

HR Report: Breaking Into Hot Industries

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May 2008

Often it seems that only the hottest candidates can break into these industries, or that these industries only want to hire candidates with prior industrial experience. These situations can be very frustrating to the hard-working, well-meaning HR executive looking for a company where s/he can hang their hat, roll up their sleeves, and contribute. How tough is it to get in there? What does it take to get in the hottest companies in the most desired industries? How can you position yourself if you're not a superstar from a Blue Chip company? How can you "back door" your way in? Is there even a backdoor?

Below are my tips on how to break in.

Biotech

Today the US biotechnology industry includes about 1,000 companies, with combined annual revenue close to \$50 billion (First Research, Inc.) and last year, the industry came closer to aggregate profitability than in any previous year (Ernst & Young). Biotech has been one of the most desired industries to enter for HR executives for over 10 years, due to its mission of saving lives, high base salaries, and at times, exponential market cap growth. Laurie Brown, VPHR at Cepheid, a publicly held DNA analysis technology company in Sunnyvale, CA, and Vice Chair of this year's Bio HR Conference happening in October 27th and 28th, 2008 in San Diego, CA, says that the first five years she spent in biotech, she did not even know if a biotech background would make a big difference to HR executives. What has changed her mind is that she came to realize that "*biotech people have a different flavor*" and apparently "*they have more passion about their work*". According to Laurie, having experience in biotech matters if you are a Director of Staffing or a recruiter because there are differences in the way you recruit and motivate people with a scientific background and a high level of education. However, for HR managers, Laurie says previous experience should not matter and that it should not keep you from applying for a position in biotech.

Social Networking

It's cool, it's young and it's growing. Even though there has been a lot of questions as to whether it is actually possible to make big bucks in this industry, there is an undeniable growth and attraction to it. Informa forecasts that social networking will yield revenues of at least \$29 billion by 2012, with growth accelerating to as much as \$52 billion depending on mobile network operator policies and user interests. Of course, people with previous experience in high-tech or internet based company have a better chance of getting in there and that is not what matters most. There you will be dealing with a lot with millenials and their life style, being able to understand and manage this new generation is absolutely necessary. Among other things, this means that you need to be a user of their product: start creating profiles on Facebook, MySpace, and other social networks that appeal to you, use all the features and don't forget to add friends! In short, know their stuff so that you are able to contribute not only as an HR person. Indeed, the social networking industry is likely to be a great place for HR. Who better than the VPHR knows about people stuff? There is great potential for HR to add value and be a respected business partner.

Green Sector

Renewable and efficiency sectors will account for as many as one in four jobs by 2030 (Asia Times), and these companies are attracting and retaining talented people at higher rates than competing industries. “Green Collar” jobs are high quality, poised for growth and have low barriers for entry, according to a report released last week. And, almost 75% of “green” companies state that there is a shortage of qualified green collar workers for their sector, with the greatest needs in energy and green building (Berkeley study). HR executives from neighboring industries like construction, property management, and biotech, who have demonstrated that they are innovative leaders in their own fields and have successful startup experience, will find it easier to transition into these companies.

General Tips

How do you get your dream job? Networking or contracting is definitely the way to go, because it allows you to get a foot in the door without having to be compared to as harsh scrutiny as direct hire candidates face. It is also a good way to start your research and gather unique information about the sector/company you want to get into. Additionally, entering through an in-demand specialty such as compensation might get where you want a lot quicker. Another way is to start in a more mature and less glamorous company in a related field and then make the move. Studies show that executives reach the top more quickly in industries that are undergoing structural change. You could also work in a start-up. According to an article published in the HBR, *The New Road to the Top*, the flattening hierarchies trend discourages large companies to promote from within because they believe there is too big of a gap in required competencies from rung to rung. So, demonstrate your skills in a smaller company – as an HRD, say – then look for the same job in a larger one.