

Confessions of a Hiring Manager Rev. 2.0

By J.T. Kirk



"J.T. Kirk has written the ultimate guide for properly positioning yourself for a job offer in this or any economy. No question is left unanswered in the process and the job seeker receives valuable and powerful perspective from a hiring manager. From cover letter to compensation negotiations and from résumé structure to interviewing strategy, this book covers it all. This is a comprehensive guide for professionals interested in paving the path to an offer."

LaDonna Wernli, CFE, PHR
Human Resource Manager
Association of Certified Fraud
Examiners

"The information in this book gives job seekers a distinctly competitive edge, especially in today's job market. I highly recommend it!"

Brian Jud
Author of *Job Search 101*, *Coping With Unemployment*, and *The Art of Interviewing*

About the Author: J.T. Kirk has been a hiring manager in both technical and marketing capacities for Fortune 500 companies in the energy industry, government research arena, and high-tech sector for more than 20 years. Kirk now writes books and speaks to associations, corporations, and schools on job and career strategies in a confused economy. He lives in Austin, Texas.

Book Description: *Confessions of a Hiring Manager Rev. 2.0* is the next collection of hard-hitting job advice from veteran hiring manager J.T. Kirk. Like the first *Confessions, Rev. 2.0* is not just another book on getting a job: business writers, résumé writers, and career coaches have written books with their opinions on how to write cover letters and résumés, how to prepare for the interview, or how to build self-esteem or self-confidence in a tough employment environment.

Confessions of a Hiring Manager Rev. 2.0 provides more insight into those qualities hiring managers need and want in addition to focusing on how candidates can get to and keep their names at the top of the hiring manager's short list. Kirk shows job seekers and career changers—including military veterans returning to the civilian workforce—how to package their work history into a Professional Skills, Knowledge, and Experience Portfolio (*PSKE Portfolio™*) and leverage it over time to separate the value-add candidate from all other applicants. In addition, he shares strategies for negotiating the best possible compensation package without leaving money on the table.

Revised throughout, *Confessions of a Hiring Manager Rev. 2.0* expands the view from the other side of the desk that reveals the perspectives and expectations hiring managers have of people looking for a job or a new career. **It is the definitive guide for job seekers.**

While résumé writers and career coaches may give you a fish to feed you for a day, *Confessions of a Hiring Manager Rev. 2.0* continues to teach you how to fish so you can feed yourself for a lifetime of professional and career success.



Title

CONFESSIONS OF A HIRING
MANAGER REV 2.0
Getting to and Staying at the
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Short List in a Confused
Economy

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FASCINATING AUTHORS Author Profile – J.T. Kirk: *Confessions of a Hiring Manager*

FASCINATING AUTHORS: Why did you decide to write this book?

J.T. Kirk: Back in the late 1990s, I wrote an article that addressed what hiring managers wanted to see in cover letters and résumés from job applicants. I was frustrated with seeing so many ill-prepared candidates over the years applying for positions for which they were qualified, but who failed to understand how to “pitch” themselves in their cover letters, résumés, and interviews to the needs of the hiring manager—so many candidates were making the pitches all about them and not what they could do for me, my team, and my company.

Shortly after that article was published, a technical professional society asked me to present a workshop at its national conference on the subject of getting hired. After presenting workshops at local, regional and national meetings, I decided the best way to disseminate this information was to write a book based on my experience in hiring manager positions in several industries and across technical, marketing, and communication disciplines.

FASCINATING AUTHORS: Do you have any secret writing tips you’d like to share?

J.T. Kirk: I think one of the best writing suggestions I can offer other aspiring authors is to become an avid reader in a wide variety of subject matter: fiction, non-fiction—it doesn’t matter. My upstairs home office is loaded with non-fiction books while our library downstairs contains about an 80/20 split between non-fiction and fiction, respectively. Both my wife and I are and have always been avid readers, and it’s rare when one of us isn’t carrying around a book we are reading.

Besides rounding out your knowledge, reading exposes you to different types and levels of vocabulary that eventually makes its way into your own writing style, and contributing to the development of your own unique writing voice.

Every Christmas, I make it easy for people wanting to get me something—an Amazon.com or Barnes & Noble gift certificate always makes me happy. In fact, I joke that if I ever won the Powerball Lottery, I would use the money to take it as far as I could to clear my shopping cart of the books that are in there...

FASCINATING AUTHORS: Tell us a quirky or funny story about you!

