and even in a market in which employers are demanding very specific sets of skills, according to Robert Hawthorne, president of Hawthorne Executive



Search, a member of TheLadders' community of recruiters.

About a quarter to a third of the placements in which Hawthorne is involved will entail a client hiring someone who has little or no experience in the hiring manager's industry for an executive slot, Hawthorne said.

"I call it the best-athlete scenario," he said. "If you get a real star, someone with a legacy of accomplishment, who has a passion for what they do, I'll tell a company they should interview this person anyway."

"We have seen a lot of career changing over the past 18 months," according to Michael Neece, chief strategy officer of PongoResume, an automated resume-writing service, and InterviewMastery.com, a job-interview training site. "Upwards of 27 percent of our clients are either changing industries or coming back into the workforce after time away."

The recommendations of trusted recruiters (who may have worked with the same set of employers for years and are intimately familiar with the company's needs and culture) are incredibly important for targeting jobs at the very high end of the job market, according to "Sharon," a member of TheLadders and former top-level marketing executive with Bear Stearns and other Wall Street companies who left her last job at an investment bank voluntarily in the spring.

"Retained recruiters will have a team for each industry," Sharon said. "The person in financial services can come to a meeting with recruiters specializing in other areas and say, 'I have this great candidate in financial services who wants to

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make a change,' and pass that person along to the technology group" or other appropriate departments.

I Am the Product

But it's not necessary to get heroic assistance from an outside source or from one recruiter who's a particular fan to make the transition successfully, according to Clark Christensen, a career-long industry switcher who is currently chief financial officer of Atlanta-based PS Energy Group Inc.

"All other things being equal, the industry experience does help, but not so much that it trumps other factors and other skills," Christensen said. "You do have to sell to the business you're coming to that you have the skills that are necessary; and once you're in the business, you understand the industry more and get better at what you do.

"But early on I decided *I* was the product – that my skill sets and aptitudes and competencies were the product and that they could be applied in more than one industry," Christensen said.

Christensen, who started his accounting career as a consultant, moved into international auditing and accounting roles at Coca-Cola, headed up Coke's Moscow bottling operation and advanced to director level before deciding he'd rather live in the U.S. Since then he's been head of financial operations at retail-services company Miller Zell and chief financial officer of logistics at shipping-service company Global Link Logistics Inc.

Constantly marketing yourself – by taking part in local and national professional groups, networking with both old and new contacts as if you're always looking for a job, and keeping your resume fresh and available – is critical to broadening your career options and finding openings in industries outside

your own experience, Christensen said.

Function Versus Industry

Unless you're in one of the core functions of an industry – an investment analyst at a brokerage, for example, or underwriter in insurance – it's not that hard to separate your job functions from the industry in which you work, PongoResume's Neece said.

"Industry experience is highly overvalued," Neece said. "Someone could work in a core operation, but their personal core skill set is being a salesperson; when they're looking to make transitions from one industry to another, they're just looking for a way to do a similar thing in a different place."

It's also possible, Neece said, to freshen your career prospects by changing departments rather than changing employers or industries. "When I was at Fidelity, we had equity and fixed-income analysts who were tired of doing the same thing every day. One of the things people did was go into compliance, where they were charged with making

sure the composition of portfolios they'd been building was in compliance with company policies. Or you could move from the trading floor to being a recruiter looking for other people with similar skills. Take baby steps instead of a big shift."

The key to making the move successfully is to not only inventory your own skills, but to package them so they're appropriate for the industry you're targeting, according to Cheryl Palmer, certified career coach and president of CallToCareer.com.

The only way to do that is to understand how the specific

“Industry experience is highly overvalued.”
 –Michael Neece, Chief Strategy Officer, PongoResume

Tough Sell: How Specialists Can Switch Markets

You may have to knock down some roadblocks to take a new route in your career.

By Kevin Fogarty

IT'S EMINENTLY POSSIBLE EVEN for a specialist with a long history in one industry to make the switch to another, career coaches and recruiters say. But there will be some roadblocks

to overcome, especially in sectors of the economy that are especially hard-hit.

"People think, 'I've done sales in my industry; I can do this type of sales,'" according to Robert Hawthorne, president of Hawthorne Executive Search, a member of TheLadders' community of recruiters. "It's not uncommon, but they have to think, 'How can I package myself to compete with someone from this industry?'" Frankly they're not go-

ing to stack up well against a performer with experience and a track record in the industry. The out-of-industry candidate is going to be out of luck."

