CAREER MOVES:

Tips on Conducting a Job Search & Managing Your Career

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Graduate Business Students and Alumni,

I am pleased to provide you with the booklet “Career Moves: Tips on Conducting a Job Search and Managing Your Career.” This booklet includes advice and suggestions on many topics, including:

- identifying and emphasizing your skills, attributes and interests,
- becoming a highly effective networker,
- writing outstanding resumes and cover letters,
- preparing for and mastering interviews,
- marketing yourself in your organization,
- managing and advancing your career, and
- negotiating job and salary offers.

You can visit the graduate professional development web site through the VCU Graduate Studies section and clicking on “graduate professional development” or go directly to http://business.vcu.edu/graduateprofessionaldevelopment.html. At this site you will find additional career related articles, videos of workshops and webinars that have been presented, and additional job search and career management resources. You can download this booklet at this site as well.

I also am available to all graduate business students and alumni for career coaching appointments in person or on the phone. These appointments, which are offered free of charge, can focus on reviewing your resume, developing a job search strategy, preparing for interviews, or negotiating a job offer. They also can focus on marketing yourself more effectively in your organization as well as strategies for managing or advancing your career. To arrange an appointment, you can contact me at jworth2@vcu.edu

I hope you enjoy this booklet and I look forward to speaking with you!

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A topic that often surfaces in my conversations over the years with graduate students and alumni of all ages is “all I know is that I no longer want to do what I have been (or currently are) doing. I don’t really know what I want to do or what type of position I should be looking for.” In other words, they don’t really know “who they are or where they belong”. Clearly, this situation makes it extremely difficult to manage your career or conduct a successful job search. **If you don’t know what you want, how can you find it?**

There are many self-assessment tools you can take to help you gain a better understanding of your interests, skills, values and motivators and how they match up with job functions in the business world. One assessment I would recommend is CareerLeader. CareerLeader is a fully integrated approach to business career self assessment that is built on the premise that one’s interests, motivators, and skill will drive their future career success and satisfaction. You can learn more about CareerLeader by going to [www.careerleader.com](http://www.careerleader.com) or by contacting me at jworth2@vcu.edu.

Another method is to take the time to honestly think about “who you are and where you belong.” Below you see a list of questions to ask yourself:

1. How would you summarize your career in one sentence?
2. What do you love doing?
3. What do you hate doing?
4. What are a few of your most highly developed skills
5. What do you do best?
6. What professional accomplishment are you most proud of? What skills or attributes contributed most to this accomplishment?
7. In what work environment do you function best?
8. What 3 adjectives would your manager or colleague use to describe you? Which one do you agree with the most?
9. What other relevant information should a potential employer know about you?
10. What is the most important thing you are looking for in your next role?

I often suggest this activity to people who are conducting a job search as well as those who say they are happily employed. I also suggest that they answer the questions initially, put them away for a few days, and then re-visit them when they are in a different mood or have a fresh perspective. This information also can help you prepare for and conduct networking conversations with students or alumni who work in jobs that interest you.
Many people start off with a great head of steam but allow frustration to take over. If you wait to get started until you have large blocks of uninterrupted time, you may never get started at all. Here are a few suggestions that can help you find time for your job search and maintain your focus and energy.

**Start by carving out several small blocks of time each week.**
Rather than wait for free days to begin your search, start with thirty minute intervals at least once a day. In one thirty minute interval, make a list of your current target companies and the names of people you know at each one. In your next interval, search the alumni directory to identify some additional alumni who can be new networking contacts at these companies. Take another interval to conduct some research on several of your target companies or take a fresh look at your current resume. Keep your blocks of time focused on small objectives. Focusing your time will help you avoid becoming overwhelmed by the activities in front of you. Use one interval to craft and send a well written networking email. Once you feel comfortable with this email format and message, you can personalize this format to a few other people on your networking list. Use another interval to personalize several more networking emails and then shift to another activity, like conducting additional research on your target companies. Limiting the scope of your objectives for these intervals of time can provide you with a greater sense of initial accomplishment and help you avoid becoming frustrated.

**Expand your time intervals as you gain confidence.** As you contact more and more people and conduct more and more networking conversations, you will begin to realize that most people really do enjoy helping other people. You may even find that you are beginning to enjoy these conversations and that your job search seems less intimidating than before.
Organizing your job search effectively can save you a tremendous amount of time and effort.