J.T. Kirk: Obviously with a name like “J.T. Kirk” I’d have to be a *Star Trek* fan. Many years ago when I was in college, my mother asked me “why do you fill your head with such useless trivia about a TV show?” She never knew it would pay off for her one day.

About 15 years later, I was out with friends after work, and the club where we were at was holding a trivia contest. Whenever the occasional *Star Trek* trivia question was asked, I had all the answers to the arcane questions, and won the prizes. The grand prize for the evening was an expensive Wilson tennis racket (I played tennis at the time) and \$200 cash. The final trivia question for the grand prize happened to be a very obscure *Star Trek* question, but I did answer it correctly and won the grand prize.

I kept the tennis racket and sent the money to my father with the instruction to “take Mom out to dinner and tell her it was on Captain James. T. Kirk of the Starship Enterprise...”

FASCINATING AUTHORS: Have you ever battled writer’s block? How do you deal with it?

J.T. Kirk: Actually, no; writer’s block has never been a problem. Mine is just the opposite: too much information wanting to jump out of my head and onto the computer screen. For me, writing is sometimes like herding cats. It takes a disciplined effort—and sometimes a supportive wife to tell you to “focus, focus”—to stay the course and stick with the current project at hand rather than want to try to keep more than one book project moving forward at a time. I can handle ancillary writing projects, such as article syndication, blogs, web site updates, and so on, but driving one major writing project at a time is the only way for me to ensure it gets finished on schedule.

FASCINATING AUTHORS: What’s your favorite quote?

J.T. Kirk: It’s hard for me to pin down one favorite quote, as I think most people have one for different situations. Here are my favorites:

“Come! Come! Why, they couldn’t hit an elephant from that dist...”

Last words of Union General John Sedwick (1813-1864), peering over the parapet at the battle of Spotsylvania after being warned of Confederate snipers.

“Hard work must have killed someone...” which is on a plaque in my office.

“Bring me a bowl of coffee before I turn into a goat.” J.S. Bach, which indicates the role coffee has in my life—and had in his!

“The happiest people are not those who have the best of everything but those who make the best of everything they have.”

FASCINATING AUTHORS: Who inspires you the most?

J.T. Kirk: As a group, teachers. The responsibilities many of them assume go so far beyond the classroom. They selflessly touch the lives of children in different ways oftentimes because parents have abdicated their authority, concern, and love for their own children to teachers.

Secondarily, any person who quietly and without fanfare makes personal sacrifices in order to care for the health, education, and welfare of others less fortunate anywhere in the world. From the small country church minister tending his flock to the aid worker in a third-world country trying to recover from some disaster; truly, the noblest of callings.



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Whose bookshelf do you want YOUR book sitting on? (hint: it's not necessarily the bookstore's...)

By J.T. Kirk, Author of *Confessions of a Hiring Manager Rev. 2.0*

(This article first appeared as a featured guest blog at FascinatingAuthors.com)

I once read an online comment from an author who wrote: “perhaps with a little luck, one of my books will get published by a traditional publisher, or any publisher that will place my books in major bookstores. That would be a dream come true!” When I mentioned that comment to an author friend, who has had books in major bookstores, his reply was: “Wow...this author needs a bigger dream. He doesn't need luck and he doesn't need a traditional publisher—and he surely doesn't need a major bookstore to be successful—especially when only 35% of Americans buy books in brick-and-mortar bookstores.”

Amazon, Lightning Source, LuLu, CreateSpace, and others have all contributed to the paradigm shift in book publishing and distribution. Individual authors and small publishers now have access to many of the same distribution channels as larger publishers. Other non-traditional distribution channels offer better terms (such as no returns, customer-paid shipping, and shallower discounts) than the usual outrageous stipulations of big-name distributors. With fewer people purchasing books through traditional bookstores, maybe the major distributors and wholesalers will choose to go with the flow, but that change may be like turning around an aircraft carrier: slow and steady, but not very swift.

Author Donn LeVie, Jr. (*It's All About HYMN: Essays on Reclaiming Sacred and Traditional Music for Worship*, Kings Crown Publishing) says that the “big bookstore” enchantment ended abruptly for him years ago when his first royalty check arrived for a book project where he was a co-author.

