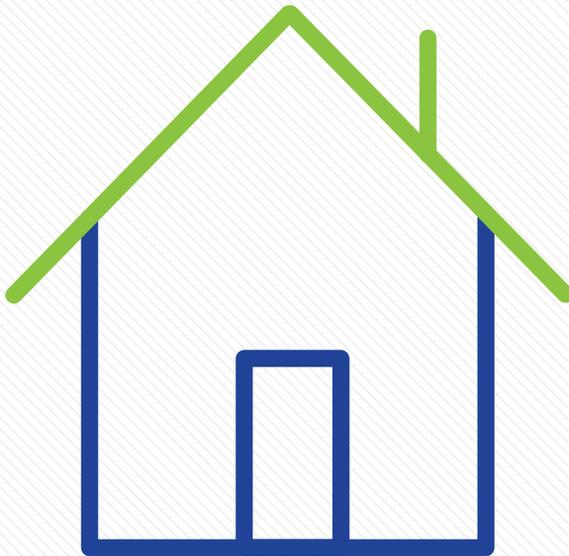


10 Essential Strategies To Safeguard Your Career in the Property Market



Introduction

As I write this, we are watching the market for signs of Brexit instability and the property market has been more badly affected than many.

And yet despite a nervousness about the future of the sector, we are still being retained to headhunt for senior level roles.

Why is this?

The simple truth is that employers are having to actively seek out good people because the best people are usually too busy in their jobs to trawl the press and look for work – and they don't need to because when you employ the simple strategies in this booklet and are good at what you do, you can be confident that the work will come and find you.

Even in a recession.

There are certain key principles which, when applied, should ensure that you can be the person who is too valuable to let go and will be the first person to find a new role should you need to – even in a recession. In this booklet are some of the strategies that we have observed amongst the high performers that we deal with.



Sue Prytherch

Natural Talents

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1. Know Thyself

For a strong, long-term career plan it is essential to know where you are naturally gifted. Each of us have natural attributes which give us strengths in certain roles. There are areas in which you can really shine and can become an outstanding performer without the effort and stress involved in trying to take on a role which does not suit your natural talents.

Our career coaching programmes always start with a series of psychometrics. We run three online tests on our coaching candidates to assess personal strengths and talents and emotional intelligence. Some people are reluctant to do psychometrics, but in the context of getting to know yourself they can provide an excellent springboard from which to develop your career.

Questions might include...

- Are you extroverted?
- Do you like variety or are you happier in a stable environment?
- Are you comfortable making unpopular decisions?
- Do you lead by knowledge or by force of personality?
- How does your behaviour change under stress?
- Do you have to adapt your natural characteristics to accommodate the requirements of your role?
- Are you an empathetic boss?
- Do you have innate self-discipline or can your work be affected by your moods?
- In a new situation, do you need time to get up and running?
- How quickly can you think on your feet or do you prefer a little time to think things over?

There are no right or wrong answers to the above questions, each of which may have a bearing on the type of role you are ideally suited for. What is important – or dare I say essential – in order to be a person who is of value to any employer, is to know these important things about yourself.

They will help you to position yourself in a role where you can flourish and will help you identify the roles for which you are not well-suited.



CASE STUDY

We recently assessed two candidates on behalf of a consulting firm seeking to make a director level appointment. Both appeared to be in identical roles, but we were able to ascertain that one of the candidates had a strong natural tendency for sales whereas the other contender was not so naturally inclined. Given the current harsh working environment and the fact that the latter candidate was in a branded company, where they were probably fed a lot of their work, we concluded that the candidate with natural sales ability would be a safer appointment.

2. Focus on what you are good at

High performers do not concentrate on what they can't do – they build their reputation on what they can do well.

Put simply, too much training and energy is spent looking at people's areas of weakness and trying to work to compensate for them.

Many of the best sales people in the world are poor administrators. What will be achieved by spending time trying to improve their reporting procedures compared to enabling them to get out there and make more sales? Hire a part time administrator and sell. Be good at what you do best and unless your areas of weakness are company or performance-critical, find a way to delegate them.



CASE STUDY

We recruit for ourselves using psychometrics. Our Head of Desk Research is methodical, detail-orientated and has a very high natural degree of attention to detail and process. She is happy to sit in the office all day researching and inputting information on our market – all the things the consulting team hate doing!