"Sharon," a member of TheLadders and former marketing executive with Bear Stearns, left her last job at an investment bank voluntarily in the spring and has been job-searching since August. After two months networking among hedge fund companies, she thought she'd landed a good position.

requirements of the industry you're targeting change the way you'd do your job, she said. Understanding an industry at that level isn't difficult but does require research, Palmer said, whether that means reading reports on hiring or outsourcing trends in the industry from the Bureau of Labor Statistics or taking a contact from that industry out to lunch to pick his or her brain about the job market.

"Employers don't want a long learning curve," Palmer said. "They want someone who can speak the lingo and hit the ground running. The trick is to convince them that you can contribute right away. So read trade journals, talk to insiders, and get a really good handle on what's going on in that industry and in that company in particular."

Another alternative is to become a pioneer within the same company rather than leaving to do innovative things, according to Josh Klenoff, leading career coach for TheLadders and president of JKCoaching.com.

"I had one client who didn't like the company he worked in but ended up pitching a new type of business to management and leading that himself. He was happier there than he would have been leaving for another job," Klenoff said. "One mistake people make early in their careers is that they cede management of themselves to their managers. But no manager will ever care as much about your career as you do yourself."

It's important to make a regular assessment of your job skills to keep tabs on how employable you are and think periodically about what direction you want your career to take, Palmer said. But it's critical to be able to do that analysis from a potential employer's point of view, not just your own.

"The right skill set is a good starting point, but you need to present yourself well on paper and articulate what you can do for the employer right off the bat in an interview setting," Palmer said.

Hired! Making the Industry Switch

In his move from the family plumbing business to sales, TheLadders member Dan Rozelman played to his strengths.

By Kevin Fogarty

MID-CAREER JOB SEEKERS trying to break into a new industry often complain that it feels as if they're fighting the momentum of their previous work history.

TheLadders member Dan Rozelman was contending with three generations of family history when he switched industries, first shutting down his plumbing business to sell manufacturing equipment, then to manage a staff selling glass to window manufacturers.

"Sales was always my forte," he said.

Through TheLadders, Rozelman recently found and accepted a sales management job that moves him toward the career goal he set for himself, though in a part of the business much different from the one in which he started.

Rozelman, 33, started his post-college career with a two-year stint selling truck parts across most of the Midwest before coming home to start his own plumbing business in 1998. He specialized in new construction – installing the plumbing for all the houses in a new development or new commercial or residential buildings.

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"Then the hedge funds blew up," she said. "Now I'm looking mostly in private equity, but I'm also looking at technology and other industries."

"I have 24 years in financial services at a very high level, but recruiters and connections I've spoken with have told me I'm too entrenched," Sharon said. "All the advice is to take your core competencies and just move them into some other area. A lot of people in those areas just don't want you. They see 'financial services' tattooed on your forehead, and they already have

enough people in their own areas."

Making the switch from a Wall Street firm (where both the products and the business are highly complex and don't much resemble the products in other industries) might be harder that switching from a less-arcane industry, according to Clark Christensen, a career-long industry switcher who is currently chief financial officer of Atlanta-based PS Energy Group Inc.

"Industries like that make you highly specialized, and you get paid highly for it," Christensen said. "But you've taken

a little bit of a fork in the road, and you've got to come back a bit if you're going to change directions."

The more industry-specific your knowledge or experience, however, the more difficult it is to apply them elsewhere.

"I'm not a chief financial officer," Sharon said. "A chief financial officer or accountant might have an easier time. I'd be aiming for direct sales. But, really, is a fantastic product marketer or strategist who has built sales strategies

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Behind the Numbers: Who's looking to switch?

