

EXECUTIVE RESOURCES

Bohan &
Bradstreet, Inc.

NEWSLETTER FOR
BUSINESS
PROFESSIONALS

CAREER TIPS

Business challenges the best, brightest, and most company-faithful employee. Career planning is a myth in comparison to a couple of decades ago due to all the changes in the organization (i.e. outsourcing, acquisitions), leadership, and competition. There will be more employees changing jobs in this current decade than the last two decades combined. Collegiate graduates are expected to have 12-15 employers during an average 35-year career due to acquisitions, changes in leadership, re-engineering, outsourcing, funding, competition, relocation and a myriad of other factors. The chance of being employed by your current employer at the end of this decade is 18%, regardless of whether you are a trainee or C-level executive. Change is inevitable and your career is continuing to change. Your choice is whether to be proactive (i.e. career advancement, skills development) or reactive (i.e. employment disruption, skills erosion). Consider the following career tips:

ESTABLISH SHORT TERM GOALS: Think of this as your "TO-DO" list for refortifying and adding sustained value to your career. Create a list of goals that are critical to enhancing your value for current employer, team, customer, role and/or self. Acquire new competencies, update your skill set, invest in education, and establish new relationships and so on. The key is **adding value**. Establish a timetable for each goal and refresh your goals every 4-6 months.

GET IN SHAPE: Think of yourself as a "career athlete" that needs to be conditioned and fine tuned. Key to career advancement is **strong organizational skills**. Look at each goal as a project and break it down into components or manageable mini-projects. With each successful completion of a project, confidence will build and you will complete your goals.

EXPAND YOUR ROLE: Seek out your superior(s) and offer to **assume additional responsibilities**. This will establish two

benefits: first, it will demonstrate your willingness to help out and redistribute the workload and second, it provides additional expertise that could be valuable in the future. Often the best opportunity to contribute is support of corporate or department goals that mean others will recognize your achievements. Another possibility is to accept responsibility for mentoring another employee.

REINFORCE YOUR NETWORK: Out of sight, out of mind. Everyone needs a network. The key is to be exposed to the people who have influence with the level of authority that you would potentially report to. These are people who are often external to a company and are viewed as resources. Networking isn't just about getting a new job. Consider it as a source for business intelligence and an opportunity to be visible and learn. Quickest way is to join a professional association, participate in a Chamber of Commerce function, or attend a seminar. Another key to career success is **being visible**.

DRESS FOR SUCCESS: Image is important. Too often appearances detract from the values, knowledge and abilities that you want to exhibit. Identify appropriate business attire that is more indicative of the level you seek. Observe the attire of those more successful than yourself.

PROTECT THOSE REFERENCES: Life is demanding and time passes quickly. Before you know it, another year goes by. People relocate, get married, and change employers, email addresses and telephone numbers. Companies relocate, merge, disappear, outsource, and reorganize. Records get lost. References vanish quickly. **Guard your references and stay in contact with them 3-4 times a year.** Everyone needs quality references and you need them more than they need you.

BE FLEXIBLE & POSITIVE: Change is an opportunity to contribute. Be open to change. Look for new challenges and assignments where you can develop new skills, attain new knowledge, and showcase your abilities. Stay positive and upbeat even under pressure. **Be recognized as a team player and/or leader who provides quality results.**

UPDATE YOUR RESUME: Even if you are happily employed, update your resume semi-annually. Resumes are used externally when applying for leadership roles in civic organizations, appli-

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**Take a look at our website:
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Career Tips (continued)

cation in many professional associations, and for new employment. Internally, executive management can view your resume to select talent for projects or promotions. Make sure you list new skills and education as well as recent contributions and accomplishments.

BE SELECTIVE: Career development is an annual mission. If you start to search for new employment, be premeditated and selective. **The three most important criteria of any search are: company, culture and opportunity.** Company goes beyond products & services, size, locations and history. Understand how the business functions and is organized. What changes have impacted a business over the last three years (i.e. leadership, competition, market growth/erosion)? Determine what distinguishes the company from others. Analyze where the company is in its life cycle.

Culture is not always obvious. Attempt to understand what motivates the company. Discover how leadership manages and communicates. Whether a matrix or straight line structure, how will your performance be measured? Does the business reinvest in human capital through education and resources? Understand why and if employees are loyal. Observe whether other employees are energized and encouraged. Ask what are the three most important reasons why employees stay with the company. Validate opportunities to contribute beyond the job description. To be career-driven, one must understand short term (1-6 month) and annual objectives of the department, division and company. Evaluate the opportunity for personal growth and reward.