Organizing Your Job Search

“I’ve been with my current company for over 17 years.”

“I got my last three jobs through headhunters.”

“The job market was booming when I last searched for a job; the hardest part was choosing between the five offers I had.”

“I’m working very hard on my job search; last week I applied to 87 jobs I saw on Monster.com.”

Conducting a job search can be an extremely intimidating task, especially for people who have not conducted a search for quite some time. For many people, the current job market seems very foreign. They have never really had to search for a job; the jobs just somehow seemed to find them. Since they have never really conducted a search, they have no experience organizing one. Organizing your job search effectively can save you a tremendous amount of time and effort. It also can prevent you from spinning your wheels and engaging in activities that can lead to nowhere. Here are a few helpful hints:

Organize your search by industry or job function. If you are flexible about location and are willing to relocate, you may decide that you want to leverage your current industry expertise but pursue a different job function. Identify some of the major companies in your industry and begin checking their websites on a regular basis for openings in areas that interest you. Alternately, you may decide that you want to focus on a particular job function that can be found in virtually any industry. In that case, make a list of companies that you would like to work for, factoring in their current growth, stability or new initiatives.

Organize your search by location. If your search is focused on a particular city or specific region, you probably don’t know the market in that city as well as you may think you do. One underutilized resource is the Chamber of Commerce in the city you are targeting. For example, if you were interested in finding a consulting position in Atlanta, you may know the names of some of the large international firms with offices in Atlanta. You may not be able to name any smaller, niche firms with offices in that city. If you go to the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce web site at www.metroatlantachamber.com and click on “member news”, you can search the membership directory on line by business category or company name. A search for “consultants” will yield the names of numerous firms, each with a link to their web site. By going to each of these firm’s web sites, you will be able to quickly identify firms that practice in your area of interest or expertise.

Network by location. Once you have the names of some companies that interest you, you can go to the VCU Alumni Directory to review the local alumni associations and chapters to see if there are any alumni working in these companies. Obviously, it is unlikely that there will be alumni working in all of these companies but, by contacting alumni who work in the consulting industry in Atlanta, you may find that they can help more than you would think. They may have friends or former co-workers who work in one of these companies. That’s what networking is all about...
TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL JOB SEARCH

For many people, conducting a job search can be a frustrating and ego-deflating experience. As you conduct your search, it is essential that you understand what is working and what is not. Here are a few tips that can help.

**Identify what is going wrong and fix it.** Sounds simple, right? Many people do not really analyze what specific aspect of their search is not working. Are you sending off resumes but receiving very few (or no) interviews? Are you receiving initial interviews but no call back or final interviews? Are you making it to the final rounds of interviews but receiving no offers? These three questions represent very different problems. If you are not receiving interviews, you may not be targeting jobs that realistically match your experience and qualifications. If your initial interviews are not yielding further consideration, you may not be as prepared or effective as you think in responding to the interview formats and questions you are receiving. If you are getting into final rounds but not receiving offers, you may not be selling yourself as effectively as you think.

**Hiring managers do not hire resumes; they hire people.** Make sure that your resume describes your accomplishments and skills AND gives a glimpse into the person behind the resume. While it is true that recruiters and hiring managers are most interested in your relevant skills and qualifications, they also are looking for people who will fit into their team, company culture and work environment. If you include a profile in your resume, emphasize the attributes and traits you bring to the table and how they differentiate you from others.

**Demonstrate what you can do as well as what you have done.** In your cover letter and interview, suggest ways in which you can add value to this job and company. Use the research you have conducted into the company and perspectives you have gained through networking (there’s that word again…) to show that you can hit the ground running and will contribute from day one.

**Develop an agenda for every interview.** For every interview you receive, develop an agenda that contains the key points you want to make in the interview and the aspects of your candidacy you want to emphasize. As you respond to questions, mentally check off the agenda points you have included in your answers. If any remain, consider using a minute or so of your time for questions at the end of the interview to “bring up one or two things that are important to know about you that have yet to come up in the conversation.”
ARE ON-LINE JOB BOARDS WORTH THE EFFORT?