3. Be prepared to change

Dissonance, or a feeling of unease or discomfort, in our careers comes when we are either being asked to perform roles not naturally suited to our personal strengths or when we are being asked to take on a role which puts us out of sync with our beliefs and values.

Don't confuse this with the discomfort many of us feel when we are stretching ourselves at work.

In general, a period of frenetic work activity when taking on a large project or bigger and more senior role presents challenges and feelings of pressure which I might define as 'positive stress'.

The stress of dissonance comes when you are discomforted on a daily basis. Maybe your work and home life are out of sync and you have to put in hours which compromise your personal life. Maybe the role you are being asked to play contravenes your personal beliefs – producing shoddy work to accommodate tight margins for example.

When you are in a job environment which creates a constant feeling of discomfort, it is a sign that you are in the wrong role. It may be the role or it may be the company. To keep on track for a long-term high level career you need to make a change. So make the change!



CASE STUDY

When D was employed by his last employer he felt bored and unappreciated, which ultimately began to affect his performance. We worked with him to look for a new role which could offer him more challenges. His new employer has been delighted with the way he has fitted in and contributed to the company, in a role which suits his natural talents.

4. Build a personal brand

The closer to the top you get, the more your brand becomes essential.

Google your name and take stock of the information that is out there about you.

At senior levels I expect to be able to Google a name and get some sort of profile on a candidate. Ideally they will be mentioned in a magazine article or will be presenting at a conference. At the very least they will have a profile on LinkedIn, telling me they understand the use of social media and are putting themselves and their company in the public arena in a good way.

I would say that it is essential to have an intelligent presence on LinkedIn. By intelligent presence I mean more than one line telling me where you work. You need to describe your role and your company, how long you have been there and, ideally, your last few roles, showing career progression. You can prevent unwanted emails in your profile settings.

If you are in a role which demands good networking skills, show that you have a network. Anyone in a senior level networking role should demonstrate they have a number of key contacts in their industry. Once again you may choose to hide these in confidence from other viewers, but it important that you show that you are out there.

When you go to a networking event be a little prepared. I dislike glib sales pitches as much as anyone but I have noticed that quite a few people assume sector knowledge that isn't there from the people they are speaking to. So don't just say 'I'm a planner' or 'I sell houses': it is important to be more specific. Say 'I head up the planning team for Taylor Wimpey Eastern region' or 'I sell houses in the £3m plus bracket in the Cotswolds' – something short and sweet that will help people neatly pigeonhole you in the right place.

You need to be visible in your industry, not just to headhunters (who will be able to track you down anyway), but for referrals. Referrals are a major part of securing employment at senior levels.

Your personal presence needs to let people know that you are competent, connected and approachable.

It is therefore important not just for your company, but also for your personal career, that you are seen out and about at relevant industry events.

At these events you want to engage at a professional but friendly level with people in your industry and let them know what you are up to.

If you are the number two in a highly successful team and your boss is taking the credit, you need to find a way to make that known. A bit of blowing your own trumpet is called for!

Presenting at conferences and volunteering to coordinate industry- related social events are other ways of getting your name known. I would reiterate the word approachable when presenting or taking on high level responsibilities. Rather like the supermodel who doesn't get any dates,

if you are positioning yourself as high profile you need to be aware that people may assume you are too expensive or out of their league, so keep conversations with colleagues and competitors down-to-earth and open.

At senior level, people can be insular in their jobs, simply because they are working hard and are time poor. However, if they have bumped into you and are aware of you and you have engaged on a friendly basis, your name may come to mind next time they are looking to make a senior appointment. Even if they don't recall it themselves, if your name is mentioned they will have a positive feeling about you and are more likely to include your name on the search list.

Some of the larger companies are using their in-house recruitment managers to constantly LinkedIn in a non-aggressive way with potential long term-candidates. So make contact! A company is more likely to respond to an email or call from you when you have already connected in this way.

Think long-term and use social media to form relationships and build trust with the people you'd like to work for before approaching them to ask about job opportunities.



CASE STUDY

We recently carried out an assignment for an Equity Partner for a highly regarded surveying practice. A demonstrable network of contacts was one of the key criteria for the appointment and part of our recruitment strategy was to take advice from professional advisors to this market to ascertain those people who were out and about and making themselves known.

5. Mentally manage and update your CV on an ongoing basis

Mentally, you need to be keeping your CV up-to-date and looking at where you are taking your career on a regular basis.