BE CAREFUL: Read the fine print when filling out employment or disclosure forms. Review closely disclaimers or legal releases on security, background or reference checking. There are many examples of confidential searches being totally exposed due to signing off and giving approval to check references of current employer.

Remember, **only in a dictionary does "success" come before "work"**. If you want your career to mature, then you have to initiate processes and efforts that will support career growth. Be smart, plan wisely, and make it happen. **Employ career wisdom.** Know what you want to do, learn how to do it, and then have the virtue to accomplish what you want to do.

CASE STUDY

CHALLENGE: Expanding consumer products manufacturer was consistently introducing new technology, designs and styles for multiple market channels. Executive team wanted better insight to product and promotional costs, profitability of contracts, impact on margins, pricing strategies, and so on. Accounting was not equipped to provide solutions and COO wanted solutions. B&B was contacted.

ACTION: After conferring with client, B&B partnered to create a new role of Marketing Controller to be liaison between finance, marketing, manufacturing and supply chain.

RESULT: Within three weeks, four candidates were identified, presented and evaluated. An offer was accepted and COO has a promotable resource who provides business intelligence.

A TOP-DOWN VIEW

What does it take to be successful as a Manager and/or Leader in today's business world? An interesting question, especially when viewed from those at the executive level. What is intriguing are the trends of business and the philosophies of executives. Over the last 10 years we first had a spike in the economy in the second half of the 1990's due to global competition, the Internet revolution, roll-ups, IPOs, Y2K scare, stock market run-up, and the options bonanza. Then reality hit us as the 21st century emerged with economic turbulence, increasing Chapter XI's, Sarbanes-Oxley, businesses downsizing, stock market run-down, employment outsourcing to Far East markets, and war in the Mid-East. As one source stated, "A recession is a period in which you tighten your belt. In a depression you have no belt to tighten, and when you have no pants to hold up, it's a panic." Recession or not, some panicked, most survived, and a few felt no pain and kept on growing. Business, life and economics are a roller coaster.

Through all the changes, ups and downs, the economy has improved after the 2004 election. Companies are leaner and more agile. Most are aggressive and progressive about profits, market share, and revenues. Roll-ups, IPOs and mergers are increasing. Outsourcing is stabilizing and USA businesses have reconnoitered, re-engineered, and reorganized to a new level of efficiency. Most businesses are flatter and too thin in talent to support sudden or sustained growth. There is a lack of bench strength, especially at the management level, to meet the demands of the executive team and the strategies of the company. To make things worse, over the next five years, the largest number of executives and senior managers will be retiring than any other period of time ever. It is important for those moving through the management hierarchy to recognize the view from the executive level, especially the first 100 days in a new role.

BUILD A FOUNDATION: Depending on level of authority, a foundation can take different form. Bottom line is that you best understand all the processes, controls, systems, and organizational structure that you support and influence. Beyond that you need to understand recent changes that need to be validated and measured as well as initiatives in process. It may require business intelligence of dotted-line functions, external customers and competition. Dive into the details long enough to ascertain the essence that will sustain your responsibilities.

LEARN TO LISTEN: When in a new role, listening is better than lecturing. The first 100 days is a time for a fresh view, whether it is people, processes or function. This is a time to evaluate the resources that you will be responsible for and to meet with those who you are responsible to. Determine what needs to stay the same, what needs to go, and what needs to be improved or changed. Often subordinates are informative, misplaced, concerned, stale, and underutilized. Thoroughly identify the priorities, strategies and objectives of your boss or bosses. Ensure that you appreciate the deliverables and expectancies on both a short (six months or less) and long-term basis. If you have the urge to lecture or pontificate on what will be accomplished, remember that many who stand up vigorously to exclaim their will or rights fall down miserably on their duties.

SET ACHIEVABLE GOALS: If you have the foundation in place, have gathered business intelligence, identified deliverables, then setting and prioritizing achievable goals is easier. Making a positive impact is gained by solving problems and implementing solutions. Problems come in two varieties: obvious and forth-

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WORST HIRING PRACTICES

According to the Department of Labor, by the year 2008 there will be about 10 million open positions in the USA. People are the backbone of any great company. In a survey conducted in 2004, over 80% of employees would be receptive to new employment. So with all the openings that will occur because of the baby boomers retiring and new job creation plus the number of people contemplating or receptive to new employment, why do so many companies continue to practice poor hiring techniques? Here are some of the worst:

UN-UNIQUE IMPRESSIONS: Most interviewers are still trying to attract candidates with job descriptions that are the same as others. The titles are stale and style of recruiting and interviewing is very yesterday. If your company has sizzle, a mission and a future, then tastily and professionally flaunt it. 21st century candidates for hire are interested in the success and future of the company (i.e. growth plans, brand success, market share growth, new business opportunities), the commitment to the employees (i.e. education/training, new technology, flexible hours.), and the culture (i.e. open communications, team goals, visibility). Every company has a distinct history, culture, and style, so define your uniqueness and exploit it.