The job sites above are only a few of the job boards often utilized by job seekers. Opinions differ as to which sites are the most effective and usually vary widely based on the background of the job seeker and the industry or job function being sought. I have been asked by many MBA for Executives students and business school alumni whether they should even bother to apply to jobs advertised on these sites. Some people tell me that they never hear back from applications submitted and never receive interviews. Others tell me that they have received interviews and job offers from applications they have submitted. So....ARE these job boards worth the effort?

The simple answer is yes. When conducting a job search, leave no stone unturned. The more thorough answer is that utilizing job boards should be only a small part of your overall job search. Let’s start with a few tips on utilizing job boards.

All job boards are not created equal. When utilizing several job boards, you must accept the fact that each site may have very different application processes and registration procedures. Some are fairly user friendly while others seem to want to frustrate you on purpose. However you intend to use these job boards, you should be very sure that the types of positions you are seeking are commonly found in the boards you are using.

Do what they tell you to do. While this may sound obvious, be sure to follow the instructions carefully for each job you pursue. If you are directed to send a resume and cover letter, do so. If you are directed to cut and paste your resume into a box on the form, do so. If the ad specifies no phone calls, don’t call.

Include key words in your resume. Many companies posting jobs on job boards or on their own web sites will have a few key qualifications, certifications or specific skills that are essential for the position. The job description may include specific requirements like “project management certification”, “six sigma black belt” or “C.P.A.”. It also may include more general requirements like “experience managing teams”, “strong analytical skills” or “outstanding communication skills”. While you may not possess all of the requirements or preferences mentioned, you should highlight those you do have in your profile or in a separate skills section of your resume.

Think of job boards as a very small part of your overall job search. Once you have applied for a position, your networking activities should kick into very high gear. Identify employees who work at the company by checking out the alumni career advisor network and the alumni data base. Begin to establish relationships with people at the company who can help you learn more about the company and the position. Let them get to know you well enough so that they will feel comfortable being an “inside ambassador” for you within the company and help your resume receive additional attention.

Job boards should be only a small part of your search.
FIVE THINGS THAT CAN DERAIL A JOB SEARCH

Many people find conducting a job search to be a very time consuming and frustrating experience. Below you will a few mistakes people often make that can prevent their searches from being successful.

Not proofreading emails and letters. Saying that you have excellent communication skills is easy, but do you demonstrate them by ensuring that your writing is concise, grammatically correct and free of spelling errors? Any recruiter you speak with can tell you horror stories of poorly written and/or incorrectly addressed emails and letters they have received. The next time you send an email, ask yourself if you would feel comfortable if this email were to be forwarded to several people in the company and remained in your candidate file as a writing sample. Stranger things have happened...

Not appearing to be focused in your search and convinced in what you are looking for. Many interviews begin with a very logical question like “Why do you want to work for this company?” or “Why do you think this position is right for you?” This is your chance to demonstrate why the company is of interest or why this position is the perfect next step in your career. Highlighting your past achievements will help you do this, but don’t forget to describe the ways in which you can add value in this role and make a valuable contribution to the company. Be sure to have studied the job description carefully so that you can use actual examples of what will be expected and how you feel you can deliver appropriate results.

Not conveying a track record of accomplishment in your resume – Does your resume describe your roles and responsibilities but fail to convey the results and impact of your work? Simply said, business is all about results. Whether you are on the job or trying to get the job, it’s not enough to simply describe what you did; you need to describe how your success in this role made an impact on the business or on the people around you.

Not demonstrating your knowledge and excitement about the company and position during the interview – During many selection processes, several candidates often emerge as appearing to be equally qualified for a position. You can differentiate yourself by conducting extensive research on the industry, the company and their competitors; networking with company employees; and reading up on current events that affect the company. If given time to ask a few questions at the end of an interview, ask questions in a way that makes it clear that you already know a great deal about the company and want to know more.

