



## Taking the Next Step in Your Career – A Five-Star Assessment Leads to the Right Position

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Changing positions in your career doesn't have to be a leap of faith or a cold, calculated move. Somewhere in between the two extremes is the path that will lead you to the right position. It takes assessments, planning, a realistic view of potential job offers, and a close working relationship with a recruitment firm that serves as your advocate.

Forrer & Associates counsels candidates to review five objectives that provide a realistic assessment of what they expect from a new position. As a candidate, if you can honestly state your needs in each of these areas, you'll be well on your way to finding a stellar position – one that fits your personality, workplace preferences, skills and abilities. As a means of comparing and contrasting your current job to your desired position, we've also included an analysis form that will support your decision when a job offer is made.

The five-star assessment focuses on:

1. Company
2. Culture
3. Position and responsibility
4. Career growth
5. Compensation and benefits

When considering what type of **company** you want to work for, be as specific as possible about the following key areas:

- a. public or private
- b. size, by revenue or assets
- c. industry
- d. stability and structure
- e. profitability
- f. location(s) - domestic and international
- g. headquarters location
- h. financial systems

Your answers should be based on your experience, advice from a trusted recruiter, reports from friends and colleagues who are in executive-level positions, and research (web, trade journals, annual reports). Try to clearly visualize how company traits would impact your job and your lifestyle. For example, if you want to work at a division or

subsidiary located in Atlanta but the job would require frequent trips to the headquarters in Europe, how would that impact your lifestyle and other obligations?

Profitability is not the same as stability. One company may have been around for 50 years or more with a set standard of processes and protocols, while another is a young yet thriving firm that must put new systems and departments in place as it grows. Another option is a company undergoing a turnaround or bankruptcy. Candidates who are willing to take a risk may find these positions to be highly rewarding in terms of new skills gained, quicker advancements due to the departure of other managers and executives, and often more attractive salary and benefits. Reflecting on your skill set and personality, which type of company would be better suited for you?

When assessing **culture**, consider each of the following areas:

- a. What is the profile of the company workforce?
- b. What is the management style?
- c. Does the company promote from within?
- d. Is professional development and training provided?
- e. Does the hiring manager support quality-of-life issues?
- e. Does the company provide flexible business hours to accommodate childcare or commuting issues?

If you have an Ivy League degree, would you be happy working with a management team that is more likely to be entrepreneurial rather than college educated? Do you do well with a boss who doesn't provide feedback or support, leaving you solely in charge and responsible for all decisions, or would you prefer someone who provides regular feedback and helps you work through the challenges that go with the position? Do you prefer a team-building approach or one that rewards individuals who forge ahead without requiring consensus along the way?

Quality of life issues are especially important to individuals with children, elderly parents or other personal obligations. You'll want to consider job flexibility, the average hours per week, and how peaks and valleys of workflow are handled. If you want your next job to be your last, and the company doesn't promote from within, can you accept that limitation? Again, being honest with yourself will put you in a position in which you are most likely to be happy and successful.

Give serious thought to your desired **position and responsibility**, by listing your preferences to the following options:

- a. title
- b. responsibilities by percentage of time spent
- c. supervisory responsibilities
- d. percentage of travel
- e. qualifications of professionals in current and surrounding departments

If you know what you don't like about your current position, now's the time to write a new job description. By using these specific details as a guide, you'll know when the

right position seems like a good match. It's important to fit in with the people who would be reporting to you as well as your peers and supervisors. Carefully consider what type of personalities and traits you value in the people that you'll be working with on a daily basis.

When evaluating **career growth**, determine the following career specifics:

- a. expected duration in role
- b. promotion opportunities
- c. lateral opportunities
- d. review periods

While **compensation and benefits** are important, we advise candidates to first evaluate the previous four objectives to determine whether the position is a good match. For example, if you don't get along with your boss or if travel is negatively impacting your marriage, the compensation and benefit package of your new position won't be the deciding factor. The list below details some of the components. A complete list is included in the five-star assessment analysis form.

