# Outplacement Offices:

Getting into them and working with them

What do Outplacement Firms Do?

Outplacement firms provide assistance to people who have been laid off by providing them with job search skills. While all of them have job postings and web sites where companies can post job openings, they do not act like recruiters or take responsibility for getting their clients interviews. These services are paid for by the companies which have just laid off these employees. In Outplacement lingo, the people who are looking for jobs are their “clients” and the companies who pay for the services are their “customers.”

What Services Do They Provide?

All the Outplacement firms offer a number of different workshops, including a basic Career Transition Workshop (teaching clients resume-building, interview skills, networking, etc.), and they all offer some form of an Entrepreneurial Workshop (for those considering consulting or starting their own business) and a Retirement Planning Workshop (for those who are considering retirement as an option regardless of their age). In addition, they generally provide ongoing “mini-workshops” on a wide range of topics plus some of them do “Lunch & Learn” workshops where they bring in outside speakers.

Who are the Clients?

These clients have gotten to Outplacement companies by virtue of their last employer paying for the service. The client base ranges from line workers in manufacturing plants (who are generally given extremely limited services) to middle managers, to senior executives and CEOs.

Many people think that the clients at these centers must be depressed and struggling through their transition. While some of them can be (and many of them probably at least have days like this), the vast majority are grateful for the services and have positive attitudes. Many are also delighted about having an opportunity to do something else and are looking forward to a career path!

Who are the Outplacement Consultant Staff People?

Many of these outplacement consultants are former human resource professionals – but in any one office there is generally a mix of professionals from psychologists to former public relations people to any other specialty you can think of. They go to great lengths to create a positive atmosphere – frequently hosting parties, lunches, celebrations for people who get jobs, and generally trying to keep an upbeat feel to the office. The receptionists are a key in this and although they may not know the clients in the depth that the consultants do, they generally know most clients – by name, and frequently what they want to do! By the way, they’re usually given bonuses based largely on client evaluations.

While each firm has its core staff of office consultants, they also use what they call “Adjunct Associates” or “Field Consultants”. These part time people pick up the slack in many areas, particularly after major layoffs, such as: conducting workshops, working at more remote sites (closer to a client’s headquarters), and seeing clients in-house during busy times. While these part-timers may have the same general background as the full-timers, many of them also run their own businesses as well, or are retired, or have children at home and want to work less – in any event, they are frequently more open to new ideas and are less risk-adverse themselves.

The one constant is that they are almost without exception, genuinely caring people who will bend over backwards to help *their* clients in any way possible and to protect them from doing anything they perceive to be a mistake. The other constant is that again, with the single exception of the person who runs the Entrepreneurial Workshops (and many firms bring in outsiders to do this), they come from corporate backgrounds and they know nothing about small businesses and less about franchising.

In recent years, with the dominance of internet career search and video conferencing, many outplacement firms have gone virtual, which presents more of a challenge in building relationships with the consultants. Without brick and mortar locations it may be more difficult, or require more due diligence to find the appropriate individuals but it’s still possible to nurture the consultant relationships once found.

The trade association for these and other career counselors is the Association of Career Professionals (which currently is limited in the cities in which it operates – web site is: [acpinternational.org](http://www.iacmp.org)). Many of them also belong to the Association for Talent Development (web site: [www.td.org](http://www.td.org/))

**Corporations pay for these services... what do they expect in return?**

The customer is the corporation that is paying the bill for these services...at the end of the day, *that* is who the outplacement firm must make happy. How do they do that?

* They give them reports on the “traffic” in the centers – the more of their employees that are using the center’s services, the happier the customer is to be paying their bill
* They give them reports on how many of their employees have found jobs or chosen alternate careers/retirement (anything that “closes” their file on that client). Again, the customer is happier to be paying the bill, the higher the rate of re-employment.
* They report on the services they provide and make available – the more the better, the bigger the variety the better, and the best still is if there’s something that other companies *don’t* provide.

**What Key Points Can be Learned in relation to FranNet from the above?**

* If the Outplacement Consultants will try to protect, as much as help their clients, it is obviously imperative that the consultant themselves must first be convinced that franchising poses a viable alternative to more traditional ones – and most of these people are only familiar with the corporate world themselves! Providing them with education and the idea of our being “risk mitigators” is as important as conveying that to clients. The FranNet Roadmap to Success is a good educational resource, and if the online version is promoted, can be a good lead generation strategy.
* If you only do a presentation on franchising every other month, some clients will only have 1 opportunity to attend that presentation – if they can’t make it, they’re out of luck. More opportunities are better!
* With the emerging prevalence of virtual outplacement, offering online webinars is a valuable way to educate the outplacement consultants and their clients.
* If the outplacement firm has as its goals: increasing traffic and speed of getting clients employed/occupied – anything you can do to bring in clients that might not otherwise come to the office OR get them gainfully occupied (on a path of franchising) sooner, the better!