Not answering open ended interview questions clearly and concisely. People ramble. Nervous people in interviews ramble a lot. The cure? Think of a question like “Tell me a little about yourself” as “What do I most want this interviewer to know about me?” Create a profile that includes a one line summary of your experience and a brief description of your most relevant skills, accomplishments and personal attributes. Your profile can help you organize your information and help you keep your answer concise and to the point. When you have finished your answer...stop talking! Use this same approach to make an outline to organize the information you want to share in other open ended questions.
EXECUTIVES, RECRUITERS, AND CAREER COACHES all agree that networking is the best way to advance in your career and find the best jobs. A key aspect of successful networking and interviewing is the ability to introduce yourself concisely and create an interest on the part of the listener. This introduction is often called a 30 second commercial. Many recruiters and alumni have told me that an effective 30 second commercial is an essential part of a good first impression and that it can be a real differentiator. I would like to see all VCU students and alumni master this important skill. Here are a few suggestions that can help:

**Begin with a VERY BRIEF summary of your experience.** Next, include highlights of your most relevant strengths and attributes, your current interest or career objective, and a glimpse into the person behind the resume. Your commercial should not tell your life story or go into detail about any particular job or aspect of your career. The idea is to interest the listener, not bore them to tears.

**Deliver your commercial in a conversational tone.** Nothing can be less effective than delivering what sounds like a canned speech when beginning a networking conversation or interview. While it is a good idea to prepare your commercial in advance, your delivery should be smooth and in your own words. Preparing an outline or a rough script in advance will help prevent you from rambling and including too much information. For example:

- **My name is Tom Smith and I have over 10 years of marketing experience in the life sciences and pharmaceutical industries. For the past six years, I've been very successful in launching new products in very competitive markets with Johnson & Johnson. With J & J, I've shown that I can combine strategic thinking with a common sense approach to solving marketing challenges. I'm developing a real passion for bio technology and early stage life sciences companies and am very interested in learning more about this environment. I'd love to learn more about Jones Enterprises and am looking forward to our discussion.**

**Practice, practice, practice!** When networking with other students and/or alumni, begin the conversation with your 30 second commercial. Ask for feedback on the length and effectiveness of your commercial and, if appropriate, ask for suggestions on how to improve it.

**If you are an alumnus contacted for a networking conversation, ask students or alumni contacting you to begin the conversation with their 30 second commercials.** Provide feedback on the length and effectiveness of their 30 second commercials and offer suggestions for improvement. Remember, networking is a two-way street; the more advice and suggestions you receive and act upon, the more effective your networking and interview skills will become.
In the world of networking, it's often said, “Networking is networking.” While this might be true, the reality is that networking is a very effective and valuable activity for people who are conducting a job search or trying to advance their careers. As people identify networking contacts who work in a company or job function that interests them, their networking outreach often begins with an email exchange and frequently moves into a scheduled phone conversation. Depending on the location and availability of the networking contact, an informational interview may be arranged.

Informational interviews can be an excellent opportunity to market yourself in person and “become known” to your networking contact. If the interview is conducted in the company’s facility, it can provide an excellent first hand view of the office and a glimpse into the company’s culture. Your networking contact may be willing to walk you around the office and even introduce you to other people in the company or department that that most interests you. Clearly, these are all very good things, so how could an informational interview be your worst enemy? Here are a few suggestions to keep in mind when conducting informational interviews.

**Do your homework.** Prior to the interview, be sure to conduct research on the company. You should be familiar with the company's products, competitors, recent trends and current events that relate to the company and industry. While this information may not become the main topic of conversation, it is a professional courtesy to be prepared and knowledgeable about your host's company. Several alumni have complained to me about conducting networking conversations and informational interviews with people who knew virtually nothing about their company or industry. To say that they were not impressed is an understatement. Don’t let this happen to you!

**Dress correctly for the appointment.** If you will be meeting your contact in his/her office, make a point to ask about the standard of dress for the company. If your contact walks you around the office and introduces you to his/her colleagues, you want to fit in and feel comfortable in these surroundings. Dressing in a suit when everyone else is casually dressed (or vice versa) will make you feel like a fish out of water.

**Try to follow up with everyone you met.** If you speak with several of your contact’s colleagues, try to get each person’s card before you end the conversation. If that is not possible, ask your contact for their email addresses. Granted, if you say a brief hello to 30 people during your tour, this may not be possible or appropriate, but sending a brief and personalized follow-up email can be an impressive gesture and help you expand your network in the company. Sending a “mass email” to numerous people who may not have met you will reflect poorly on you.

