



## Stay Informed: Online Column

### Trends in the Job Marketplace: Recruiting the All Stars



By [Karen Tripi](#)

*Published in DM Review Online, July 2003*

Direct marketers, specifically very talented direct marketers, occupy a privileged place in the job market right now. Simply put, they are in demand. I think there are two reasons for this.

The first is the slow, steady increase of the role of digital marketing within the overall marketing mix. First there was the dot-com boom; then there was the dot-com bust. Now, digital marketing is finally becoming what it should always have been: a superb marketing medium in the one-to-one world. But, how many people are out there who have extensive history in interactive marketing? There *aren't* many yet. It's a concept in its adolescent stages. Where do companies turn to find people who understand these concepts? They turn to direct marketers. Direct marketers have been doing this segmented one-to-one stuff for years.

The second reason is the steady growth of ROI marketing. Companies are definitely starting to spend again. They know they can't cost cut their way to growth. But caution reigns supreme. If they spend a dollar, they want to know exactly what the return on that dollar will be. Goodbye lavish Super Bowl ads, hello accountability and ROI. No matter what the medium, clients are expecting a quantifiable return on their investments. So, they're looking to direct marketers – direct marketers who are accustomed to functioning in this world of **actual results**.

This is why I feel that the job market in direct marketing is simply not mirroring the trends in the general economy. In a world where it seems that there are more candidates than there are jobs, the very talented direct marketers are starting to notice that they are in the enviable position of being in just the opposite situation: low supply and high demand.

I don't think that most prospective employers fully realize this is happening yet. In the search business, I see these trends in the early stages. A handful of my clients are just starting to feel the frustration of watching top players slip through their fingers.

Being an optimist, and occasionally a contrarian, I predict that this trend will continue. Attracting All Stars to join your organization will become even more difficult in the coming months. I believe that what happens from the very beginning of the interview process has much more bearing on the end result than you might

think. Is there anything you can do to improve your chances of bringing these kinds of candidates on board?

I have clients who consistently are able to close the top candidates. Here are some tips that these companies use as their guidelines in the interview process:

1. The wooing process goes both ways. You are there as much to entice them as they are to convince you to hire them.
2. Give the interview process top priority. These people represent the future of your organization. Smart people sense when they're being squeezed into an overcrowded calendar. And they draw conclusions about how the company functions in other areas when they see this.
3. Establish consistency of message among all of the people in the interview process. Everyone in the mix needs to speak in the same voice.
4. Be careful that no one in this process uses the medium to vent his or her own frustrations with your company. You'd be surprised how often this happens.
5. Don't over-interview. How many people really **need** to meet and approve of this person? More isn't always better. How many new people can someone meet in one day and still be effective?
6. Share the vision. Top players want to know about the company's future goals. To them, a new job isn't the end of a job search. It's the beginning of a new life.
7. Present the challenge. Really good people want to be challenged. They want to grow.
8. A good conversation is 50 percent listening, 50 percent talking. So is a good interview.
9. If you like them, stay in touch. Talk to them often. We talk to our candidates every day, weekends included, if necessary. Take their temperature. A new situation can crop up in one day and change everything. You won't know about it unless you're in constant communication.
10. Top players come in all shapes and sizes. They can be corporate or they can be entrepreneurial. One is not better than the other. But you need to know, in advance, which type **really** works best in your company.

The ups and downs of the economy have given us some rare opportunities to meet people that are truly excellent. They are coming from all types of situations, not necessarily from traditional direct marketing backgrounds. There are some real gems out there. *The trick is to spot them and get them on board!*

---

*Karen Tripi is president and founder of Karen Tripi Associates, New York, one of the leading independent executive recruitment firms serving the direct marketing, interactive and integrated marketing fields. With more than 30 years of in-the-trenches experience, Tripi has filled hundreds of senior marketing positions in mid-size to large corporations across the country and has had extensive involvement with staffing the top direct marketing advertising agencies. Her corporate clients have included American Express, JPMorgan Chase, BMG, Pfizer, Time Life Books, Yahoo, Amazon, CMGI. Agency clients have included Deutsch, Inc., OgilvyOne Worldwide, Wunderman, Organic, Digitas, Mullen, and LLKFB (an Omincom DM company). She can be reached at [karen@karentripi.com](mailto:karen@karentripi.com).*