If the consultants themselves are being given bonuses based on client evaluations, the more they can provide resources, the better off they are (and the more confident they want to be of those resources).

* The receptionist can be a key person in addition to just the consultants – don’t forget to talk to them about what you do and get materials to them.
* Don’t just target one consultant you think may be “key” in any firm (even if it is the one that does an Entrepreneurial Workshop). Any consultant can be an advocate if *they* think you provide a viable alternative for one of their clients. Get to know ALL the consultants... including the part-timers!
* Telling stories of your own franchise client positive experiences (testimonials) will get more attention. Stories can be much more powerful and memorable than facts.

**Suggestions on Getting In**

1. The Managing Consultant is probably the best place to start your approach. But keep in mind that another staff member may be the one who manages the calendar. You could also try asking the receptionist for the name of the consultant who handles scheduling events for the client calendar, or the name of the person who conducts their Entrepreneurial Workshop (if it’s a consultant there and not an outsider) as other possible entry points. Be sure and ask about virtual opportunities so that you can offer to host webinars.
2. Send a letter to that person introducing yourself and FranNet (copy of a sample is included). Include in the package: The Road Map To Success Booklet, your own bio, and possibly a selection of franchising articles or any educational resources available on the FranNet intranet. Be careful not to overwhelm with too much information. ‘Less is more’ in many cases.
3. Follow up with phone calls – or even stop by. You may need to be persistent but mix up your approach. Don’t just don’t leave messages all the times you call!) – sooner or later, they will actually pick up the phone and you’ll have your opportunity to talk to them. Particularly good times to try are 8-9 am and 4-5 pm when they generally limit their client consultations and other activities.
4. Once you actually have them on the phone, realize that you may have to do some educating of the consultant you are speaking with. Make sure you emphasize that A) your seminar will be educational; you will not be selling anything! B) There will never be a cost to their clients *or to their firm* at any time! C) Franchising is a viable career alternative even for the non-entrepreneurial clients. D) Emphasize your role in making the exploration of this alternative safe.
5. OK, so you have them on the phone and they’re interested, what do you want them to do? You really want them to do two things: you want them to have you present a seminar for their clients and you also want to be able to present the material to all their consultants. It really doesn’t matter which order these come in as long as you don’t forget that your goal is to do both.

**Suggestions on Managing the Ongoing Relationship**

1. There’s a saying in outplacement (as they try to increase their traffic) “Feed them and they will come.” It applies to consultants also. Host a lunch seminar for all the consultants and admin staff – present an abbreviated version of what you might present in a client seminar, focusing on the educational aspects regarding franchising. You might also want to compare it to small business ownership (and the risks). Show a balanced perspective about franchising. Clients can be in business for themselves but not by themselves. Make this lunch an annual event.
2. Have a package of materials ready to hand out to the consultants. If you have only been able to schedule a client seminar and nothing for the consultants, this can still be a good handout to have the Managing Consultant give to each of them. Remember, these people are all feeling overworked already, the most appreciated package could be a hanging folder labeled “Franchise Information” filled with a few Road Map to Success brochures so that they have it ready to just plunk in their drawer without any additional work or putting it in the “to be filed” pile. In addition, you may want to enclose a cover letter with some information about yourself and FranNet along with the Client Bill of Rights and Broker Disclosure Document.
3. Make sure to invite every consultant to one of your client seminars until they finally attend one! It’s not necessary that they attend (although it’s obviously helpful) – but it’s necessary that they feel that you would like them to. If you schedule a webinar, be sure to record and send the link following the event so that it can be shared and viewed virtually and when time permits. Busy people appreciate access on-demand to useful information.
4. Get to actually know the consultants and the receptionist. Know them by name. Seek them out either before/after you do your seminars. Stay in contact.
5. Consultants are responsible to keep copious notes about their clients’ progress. If you have a client that came from an outplacement referral, let them know what progress that client is making (without violating any client confidentiality). They will appreciate it, and it’s another chance to let them see how you can help their clients and perhaps make the consultant job just a little easier!
6. Manage the schedule. Try to schedule an entire year of seminars, say on the morning of the first Tuesday of the month. Explain that this will ease the load on the admin staff, and you will alert all consultants in the system about 10 days before and call two days before to check attendance. Don’t forget you can invite them to webinars hosted by FranNet corporate.