**Thank your contact.** The words “thank you” can never be overused. Thank your contact for taking the time to meet with you and (if applicable) for introducing you to his/her colleagues. Keep in touch with him/her and offer to return the favor in any way you can.
For many people, discussing their weaknesses is one of the most dreaded aspects of a job interview. While you can't avoid or refuse to answer the question, it would be very counterproductive to engage in a long narrative of your many weaknesses. The key is to prepare a straightforward answer that demonstrates knowledge of yourself with information that will not hinder your candidacy. Here are some suggestions that can help:

**Don't try to “game” the process.** While it may be tempting to answer this question by telling your interviewer that your only weakness is your inability to organize and keep track of your many accomplishments, don't do it! Even the most inexperienced or gullible interviewer will be able to see through this approach. Taking this approach can also cause the interviewer to think you are not being honest or, even worse, that you have something to hide.

**Don't describe a weakness that relates to a core competency of the position.** If you are interviewing for a position as Sales Manager, don’t volunteer as a weakness that you are not always effective at motivating or developing people if the job will require you to train, develop and get the most out of your sales representatives. Similarly, don’t volunteer that your analytical skills are not as strong as they could be if you are interviewing for a finance role. While this may seem obvious, I have seen people do this more often than you would imagine.

**Refer back to your performance reviews.** Just as there are very few perfect candidates, there are very few perfect employees. Hopefully, you have kept or have access to your past performance reviews. As you review them, you will probably notice that you were not outstanding in EVERY aspect of your job. Undoubtedly, there were some areas in which you excelled, but there were others where you could still improve. When answering this question, volunteer an area mentioned in your review where you could continue to improve. Make sure you include in your answer what you have done to improve in this area. You may want to include a description of courses or training programs you have taken (or are taking) to bolster your knowledge in specific areas. You may want to give examples of committees or task forces you have volunteered to join to broaden your understanding of the company’s products or services. These types of examples also can help you demonstrate additional areas that you can add value outside your major areas of responsibility.

**Show what you have learned.** When answering a question about your weaknesses (or describing something at which you have failed), include what you have learned from the experience or give concrete examples of how you have improved. Many interviewers ask questions about weaknesses or failures to gain perspectives on how you react to constructive criticism or how you handle adversity. Don’t be afraid to be honest about the fact you are not perfect (no one is!) Instead, show what you did about this failure or disappointing result and focus on your commitment to continuous improvement.
IDENTIFYING AND EMPHASIZING YOUR RELEVANT STRENGTHS

A previous article addressed the topic “What Are Your Weaknesses?” The article began with the premise that many people dread answering questions about their weaknesses and stated that candidates need to prepare a straightforward answer that will demonstrate self-knowledge and provide information that will not hinder their candidacies.

Surprisingly, many people dread answering questions about their strengths as well. Some are uncomfortable talking about what they do well because they feel that they are bragging or being boastful. Even more surprisingly, other people dread addressing their strengths because they don't know what they are! Here, the key is to demonstrate a knowledge of yourself that allows you to identify and emphasize your strengths that are relevant to the position you are pursuing. Here are some suggestions that can help:

Discussing your strengths is not boasting. While it is true that no one likes a braggart, there is a big difference between announcing that you were the best manager the company had ever seen and describing the skills, attributes or approaches that led to your success in managing projects in your job.

Refer back to your performance reviews. This suggestion can help you identify your strengths as well as address your weaknesses. Look for areas where you received the highest performance ratings and craft a story around how these areas of strength helped you to succeed in your job and add value in your role. If you still feel that you are boasting, try beginning your answer with “Well, my recent performance reviews identified teamwork and management style as my strongest areas. Here’s how these attributes helped me to add value in my last role…”

Emphasize strengths that are relevant to the job you are pursuing. This is especially important for people who are changing careers or moving into a different or higher level position in their company. If you have been an engineer or software developer, you are probably used to describing the technology you have utilized and mastered in detail. You also may be used to emphasizing the patents you have applied for and received along with technical articles you have written. While this may have helped you in the past, it can hurt you now if these areas are not relevant to the job you are pursuing. This brings me to....

Study the new job description in detail. Pay close attention to sections like “the ideal candidate must have…” or “requirements for this position include…” It is likely that ALL of these areas will not be your major strengths, but you should make a point of emphasizing the areas that are. While it certainly would be disingenuous to cut and paste this section into your resume or application as examples of your strengths, failing to address these areas can definitely harm your candidacy.