UNDERUTILIZING EMPLOYEE REFERRALS: Lots of companies ask for employee referrals and then they fall through the cracks. The highest percentage of finding someone for a position is through referrals and employees are just one source. Before soliciting referrals, get organized and establish a process for distributing the information or resumes. We've all looked for employment. If there is an opportunity at your company and you ask an employee for a referral and then the referral never hears from you one way or the other, imagine the impression that you have left with both the referral and the employee.

PURPOSELESS INTERVIEWING: This really happens too often. A candidate returns from an interview and tells us that the hiring authority is a nice (sometimes great) person but dominated the interview; talked about things that were not relevant to the company, culture, management style, position or opportunity to contribute; or complained about the company, culture, management style, or role. Sometimes the candidates don't even get asked one question. The candidate feels like they have not been interviewed. And then we get a call from the company saying that they want to check references and make an offer. Amazing. The key to a successful interview is planning. Everyone in the hiring process must understand their role. Identify the key criteria, skills and personality traits that are critical to the role and develop questions that will allow you to assess the candidate. Block out the correct amount of time for each person and ensure that the candidate moves through the process seamlessly. Another story: We recently had a candidate on interview from 9AM to 4PM with a NYSE-listed company. The candidate interviewed with 6 different people, was kept waiting for over an hour throughout the process, and never was offered or given an opportunity to have lunch. Impressionable.

UNCONSCIOUS DIFFERENCES: True story: Area company was trying to hire a Customer Service Manager (CSM) on their own. After four months of frustration where 30+ candidates had suffered through 2-4 hour interviews and no offers had been made, the company turned to B&B to manage the search. Guess what the problem was? The committee involved in evaluating CSM candidates were split on the role and direction of the position. One group thought the CSM should be reactive and customer-sensitive. The other group felt the CSM must be proactive and marketing-driven. This is very typical in companies. Make

sure short-term deliverables and long goal objectives are agreed upon before starting the evaluation process.

INDECISIVELY DECISIVE: The best hiring process is to define the role, plan the interviewing procedures, identify the appropriate candidates, and be decisive because very good to great candidates will not be available for long. Often when the first candidate is a strong contender, the company will stretch out the process to ensure the best choice. No or delayed action is a turn-off. Just recently we had a client who interviewed four candidates and really liked one. The hiring authority traveled for one week, went on vacation for 10 days, and then was involved in a project that eliminated any communications. So seven weeks go by and the hiring authority asks to see the #1 candidate again who was miraculously still available. Three weeks after the second interview, the company finally made an offer, and then insisted on having a decision within 48 hours because the company needed someone to start in two weeks.

PERSONNEL GUARDS: Top Human Resource professionals are an asset to both internal and external customers. However, HR is often the first person met by a candidate and therefore sets the stage for impressions. When companies use 3rd party interviewers or under-trained subordinates to do the initial screen, make sure they understand the personal and technical requirements of the opening, the reporting structure, and the opportunities to contribute. Too often these first impressions are weak, unimpressive and not as positive as the executives would want to assume and set a tone that impacts the remainder of the process. From a search consultant perspective, the quickest way that a company can become a target for recruiting out is to have an HR department that short-sells the interviewing process and/or limits access to hiring authorities, thereby handicapping the flow of information and defeating the objective of securing the best talent for the welfare of the company.

TIDBITS

- Less than 30% of the Fortune 100 in 2004 were in the Fortune 100 in 1984
- Women executives are most prominent in health care, consumer products, and financial services.
- Products and technology are learned, but experience and expertise must be earned.
- Bohan & Bradstreet completed searches in 73 different companies in 2004
- 90+% of resumes are written more for the writer rather than the intended reader
- The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects a shortage of 10 million skilled workers by 2008.
- If you are confused about career direction or dissatisfied in current role, consider investing 20 minutes of time with MAPP (www.assessment.com), a free personal career matchmaker
- Revenue is Vanity, Profit is Sanity, Cash Flow is Reality
- Younger firms are termed as businesses with less than 30 years of existence. Older companies are obviously been in business for over 30 years. Quickest route to executive level is in a younger firm; average length of time of an executive in a younger company is 50+% less than an executive in an older business.