# SAMPLE INTRO LETTER TO OUTPLACEMENT FIRMS

Date:

Mr. (Managing Consultant)

OUTPLACEMENT FIRM NAME

STREET ADDRESS

CITY, STATE ZIP

Dear FIRST NAME:

Would you like to make more choices available for your outplacement clients? Your clients may have a strong desire to be in business for themselves after leaving corporate jobs. Providing information and education about the many opportunities in franchising may be very attractive so your clients who want to explore all their career choices. As a FranNet Consultant, I can provide valuable information to your clients at no charge now, or later if they choose to pursue franchising as an option.

FranNet has local offices around the country like mine in CITY NAME and we’ve worked with clients at many outplacement offices throughout the United States such as Lee Hecht Harrison and Right Management Consultants,

We expand the career choices for these clients in two ways. First, we conduct an educational seminar on your premises for your clients (an outline of which is enclosed). Then, for individuals who are interested, we provide private consulting in our CITY NAME office. We can also provide virtual webinars. We work with clients to construct a model of a business that will give them what they want, and then introduce them to franchise businesses that match their background and desires. Because we have a proprietary assessment, we are able to really understand the client’s needs, interest and desires.

We coach them on how to conduct proper due diligence, including referrals to competent franchise attorneys and accountants. Our services are free to your clients. If a client buys a business that we have recommended, we receive a placement fee from the franchisor, much like an executive recruiter.

I am enclosing other material for your review, including the seminar agenda with my business profile. In addition, I have enclosed a list of references of other MANAGEMENT CONSULTANT OFFICES who have worked with FranNet. FIRST NAME, I welcome the chance to visit with you to answer any questions you may have. I will call you in a few days to set up an appointment.

Sincerely,

CONSULTANT NAME

CITY OFFICE NAME

PHONE

EMAIL

WEBSITE URL: FranNet.com/CONSULTANTNAME

PS: Transparency of the process is very important. FranNet has led the industry with the development of the Client Bill of Rights and the Broker Disclosure Document. Your clients will know exactly what to expect from the very beginning. I have enclosed copies of both documents for your review.

# SAMPLE COVER LETTER IN PACKAGE FOR ALL CONSULTANTS

What is FranNet and how can learning about franchising help your clients?

To a great extent, franchising is kind of like the halfway house of entrepreneurship. Most franchisees are not entrepreneurs by nature... they are people who have been successful within the traditional corporate structure but who are now looking for: greater freedom, security, or the opportunity to increase their net worth (rather than just their paycheck). Franchise owners are frequently those who may never have considered business ownership if their employment had continued as planned. However, when faced with a career transition, they may realize that:

* They may be difficult to employ (due to age or changing trends in their industry), or
* They may not be able to realize their financial goals by working only for a salary, therefore not developing equity, or
* They’re simply tired of not being in control of their own destiny

I work with these clients to help them develop their own personal model of their ideal business – starting with FranNet’s proprietary assessment tool. With this knowledge of their background, interests, desires and skills, I assist them in finding a franchise business that will give them what they want by introducing them to proven business concepts.

Due diligence is very important so I also coach them through the process, including referrals to competent franchise attorneys and accountants –- all at no cost to your client at any time. If a client buys a business that I have introduced them to, we receive a finder's fee from the franchisor, much like an executive recruiter (and the franchise fee your client pays is the same regardless of whether they work with me or go directly to the franchisor). The client’s best interest is always the guiding factor. FranNet has led the industry with our own Client Bill of Rights, as well as a Broker Disclosure Document so that from the very beginning, your clients have transparency in the process and know what to expect. I’ve enclosed these documents for your review.

My real goal is to assist your clients in moving into their next career as smoothly and as quickly as possible. It’s exciting for those who decide business ownership is for them -- and for others, simply exploring their entrepreneurial options makes them realize it really is not for them, and they can then pursue their traditional job search with renewed vigor. Whether a client does or does not invest in a franchise is truly ok with me – I get a great deal of intrinsic satisfaction in helping them in their process of transition regardless of the outcome.

I’ve attached my brief bio along with some more information on FranNet to give you a little more information about why I’m qualified to work with your clients in this capacity. I’ve also enclosed in the folder a few of my brochures so if you work with clients in the future who may wish to explore franchise possibilities you will have some information to give them. I’ll look forward to working both with you and your clients in the future.

Best regards,

CONSULTANT NAME

CITY OFFICE NAME

PHONE

EMAIL

WEBSITE URL: FranNet.com/CONSULTANTNAME

PS: Transparency of the process is very important. FranNet has led the industry with the development of the Client Bill of Rights and the Broker Disclosure Document. I have enclosed copies of both documents for your review. Your clients will know exactly what to expect from the very beginning.

