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Six Ways to Position Yourself for Career Advancement

Finding the corporate security job you want, and then landing it, requires a lot of preparation. It's a long-term process that encompasses everything from clearly identifying your career needs and wants to laying the groundwork of skills and relationships you'll need to get there.

Security Executive Council faculty have pinpointed the following six focal areas for security leaders looking to advance their careers.

Strategize your long-term career plan. What are your five- and ten-year career goals? Where do you want to work, geographically? What industry would you like to be in? Are you trying to avoid working for a certain type of manager or a certain style of company? What kinds of skills will you need to hone to get where you want to be? What time and financial investments will you need to prepare for?

Monitor relevant job boards, not only to keep an eye out for opportunities, but to keep up with what might be changing in your field. What types of open positions are being posted? Are there more or less than a month or a year ago? In what industries? Can you see trends in reporting levels or required responsibilities? Beyond popular job sites like Indeed, LinkedIn, and ZipRecruiter, check out field-specific boards like the SEC's Job Board and ASIS Career HQ.

Maintain a strong LinkedIn profile. LinkedIn is the world's largest professional network and a good way to keep peers, colleagues, and potential employers up to date on your accomplishments. Make sure you use all the available elements of your profile, including headlines, About summary, and skills list. Keep your profile photo and background images crisp and professional. Update with new certifications, job titles, and accomplishments.

Set up informational interviews. If you have a good idea of the company type or industry you'd like to move into, consider conducting informational interviews with people already in those

areas. These short conversations allow you to ask for career advice and gain insights on how best to prepare for a job in that arena. For more on conducting informational interviews: https://hbr.org/2016/02/how-to-get-the-most-out-of-an-informational-interview

Keep learning – both security and business. SEC founding Emeritus Faculty member J. David Quilter has helped many security leaders reach their career goals, particularly when it comes to transitioning from the public sector to the private sector. He coaches security leaders to prioritize learning opportunities to advance both their business and corporate security skills throughout their careers. "No matter how talented you are in security," said Quilter, "if you don't know how businesses make money and lose money, if you don't understand your business' operating objectives, budgets, and goals for not only the current year, but three years out … if you don't know how businesses run, you're not doing your whole job." Continuous training will make you more effective and valuable in your current position and can make you a more attractive candidate in a job search.

Look for a cultural fit. "When I coach security professionals who want to advance their careers in the private sector," said Quilter, "I always tell them, 'Don't go for the money. Don't go for the location. You have to go for the culture." If you lead with and value a people-first mentality but you join a numbers-first organization, for example, it will be difficult to square your short- and long-term goals with those of the business. A cultural mismatch could result in lost time, money, and job satisfaction. Finding a cultural fit can require some digging – seeking input from others with experience with the organization and learning how to ask the right targeted questions about organizational values and leadership.

Doing the work to prepare for your next job search well before you expect it to begin will give you the time to define what you want your next position to look like and to position yourself to obtain it.

The SEC's Next Generation Leader Security Leader infographic lists skills, elements and knowledge needed for leading today's security function. You can review this graphic for insight into what an organization may be looking for in a job candidate and where you can best add value.

Visit the Security Executive Council web site to view more resources in the Corporate Security Career : Career Development series.

About the Security Executive Council

The SEC is the leading research and advisory firm focused on corporate security risk mitigation solutions. Having worked with hundreds of companies and organizations we have witnessed the proven practices that produce the most positive transformation. Our subject matter experts have deep expertise in all aspects of security risk mitigation strategy; they collaborate with security leaders to transform security programs into more capable and valued centers of excellence. Watch our 3-minute video to learn more.

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