A Top-Down *(continued)*

coming. In establishing goals, think about the business strategies and the needs of the future. Realignment of personnel and/or function, reevaluating quality and timeliness of deliverables, and building better relationships with internal and external customers are often examples of obvious improvements. Anticipating change, whether proactive or reactive, is opportunity to shine. For example, business growth, either organically or through acquisition, requires prudent advance planning and careful execution.

CREATE THE BEST TEAM: Evaluate the people that you inherit and determine which ones are "A", "B" or "C" caliber. Remember that "A" employees are high caliber who need to be challenged, want to be promoted, endorse change and must learn about team work; "B" employees are often more loyal, predictable, team contributors, and need to be mentored; and "C" employees are below average performers who should be outsourced, eliminated or transferred to another department. Best teams are built

with a mixture of "A" and "B" personnel. Create the organization structure that you need to move forward without consideration of existing personnel. Plug in the "A" and "B" employees who are keepers. Look internally and externally for other quality candidates to fill the remaining roles. Be decisive about your choices. Remember, when a decision has been made and the die is cast, then destroy the alternatives.

TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS: As Francis Bacon once said, "If we begin with certainties, we shall end in doubts; but if we begin with doubts, and are patient in them, we shall end with certainties." Leaders must make decisions whether it is priorities, personnel or policy. The better that you know your environment, people and processes, the more comfortable you are in quantifying your doubts and defining your certainties. When faced with a decision, quickly and prudently evaluate the alternatives, listen to your instincts, and then make a decision. Try not to give reasons because even though your decision might be right, your reasons may not be valid.

Five Ways To Not Get An Offer

On the average, one out of eight job applicants receives an offer. Over 80% of the time, the best candidate for the job does not get the offer because of either poor interviewing habits or lack of proper preparation. As William James once said, "Whenever two people meet there are six people present. There is each man as he sees himself, each man as the other person sees him, and each man as he really is." So goes interviewing. Interviewing is both an art and a game. Art is the style, soft skills and characteristics displayed. The game is to get an offer and winning comes with practice, planning, and strategy. Although some have tried, you can't accept or turn down an offer unless you get an offer. Here are the five most common ways to not get an offer:

APPEARANCE: Under-dressing is viewed as disrespectful. Clothes need to be conservative, neat, pressed, and appropriate for business formal even if the setting is business casual. Shoes need to be shined. Make-up minimized; light or no perfume or cologne; hair must be combed and not distracting; minimize jewelry and accessories. We recently had a candidate on a 2nd interview to meet the President. The candidate arrives in casual attire because he was going to play a round of golf right after the interview. I didn't ask what his handicap was because he quadruple bogied the interview.

LACK OF ENTHUSIASM: If you are not interested in the opportunity or the company, why are you going on the interview? If you are interested, then show it. Here are the most common ways of displaying lack of interest: Didn't research the company; failed to ask meaningful questions about the position, company, culture, management style or industry; and provided at best short or vague answers to questions rather than showcasing meaningful knowledge, personality traits, and acquired skills.

ME, NOT WE: Remember the first part of William James' quote, "There is each man as he sees himself." There goes the problem. The interviewee is all about the interviewee. Too much accent on money, title, or other ego-satisfying stimuli. As Ben

Franklin said, "He that falls in love with himself, has no rivals." We too often fail to appreciate that what gives money, perks and title value is that you must exchange work for it.

UNCONSCIOUSLY SELF-DESTRUCTED: Consider interviewing as being an invited guest to an event that you want to attend. Bad form is arriving late for an appointment (indicative of poor planning); not fully completing the application (lack of compliance); limp, fishy handshake (lack of professionalism), failure to look at interviewer when conversing (lack of confidence or respect); poor posture (lack of poise or confidence); condemnation of past employers (lack of respect); make too many excuses (may not accept criticism well); provides evasive and/or conflicting information (perception of fabrication); poor manners (lack of courtesy); and doesn't show appreciation of interviewers time (lack of tact and professionalism). On the hilarious side, we had a candidate interview for a management role with one of our clients at noon. During the interview, the candidate pulls out a sandwich and attempts to have lunch while answering questions and discussing the opportunity. The candidate was hungry and therefore, excused quickly to align his priorities.

BEYOND THE CALL: Interviewing is an exchange of information. It is an opportunity to exhibit your personality and communicate knowledge and experience that is appropriate to the needs and requirements of the opportunity. All that being said, some people are too forthcoming (treat interview as a confessional and expose negativity); high-pressure (attempt to close too quickly or force decisions); aggressive (come off as conceited or with a know-it-all complex); verbose (treat interview as a lecture rather than an exchange); opinionated (lack of flexibility or inability to endorse change); and/or demanding (three for me, one for you attitude).

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