# FranNet

FranNet is the most respected supplier of consulting for clients wishing to find the right franchise for themselves. Over the past years FranNet has helped thousands find the franchise of their dreams.

FranNet is a respected member of the International Franchise Association – the company has an extremely strong reputation with franchisors, which enables us to carefully screen the companies we represent. For every one franchisor we work with, there are close to 15 that we turn down for various reasons. All of the companies we represent are subjected to vigorous examination and represent what we feel are the best opportunities available. **We work with close to 100 different companies in over 50 different industries** including food, automotive, retail, business services and personal services.

FranNet consultants are devoted to coaching and helping others to realize the benefits and opportunities in not only owning their own business, but more specifically a franchise that is right for them. And what is right for each individual depends on their interests, goals, skills, resources and desired income potential. We work with our clients to help them find the franchise that best meets all their wants and needs, advising them as they go through the process of searching for and evaluating franchise opportunities -- charging no fee for the services rendered.

**FranNet Associate**

Include brief Bio

# Suggestions on Working with Outplacement Offices

1. **Understand the Industry** The industry provides assistance to laid-off employees, to help them find employment or new careers. There are three purposes of outplacement: A) Provide help to laid-off employees at this serious moment in their lives; B) Show the retained employees that the employer has some concern for them, and thus bolster morale for the survivors; C) Salve the consciences of management.

The range and quality of services provided is very broad. For the very senior level former employees, the services include very sophisticated testing and counseling, sometimes services for spouses, and perhaps financial counseling, in addition to the basics: resume composition, interviewing practice, networking training, mailing of resumes, etc. Time of services may be as long as 18 months.

For senior and mid-level former employees, the services are limited to the basics. The time of services is in the 3 range and shrinking. In some cases, these two groups may have access to outside speakers on business ownership-and this is the coattail we ride on!

For low-level employees, there may be 2 or 3 days of resume training and maybe access to a job center to use computers etc. There may be an opportunity for FranNet here as well.

1. **Understand the Staff** Most consultants are ex-human resource staff people. They have a genuine and sincere concern for their candidates, as they call them. Many feel overworked. While well trained in HR matters, such as testing, these consultants know very little about business ownership, and nothing about franchising. This is why outsiders do workshops on entrepreneurship. Many are contract workers, brought in when the candidate population requires it. Often these contractors may pop up in a different firm months later, or even attempt a private practice on their own.
2. **Understand Your Strategy** These offices can be a strong source of qualified clients for FranNet. Your strategy: convince them that you can provide a valuable service to their candidates at no cost to the firm or the clients, and (unspoken) help the firm get what it wants: the candidates out the door, on their way to something, but out the door. That service is to first educate candidates about franchise business ownership as a career alternative and then to help those who wish it to achieve it.
3. **Some Tips on Achieving Your Goals** Do not be surprised if you are met with suspicion when you first approach an outplacement firm. You may be seen as just another salesman trying to get to their clients. Some ideas:

* Visit the office to drop off a package of material. Be sure to include several FranNet articles. Include a list of outplacement offices around the country already served by FranNet. If the office is a part of a chain, have referrals from sister offices ready. Ask to see the manager. You might luck out! If not, call to schedule a visit. Be persistent!
* Offer to host the consultants, and other key staff, to an in-house luncheon. Whatever they order for a staff luncheon is fine, but you pick up the bill. Explain that you do want 15 to 20 minutes to give an overview of what FranNet is, who you are, and how you help them by educating and assisting their clients. Make this at least an annual event.
* Be sure to invite every consultant to every seminar – a standing invitation, so to speak. Chances are one will be assigned to attend your first seminar, to check you out. Be sure to include some criticism of some zors, so that you are not seen as a franchise Polly Anna. In *every* seminar, I strongly criticize Subway, and now enjoy a reputation in some SBDCs as the “man who hates Subway” – a title I relish! This establishes trust with the audience – and the watching consultant.
* Manage the in-office relationship. Try to arrive early for every seminar, and wander around the office, saying “hello” to consultants. Someone gave me this idea: he brings bags of M&Ms or other candies with his business card stapled. I sometime leave a note card with a FranNet pen. Do not neglect the administrative staff – they can be strong allies.
* Manage the one-on-one relationship. If you have a client, learn who the outplacement consultant is. Place a call to the consultant, confirming the consultation. Do not disclose the referral businesses – that is the client’s private information. If you have received several referrals, send a written note of thanks – not an e-mail. If you have received a lot of referrals, host the consultant to a nice lunch.
* Manage the schedule. Try to schedule an entire year of seminars, say on the morning of the first Tuesday of the month. Explain that this will ease the load on the admin staff, and you will alert all consultants in the system about ten days before, and call two days before check attendance.