It's a thrill to see your book on the shelves of a major bookstore, but as you stare at the two copies stuffed between other titles in the same subject area, the thrill comes and goes quickly. Our share of the royalty was 12% of the net to the publisher. Because my co-author also provided the illustrations for the book, he got 7% and I received 5%. The book retailed for \$14.00, and the

Whose bookshelf do you want YOUR book sitting on? J.T. Kirk

publisher's net was \$8.80, so 5% of \$8.80 came to \$0.44 per book for me. I received a \$3,000 advance for my share, but the royalties over time didn't even cover my share of the advance. The small media tour that the marketing department helped put together was partially subsidized out of my pocket. The initial printing of 5,000 copies sold out, so someone was making money—it just wasn't us. That was my first and last experience with co-authoring and working with a traditional publisher. The economics of that conventional publishing and distribution venture in 1990 convinced me that as a vehicle by itself, maybe a non-fiction book was not going to generate the revenue I thought it would—I had to rethink the idea of a book being just one component of a larger strategy, not an end product.”

Back in the late 1980s, I heard author and speaker Gordon Burgett at a workshop for writers talk about “topic spoking”, which is a process of identifying various spin-offs from a single subject that could be turned into revenue streams. Gordon mentioned how one idea for an article could turn into additional revenue from selling various publication rights, offering rewrites to different publications, creating workshops aimed at different audiences, and developing different media (at the time, cassette tapes) for communicating to yet other audiences the information found in that original topic. Little did Gordon know at that time that his topic-spoking idea—selling more than 100% of what you write—would eventually evolve into what today is called “platform building” or as Gordon now calls it, “ancillary publishing,” particularly when books are distributed in a variety of electronic formats for the various portable electronic devices.

Platform building is what information providers (as authors, we are information providers) use to build a media voice; to position ourselves and our books to online and offline audiences; to generate brand *identity*, create brand *recognition*, and generate brand *preference*; to drive targeted traffic to websites, and to sell books. But it doesn't stop there; it's not just about books, though books may be the prominent platform building block—it's about providing focused information to identified audiences who have a need for that information. Creating a platform requires a strategy that leverages the power of all the tools used in a synergistic way to create it: books, blogs, Twitter, websites, social networking sites, article syndication, internet and broadcast radio, TV appearances, free publicity, webinars, podcasts, speaking engagements, seminars, workshops, and so on. The well-designed and constructed platform allows us as authors to create a stronger, deeper, and more personal relationship with those who have a need for the information we provide. It creates a dedicated readership in whatever form “reading” occurs.

Whose bookshelf do you want YOUR book sitting on? J.T. Kirk

The development of Internet 2.0 has been the impetus for how information is created, disseminated, consumed, and repurposed by a variety of target audiences. Virtual communities with shared interests now drive the direction of many social-, political-, and consumer-specific initiatives. That aggregated power and influence is something we as authors should make every attempt to contribute to, and perhaps even help steer with information that such communities value and have a need for. It's not about selling books; it's about providing information for people who have a need for it; especially a need that, when fulfilled, can improve some aspect of their lives.

And we don't need a major bookstore to do that. To sell more books, we have to get off the beaten path of traditional book distribution (as a priority) because we have to step over so many bodies that litter the course. Until authors and small publishers can attain more equity with large distributors and wholesalers in co-participation for a book's success, we should: (1) aggressively pursue building platforms that define the value of the content in whatever form it appears, and (2) prioritize those channels that are most receptive to it.

As an author, what's your dream? To see your book stocked on the shelves in *Borders* or *Waldenbooks*? To see it as a "Book of the Month" selection? Or, do you see your book as a tool for developing a platform to establish and promote your "brand," where the information you provide is available to a specific audience *with a need* for that information in multiple formats?

So, would I as a "disseminator of needed information for a specific audience" be excited about seeing *Confessions of a Hiring Manager* sitting on a major bookstore shelf? Sure, for a moment, but I'd be more excited about hearing from someone who bought the book and how that information—between the covers or linked to it through other elements of my platform—helped him or her find a job or change careers.

The bookshelf we all want our book to be sitting on is the one in a person's home, where its potential to effect change in lives has been unleashed; not the bookstore, where its potential lies dormant and unrealized.

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© 2011 J.T. Kirk. J.T. Kirk is the author of *Confessions of a Hiring Manager: Getting to and Staying at the Top of the Hiring Manager's Short List in a Confused Economy* (Kings Crown Publishing, \$19.95). He is also the author of *50 Things You Can Do NOW to Help Keep Your Job*. J.T. Kirk has more than 20 years experience in technology, marketing, and communications hiring manager positions for Fortune 500 companies. He now writes books on job and career strategies, teaches workshops, and works with individual clients who desire a job or career change. Visit the website

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