If you are employing the tactics I recommend, your CV is less important than your contacts and referrals, but still needs careful consideration. I do not expect many of the people we approach to have an up-to-date CV because, by definition, they are not actively looking, but I do need them to be able to talk me through highlights of their career relevant to the role we are looking to fill.

Your career needs to show progression. If you are in a secure role and you are happy there, still seek to add to your skills set so that you can show you have taken on new challenges and are aware of current developments in the market.

Seek out tangible achievements to add to your CV. At senior levels, a certain level of competency is assumed and it is the things which will differentiate you above others that you need to highlight. If you represent the firm at speaking events, if you have won awards, if you are top salesperson or have the most profitable division or office, or handle certain premium accounts, these are the things to highlight. Management skills and team leadership become important as people rise towards the top. Highlight what you have achieved in these areas and also the types of people you have managed.

If you are formally applying for a role, then be aware that the information required on CVs has changed, as has the time we have to spend looking at them. I estimate you have 30-40 seconds to make an impact with the first page of your CV, so it is critical that you spend time writing and honing it.

Make your CV chronological. Unless you are changing career, competency-based CVs get a poor reception nowadays. Concentrate on your most recent role and work backwards. Take no more than two pages.

Put everything in context. Don't expect everyone to have heard of the companies you have worked for, so give them a brief summary, i.e. 'multi billion international contracting business' or 'small boutique planning firm with 10 employees'. Briefly put your role in context – who do you report into and supervise? Take the majority of the next paragraph to describe your achievements as they relate to the bottom line. Employers are not looking to read your current job description. As much as possible each CV should be re-written for the role applied for.



CASE STUDY

James was progressing well in his career, but we ascertained that management skills would be critical in his next role and he was not gaining the people management responsibility that he needed. He decided to take a voluntary role working as a mentor to students undertaking APC training. He also took an active role in organising training and networking events within the company, all of which strengthened his CV sufficiently to help him make that next move.

6. Manage your reputation

What your colleagues and past employers say about you is more important than you think.

On any search we undertake we can quite easily derive a list of eligible names – people in competitor companies to our clients, doing similar roles.

What differentiates the people we eventually speak to is positive feedback and reputation in the market place.

Take advantage of gossip and hearsay. What would your worst enemy say about you? Be aware of it and make the effort to make it work to your advantage. Once someone has a poor preconceived idea about you it is hard to change it.



CASE STUDY

'Great networker but can't manage a team to save his life.'

'Coasting on the performance of those below him.'

'Disliked and does not hold a team well.'

These are just a few of the market perceptions on candidates that have come through to me in the last week. Do you think those people are aware of how they are perceived?

Compare the above with...

'He's making an impression in his area. We would like to know more about him.'

'I've heard he's extremely hard working. Will he move?'

'Keeps his team and they follow him. See who he might bring with him.'

How do you want to be seen? Are you a Superstar or a Hero? These two categories of people are often talked about when looking at key roles. Superstars are normally attracted to blue chip names and follow a linear career path, where they achieve well and progress.

Heroes are usually attracted to turnaround situations, may work in smaller and more volatile companies and have less predictable careers.

It would stifle a Hero to put them into a Superstar role, just as it would be unlikely that we would seek out a Superstar for a high-risk position. When you make your career choices, think clearly about the bigger picture they are painting. I have often heard clients from smaller companies say that they will not take on people from a larger brand who rely on said brand's prestige rather than winning work for themselves. Similarly, larger companies express concerns that those from small company backgrounds may not be used to working with the level of politics and formality that their firms require.

Don't let yourself get pigeonholed too early in your career.

7. Add to the bottom line

The people who stay in jobs and progress in jobs add to the bottom line of the company.

In a recession this is more important than ever. Companies are cutting out fat. Any role which does not directly impact on the bottom line of the business is under scrutiny. If you are in a managerial role which does not directly impact on the bottom line in a way which is absolutely demonstrable, then your role may be in danger. Find a way to contribute and be seen to do so.

Constantly relate your career and achievements to the bottom line. Don't think of yourself as an HR manager for a multi-national business – promote yourself as the HR manager who saved 60% on hiring costs in the last year for a multinational business.

Don't take your eye off the bottom line. Ever.