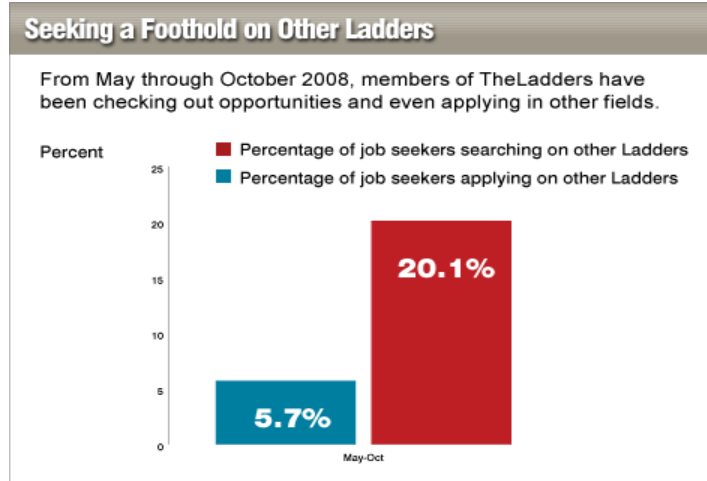
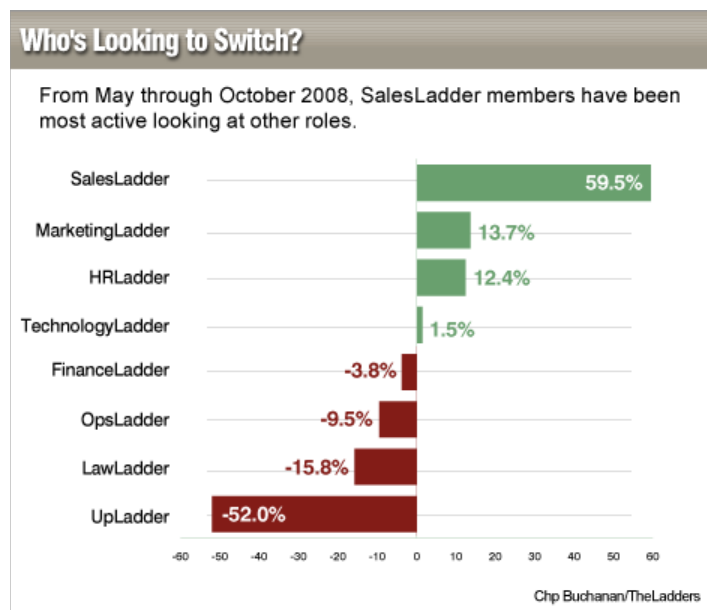
Which members of TheLadders are looking at other functions?

By Ryan Peterson, TheLadders Business Intelligence

WHETHER THEY'VE FOCUSED THEIR JOB HUNT on sales, marketing, tech, finance or elsewhere, members of TheLadders keep their eyes open for other possibilities.

Data from May through October 2008 reveals that one in five members have searched other Ladders for jobs, and 5 percent have applied for positions outside their Ladder.

SalesLadder members are far and away the most enterprising about searching elsewhere, TheLadders' data reveals, followed by marketing, HR and technology.



Around the Web: Changing Industries

The grass may be greener in another field; these online resources can help you over the fence.

By Jordan Breindel

NO QUESTION, MAKING THE TRANSITION FROM one industry to another is more daunting than the already stressful process of finding a new job. Is it worth the time, effort and risk? That can depend on the health of the industry you're in, the one you're interested in and which is closer to the kind of work you'd be doing if you really had your 'druthers. More importantly, if you've already made the decision to switch, how can you do it successfully?

Here are some resources from the Web to help make your career transition a smooth one.

- From aircraft mechanics to zookeepers, The Department of Labor's **Occupational Outlook Handbook** is a comprehensive resource on almost any job you can think of, including the nature of each position, required training, career outlook and estimated salary.

- **Professional organizations** concentrate vast information about specific career fields, including job opportunities, industry trends and employers in the professions they serve.

- OK, so getting your first AARP card in the mail on your 50th birthday was kind of a shock, and it's odd to get career advice from a group dedicated to "retired persons." Still, **AARP's National Employer Team** can help, with a network created to make it easier for mature workers to connect to companies that value their experience, talent, and abilities. Its Web site features information and listings from companies that have made a strong commitment to hiring experienced, executive professionals.

- Career coaches can reality-check your plans, pull out those repressed professional ambitions and encourage you to power over those last few hurdles to your goal. When considering a career coach, check to see that they're accredited with one of the major counseling organizations (such as the **CACREP** or

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NBCC), and that they have experience with career changes.

- Remember the aptitude test you took in high school that said you should be a park ranger? It was probably wrong, but personality assessments can help you put a name to those vague evaluations you've put on your own traits and maybe help you hone in on the job or career move that would close the existential gap you've been meaning to fill. Take the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Assessment at the **Center for Applications of Psychological Type**.

- It might have been a while since you've heard anything but donation requests from your alma mater. Nevertheless, many schools offer career services for alumni that extend far beyond the first-job search they do for students. In addition to being able to meet with a career counselor, access your alumni network and view job listings provided by your school, you should also enquire about reciprocity programs that could give you access to the career-services offices of colleges and universities, in your local area or that are particularly strong in your professional arena. **NYU Law** is one example.

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The jobs averaged around \$150,000 but ranged as high as three quarters of a million. Business was good, but his goal was to build it to the point where he could work full time on the business rather than having to go out on the job sites himself.

“My great-grandfather, my grandfather, my father and two uncles were all plumbers, so I knew that world,” he said. “My grandfather and father worked hard every day. My dad still does. But we live in Cleveland, and let me tell you: New construction ... putting the furnace in during January ... is no fun.”