Demonstrate how you can add value in this role. While describing your past accomplishments is important, don’t forget to describe how the skills and attributes you bring to this position can add value to the role and the company. Even if you have not had previous experience in this exact position, mount a convincing case that this position is the perfect next step for you and that it is one that you know you are ready for. Now is not the time to be timid....
IF THE JOB MARKET LOOKS BLEAK, PURSUE YOUR DREAMS!

“Beth” is the Director of Development for the press function at a large public university. Prior to this role, she was in a similar role with the The Hill Center in Durham, North Carolina. Before that, she was the Director of the North Carolina Pottery Center in Seagrove, NC. She has combined her passion for the arts and humanities, education and administration into a career that has allowed her to help non-profits operate in a fiscally responsible way.

“Tom” aligned his undergraduate business studies with his passion for working with urban youth by becoming a Principal with the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) and opening his own public charter school in Atlanta. In 2008, he was promoted to Executive Director for KIPP’s Atlanta regional office where he oversees the cluster of schools and is working to grow several new KIPP schools.

“Helen” enjoyed a long and successful career with Avon Products and left her position as Executive Vice President, Chief Financial and Administrative Officer to move back to her home town. She is currently the owner of small educational publishing company which provides custom self-publishing services and also serves on the Boards of Directors of RadioShack Corporation and R.H. Donnelley Corporation.

What do these people have in common? All made a decision at some point in their careers to combine a passion or strong area of interest with their career direction and found a non-traditional way of utilizing and leveraging their business education. Put another way, they are pursuing what has always been (or turned out to be) a dream.
We all have heard the adage “when life gives you lemons, make lemonade”. This adage is very relevant to today’s economy and job market. Many companies are in trouble and large layoff announcements still seem like daily bulletins on the news. I have spoken with a number of people who are very surprised to find themselves in a job search at this point of their careers. Others want to make sure they are prepared in case a layoff impacts them. The plan was to climb the corporate ladder in their chosen field of finance, marketing, accounting or consulting for the immediate future and maybe, just maybe, pursue something they really want to do later on when (or before) they retire. With the job market resembling a very large lemon, maybe the best lemonade is…..why wait?

I once spoke with someone who had been a Brand Manager and Marketing Executive at several consumer brand companies, most recently a luxury leather goods manufacturer. He excelled in his job and has always been an avid sports (particularly hockey) fan. He decided to leave the world of corporate marketing to become the Director of Strategic Development for NHL Interactive CyberEnterprise, LLC, the interactive division of the National Hockey League. Needless to say, he has never been happier.

Whether your dream is to teach, start a business, run a non-profit organization, perform a similar function in a different industry/environment or pursue something totally different from anything you’ve done before, include a passion or something that always has been a long term plan into your job search activities. It will put a whole new spin on your efforts to identify your most transferable skills. Your networking activities will be much more fun and you will meet many people with whom you have a lot in common. In your interviews, you will have no difficulty demonstrating a sincere interest in the job. You may find yourself smiling more than ever before. Isn’t that what it should be all about?
When speaking with alumni and EMBA students who are conducting or contemplating a job search, I often am asked “I’m thinking of looking for a new position. Do you think I should engage a search firm to help me in my search?” This question conveys a lack of understanding about search firms in general. When speaking with a search firm or executive recruiter, you must realize that they are working for their client companies, not you. They only will be interested in you if your skills and experience strongly match the position a company has hired them to fill. They are very interested in candidates who are looking to build on significant industry and functional expertise; they are usually not interested in career changers. Here is some information that will help you better understand the search environment.

Research search firms before contacting them. Identify firms and even individual recruiters who specialize in placing people in your industry or job function. Pay close attention to the background or biography of the recruiter. You often can find this information in the firm’s web site or industry publications. While there are many sites you can use to research firms, one site that is easy to remember is www.searchfirms.com. At this site you can search firms by industry, functional area and location. This will help you to identify firms and recruiters who have a practice in the areas that most interest you.

When identifying a firm to contact, consider small independent firms as well as large, international firms. You also must realize that search firms come in two basic types, retained and contingency (though some firms work in both). It is important to find out how a firm is working on a particular assignment and how these two different methods of filling a job align with your goals and objectives.