CASE STUDY

Last year we received an outstanding offer for a candidate who was able to substantiate figures showing he was contributing a well above average fee income to his company. He secured three further offers from other companies, but ultimately took the decision to successfully strike out on his own. Such was the pipeline of business he had established for himself that his new company is flourishing!

8. Think niche

Niche is good. Niche is in-demand and niche can usually command a premium. If you can establish yourself as one of the main players in your niche, your chances of being headhunted or retained by your current employer expand exponentially. Another way of standing out from the crowd is going against the stereotype for your niche. Stereotypically, planners are seen as more process-based and less client-facing than commercial agents or residential agents. What would happen if you gained a reputation as the planner who has excellent business development skills? Judging by recent conversations I have had, people would be beating a path to your door!



CASE STUDY

We recently carried out a search for a niche role in the residential housing market. The number of eligible people for this role was tiny and meant that the selected candidate was in a very strong position to negotiate a highly competitive package with our client.

9. Own your clients and contacts

The single most important thing I find clients are looking for when appointing at a senior level is the network of clients, contacts and deal flow that a candidate can bring with them. It all goes back to the bottom line. When you are being considered for a role commanding hundreds of thousands of pounds in salary perks and overheads, there needs to be some justification and some credibility about what you can bring to the company.

Non-compete clauses exist in many employment contracts and some are stronger than others. Whilst you have a duty to do the best for your employer, it is important to realise that your contacts are your collateral. Where do you note your clients' contact details? Do you regularly update them? How frequently do you keep in touch?

At senior level, strong contacts need a personal connection, so work hard at building relationships with your contacts over and above the superficial work level. These are the deal flow of new work that you will take with you to a new company. If you have done your job well, you will not need to solicit clients in your new role, because they will follow you. Your attitude towards building strong relationships with suppliers, service providers, clients and other related professionals in your industry is one of the most important career development skills to work on.



CASE STUDY

We recently undertook a search for a Planning Director where the level and quality of the successful candidate's network was pivotal in his appointment. As part of his move, the two firms involved are negotiating an agreement between them for the business which it is accepted will pass across with him.

10. Take the headhunter's call

Well, I would say that wouldn't !!

At a senior level, the great majority of roles are not advertised. Managers increasingly prefer to access their own network of contacts or to use proactive methods to hunt out the best people in the market. When you start to get calls from headhunters (as opposed to job agencies), you know you are doing well! As a minimum you have been identified as someone who is at the right level and position for the position being discussed. It is also highly likely that subtle background checks have gone on about you and your reputation, internally and externally, by the time you are called.

How you handle the headhunter's call will contribute to the next step in your career more than you imagine.

We will always preface our initial calls with who we are and what we do, then ask if it is a convenient time to speak. It is very simple to ask to be called on a home or mobile number at a time that is convenient to you.

Most people are more comfortable speaking on the phone in the evenings. I make many of these evening calls and find my time is never wasted, nor should yours be, because any call with a headhunter is your chance to sell yourself and tap into their network.

When approached, it pays to be clear about what roles may be suitable for your next career step, which companies you would or would not like to work for and any important points in your own career plan. If candidates tell us they are not looking at present because they have just had a promotion, their wishes are naturally respected. If they let us know that in about 18 months they will review how things are going and their ideal next step up would be to XYZ role, we will note this and be ready to tip them off when such roles become available. If the role is not right for you but you have left a positive and helpful impression, be certain that your name will be put forward for other positions in your sector.

The way candidates interact with headhunters is all part of the profile we build up about them. If candidates are slow to return calls throughout the interview

process, you can bet I am discussing that feedback with my client. Similarly, if candidates are charming and polite, as many of them are, that feedback is noted too.

A final thought: it is highly likely that when we approach someone in a company we have already spoken with and gathered feedback from other people in that company. I recently met with three people from the same practice who each claimed to have the highest performing office in the country! It always pays to be truthful about your achievements and be ready to substantiate them.



CASE STUDY

When we first approached William he was not ready to move, but indicated that he may consider a change in a year's time. We had a good conversation on the phone about his background and the sort of role he was seeking. A year later, when a role came up in a region of the UK where we knew he had family connections, we were able to approach him about it. He made a move to be closer to his family in an excellent director level position which he would otherwise never have heard about.

Conclusion

In his book *The E-Myth*, Michael Gerber recommends that entrepreneurs work 'on' and not 'in' their business. To a large extent, the same applies to your career.