Dan Rozelman

“I was doing a million a year in new construction running two crews,” Rozelman said. “I could have run 15 crews, but I couldn't find the right people to oversee the work to the level it needed to be done, to the point that I could be in the office every day rather than supervising on the job site.”

that he decided to get out of the plumbing business and focus on sales instead.

“Looking back, that was the best move I ever made, because the Cleveland housing market started to crash right after that,” Rozelman said. “A lot of the guys I knew are out of business; it's possible I would have been, too.”

Taking an inventory of his own skills, Rozelman decided his nine years in the construction business had given him enough understanding and insight that he could operate in any business closely related to it.

“My strengths were in talking to contractors, owners of contracting companies, supply houses,” Rozelman said. “I knew the lingo; understood what was going on; I knew what the end users of the product had to deal with on a daily basis.

It took six months of research and applying to online job ads related to construction equipment and capital equipment but he landed a job at a company selling manufacturing equipment to manufacturers of windows for residential

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for every type of financial product around not going to be able to market other things?”

To a certain extent, complexity is complexity, so the ability to handle the technicalities of one industry is a good indication you could do the same in another, according to Michael Neece, chief strategy officer of PongoResume, an automated resume-writing service.

Neece, who worked in human resources at Hewlett-Packard, Fidelity and publishing giant International Data Group, said the key to convincing an interviewer of your competency is to show how you mastered the complexities of your last industry and do enough research to show you under-

stand a fair amount of the subtleties of the new one as well.

“If you've made the decision to switch and are having a hard time selling it, go back to the common threads that transfer across industries,” PS Energy's Christensen said. He suggests you tell interviewers, “I was in this industry, and this is what I did, but there were 10 or 12 sub-industries in there. I learned each one, quickly to get the job done, and isn't that what you're looking for?”

“You have to get the interview, let them see the passion in your eye and show them you're not stuck and that you have these skills that make you more than your resume would suggest,” Christensen said.

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buildings.

“I didn’t just apply to everything I saw. I mostly applied for things that looked right for me,” he said. “I got a lot of interviews, and tried to make most of what I said specific to the type of sale and challenge I was applying for. I talked about how I would spec a job with the engineers, and sell the job and present it. I could say, ‘I know you’re selling to the end user, and in my position, I did this. This is what drives their decisions, and this is what their purchasing patterns are and how they work with engineers and this is what they’re concerned about.’”

There was a certain amount of luck in landing the job, he admitted. But in 18 months he outstripped the expectations the company had set for him.

His territory covered 19 states, and the average sale was close to half a million dollars. Long-term capital equipment isn’t a high turnover business, though, so the customer he sold a welding or fitting machine to one year might not buy again for six years.

“There wasn’t a lot of opportunity for growth, was the big thing,” Rozelman said.

It took about another six months, this time using TheLadders as his primary source of job postings, newsletters and advice on resume format, to find his current job as sales manager for Cleveland-based Intigral, which manufactures double-paned insulated glass for window manufacturers.

“I wasn’t looking for something too specific – an industry

or business that was growing and had some opportunity to move up,” he said.

He relied only on online job ads and resumes sent by e-mail. When he got an interview, he relied on his knowledge of the construction business, sales practices from previous jobs and his ability to handle a negotiation to answer any questions.

“I wasn’t looking for something too specific – an industry or business that was growing and had some opportunity to move up.”

– Dan Rozelman

“They did say, ‘What do you know about glass?’” Rozelman said. “I said, ‘If I can learn all the ins and outs of the capital equipment to make vinyl windows and break into some of the customers I broke into during that year and a half and get the letters of thanks I got from some of my customers on those complicated sales -- no offense, but glass has got to be a breeze!’”

Rozelman supervises three other salespeople covering a territory about 300 miles in every direction from Cleveland, including parts of Indiana, Michigan, West Virginia, Pennsylvania and New York.

The money is better, the work is interesting, and there’s a growth path.

“The president and vice president are only going to be in the company another five years or so, and my boss, the vice president of sales, can probably step up to the vice president’s job, and I can move into his,” Rozelman said.

“Plus, they’re looking to do a major expansion into the East Coast, and I’d be responsible for helping to grow business and pull in the manufacturer’s reps on the East Coast,” Rozelman said. “It’s a good opportunity.”

Career Advice from TheLadders: Switching Industries

- Mission: Career Change
- Jump into a New Career with a Brand-New Resume
- Stepping Toward Career Change
- Job-Search Strategies for an Industry Change