*Cash compensation:*

- a. base salary
- b. bonus program

*Non-cash compensation:*

- a. stock options and grants
- b. car allowance

*Benefits:*

- a. vacation
- b. health
- c. pension/401-K

*Other:*

- future compensation, based on company's salary grade levels and bonus or stock option program
- potential relocation and related cost of living adjustments

### **Allow your assessment to serve as a guide**

If issues at your current position are motivating you to find a new position, score your five-star assessment higher for areas that will resolve those issues. For example, if your boss's personality is keeping you awake at night, you'll want to make sure that your next boss has a different management style. That would score higher than, perhaps, your desire for a shorter commute.

Once you've completed your five-star assessment, use it as a firm guide when considering open positions. You will be better equipped to say "no" to those interviews that don't match your stated objectives, and instead spend your time and energy on

those openings that will lead to the right opportunity. Forrer & Associates will match your list of objectives closely to available positions and serve as your ally when negotiating your salary and benefit package.

Know your bottom line, so you'll be able to respond in a timely manner when an offer is made. Forrer & Associates can help you determine your market value. Companies typically have a prescribed range of salary and benefits that it rarely exceeds, so keep goals realistic based on the industry and your position and qualifications.

### **Extending an offer**

Companies make hiring decisions in different timeframes with interview sessions that range from one to three or more. At some companies, managers are authorized to hire candidates on the spot. At other companies, the hiring process can take weeks or even months, no matter how important the open position is to the company. The best approach for the candidate is to be patient and keep in contact with the recruiter on a weekly basis. The majority of offers will be vetted through the recruiter.

The goal of the Forrer & Associates recruiter is to get our candidates the best possible compensation and benefits package within the client's acceptable range. By doing all due diligence beforehand, in terms of completing the five-star assessment, all demands and expectations should be known to the candidate, the recruiter and the company. We expect candidates to be forthright in their expectations and not waver from their bottom line. Typically, our clients make the best offer right out of the chute. In nearly all cases, the two interested parties will be able to make a deal that satisfies both.

There's nothing that poisons a deal faster than a surprise demand made by a candidate at the last minute. If there are one or more negotiable items, be up front about it when the offer is first presented and let the recruiter discuss these issues with the company. Provide authorization for the recruiter to accept an offer of employment on your behalf if your requirements are met. Be aware that some counteroffers result in companies rescinding the offer, so make sure the negotiable items are really important to you.

Once you have agreed to accept a position, your word is as good as gold. It's considered a firm acceptance. Don't burn bridges with both a company and your recruiter by saying "yes" and later saying "no". If you need extra time beyond the normal 24 to 48 hours, ask for it. It's better to take a day or two longer to ponder an offer than it is to accept and then decline an offer. However, be aware that taking longer to decide makes you appear indecisive, which is not a desirable trait when all due diligence should have been done by the offer stage.

An offer officially consists of the following three items, which can be communicated verbally or in written form:

1. your position title
2. your starting salary
3. your start date.

If the recruiter states that the client is thinking of making you an offer, it's not yet an offer. It may be a good ego boost, but it isn't official until all three items are communicated to you either by the recruiter or by the company.

Once the recruiter makes an offer on the company's behalf and the candidate verbally accepts, the recruiter will inform the company and then ask the candidate to call the hiring manager directly to personally accept. This process covers all the bases and paves the way to a good working relationship between the candidate and employer. The candidate should expect to receive a letter from the company offering employment stating the position title, starting salary and start date. Our candidates typically receive this letter via overnight mail within a day or two of their verbal acceptance.

All offers have contingencies. These typically take the form of:

- drug screen
- a background investigation, with a review of your credit history and criminal record
- proof of past employment, salary or military service.
- verifying your academic credentials
- passing a physical examination
- documenting your citizenship or immigration status

It typically takes the company five to ten business days to complete the verification process regarding contingencies. Your new employer will notify you of the contingency clearance either by phone or letter. Forrer & Associates recommends not giving notice to your current employer until you've been notified that all contingencies have been cleared.

Accepting a desirable offer and starting your new position is one of the most exciting phases of a career, and is even more rewarding when the position meets your expectations – thanks to the five-star assessment. Your Forrer & Associates recruiter will be in contact once a week while you are making the transition from your current employer to your new employer. We will also call you 90 days after your start date and continue to maintain periodic contact to forge a solid working relationship.