In your 30's and 40's you need to actively work on your career and manage it. Do not get so wrapped up in the small stuff that you forget to sit back and evaluate where you are going.

Research the companies you would like to work for and look at job descriptions and career profiles for people who are in the jobs you aspire to. Take stock of what the market is telling you about the requirements for the next stage in your career.

Where are your skill gaps? Are you addressing them? What is your timescale for that next promotion? Are you on line to make it?

As the recruitment process becomes more sophisticated, it can help to practice answering competency-based questions or thinking through what issues an assessment day may hold. CVs can be finely tuned and letters of application can be perfected. But ultimately it will become more and more a matter of engaging socially with your market and becoming recognised and visible for being good at what you do.

When you are recognised in your field, people will seek you out and you will find you have contacts who will introduce you to off-market roles. You will bypass recruitment procedures and computerised job matching. At this point your career becomes more about you, your competencies and your network of contacts than the brand name that you work for. And this is the position that will recession-proof and (to an extent) age-proof your career.

For many people, becoming a brand, a recognised expert and self-marketer may not sit easily with how they see themselves, whilst for others it may come naturally. Again, it's all down to natural traits. However, if you are serious about your career then you must take on board that this IS the new reality and the way the market is changing.

Adapt to the changing jobs market and put a strategy in place to recession proof your career today. In a few years, when you are enjoying your dream job, you will be glad you did.

About Natural Talents



Sue Prytherch
Company Founder

Sue Prytherch is the founder and director of Natural Talents and for the past decade has specialised in working on retained, high level appointments in the property sector.

Alongside executive search assignments, Sue assesses boards and teams and is qualified to test individuals' personality, aptitude and emotional intelligence.

She is a qualified executive coach, specialising in career transition and career planning at senior level, and has worked with some of the country's leading professionals.

Sue and the team at Natural Talents are dedicated to finding, recruiting and career coaching the very best candidates in the property and environmental sectors, acting as both a cutting-edge source of new talent and an invaluable mentor to high performers who're seeking out new challenges.

Natural Talents has an excellent track record, helping a wide variety of clients with hard-to-fill vacancies. They have successfully recruited and advised:

- Equity Partners
- Development Directors
- Construction Directors
- Project Directors
- Marketing Directors
- Finance Directors
- Directors of Environmental Due Diligence
- Sustainability Specialists
- CSR specialists

...and many, many more.

Visit our website to find out more about we might help and advise you with your own career planning...

www.natural-talents.co.uk

What our clients say...

"Sue has always been successful in finding strong candidates for us to employ and has represented the firm impeccably with positive feedback from candidates and staff."

Equity Partner, Top Tier Property Consultancy

"The reason I chose Natural Talents when recruiting for a Senior Commercial Property Manager was simple – their knowledge base and willingness to be flexible. The overall service received from the initial meeting to the appointment of the successful candidate was excellent."

Managing Director, Private Property Group

"I cannot speak highly enough of the work that Sue has done for me. I received a card at the end of my first week and I continue to receive texts from Sue. This individual attention to detail and follow up has been very much appreciated and shows how professional Natural Talents are."

Recently appointed Planner

"In my experience, Sue Prytherch takes the time to accurately assess a candidate's capabilities and career objectives... and always acts with the utmost discretion and professionalism."

Director, Commercial Surveying practice, Milton Keynes

"An important consideration for me was absolute confidentiality and discretion. Sue's method of communication was entirely appropriate and her support and feedback during the process was very helpful."

Newly appointed Commercial Development Director

10 Essential Strategies To Safeguard Your Career in the Property Market

Why do some people seem to excel effortlessly in their careers?

This booklet from recruitment expert and career coach Sue Prytherch will answer that question, offering strategies that are guaranteed to help you build the career you've always dreamed of. The topics covered include...



Sue Prytherch
Company Founder

- Understanding yourself and the roles that are right for you
- Developing your personal brand
- Standing out in a crowded market
- Making the most of your contacts
- How to make friends with headhunters

And much more!

These are strategies that Sue has seen in all the top performers she has sourced for high level jobs in the property market. And now you can apply them yourself, taking you from wherever you are now to the successful, fulfilling career you've always dreamed of.

Packed with expert advice from a recruitment and career coaching expert, no-one serious about boosting their career in the property market should be without this essential guide.

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