Retained firms. Companies may "retain a firm" to find someone for a particular job opening, usually a high level executive position. In this case, the firm has the exclusive role to search for candidates for this job. The company seeking a new employee pays the retained firm for its expertise as a consultant and its ability to source and identify outstanding candidates. During the search, the company agrees to interview only the candidates identified by the firm. The firm usually receives payment in installments: part of the fee is paid to initiate the search, part is paid midway through the search, and the final payment is due when a final candidate is hired.

Contingency firms. Contingency firms operate more like brokers, brokering people to potential employers. A contingency recruiter may have strong relationships with executives in human resources or functional disciplines like marketing, finance or operations with a number of different companies. He/she also may have a good understanding of the cultures of these companies as well as specific skills and attributes that are valued. The recruiter will send resumes of candidates to these companies hoping that one will be selected for an interview. The employer pays the firm only if they hire a person recommended by the firm. Both types of firms provide valuable services and have coexisted and flourished for many years. Depending on your background and job objective, search firms could play an important role in your search.
A profile provides an immediate opportunity to demonstrate that you possess the experience, general attributes and specific skills that are being sought.

Create a Profile that Describes Your Candidate Identity

The first impression of a candidate often is the resume that is received. That said, the first impression of the resume often is the profile that leads it off. So what is a profile and why do you need one?

For your job search to be successful, you must create a candidate identity that matches the requirements and major components of the job you are seeking. A profile provides an immediate opportunity to demonstrate that you bring to the table the range of experience, general attributes and some of the specific skills that are being sought. This is especially important for career changers, whose current work experience may be in a different industry or job function. Put differently, a profile can help highlight your transferable skills. Below you will see an example of a highly effective profile and what makes it effective.

*****************
Accomplished Project Manager with 12 years of demonstrated success in delivering complex projects that involve multiple parties and matrixed resources. Known as a highly effective leader with well-developed communications skills, a dedication to excellence, and the ability to deliver client requirements on-time and on-budget. Recipient of several company achievement awards in recognition of outstanding leadership and perseverance. Possess diverse project management expertise, combined with proven strengths in strategic planning / road mapping and project execution. Areas of special expertise include:

- Strategy & Execution
- Budgetary Control & Oversight
- Team Leadership
- Process Improvement
- Benchmarking & Evaluations
- Client/Vendor Relations
- Project Management
- Forecasting/Resource Allocation
- Training & Mentorship

*****************
Highlight your years of work experience if it works to your advantage. In this case, the candidate learned that the types of positions she was seeking all required between 10 -15 years of experience. Since her work experience falls right in the middle of this range, she has highlighted this fact in the first line of her profile.

Combine skills and attributes you have developed with those specified in the job description. In this case, the job description specified that “the ideal candidate should have experience managing large and complex projects and delivering them on time and under budget”. Since this is one of her major strengths, she has highlighted this in the narrative of her profile and will provide significant result-based accomplishment statements in her work experience to back it up.

Isolate and draw attention to specific relevant areas of expertise. Recruiters do not actually read a resume on the first pass. Rather, they glance at the resume for 30 seconds or so to determine whether the candidate possesses the major requirements needed for the position. By listing some of her relevant expertise in brief, bulleted columns, she has helped ensure that this information will survive this quick glance.
Many people do not give adequate thought to what they are trying to accomplish or learn from their networking conversations. For many people, networking is an uncomfortable activity that they engage in out of desperation or because “they are supposed to.” They think networking is all about contacting strangers, asking for favors or, even worse, asking for a job. They do not give adequate thought to what they are trying to accomplish or learn from their networking conversation and conduct very little research in advance about the person’s company or industry. All too frequently, this inappropriate approach and/or lack of preparation result in a negative first impression that can be easily avoided. Here are a few suggestions that can help you feel more comfortable about conducting networking activities:

**Network to learn.** When contacting people initially, let them know what you want to accomplish in the conversation. Tell them that you are looking to learn more about their company, their job function, or their industry. Whether you are networking as part of a job search or networking to become more visible and connected in your company or industry, setting the stage up front will help your get off on the right foot.

**Don’t attach your resume to an initial email.** Attaching your resume to your initial email can give a “bait and switch” impression to your networking contact. With today’s complicated human resources policies, your contact may wonder why he/she is receiving your resume and worry that the receipt of your resume makes you an “official candidate” to the company and requires some special action. After you have exchanged a few emails and scheduled a time to talk, you can then send your resume with a statement in your email like “Thanks so much for agreeing to talk with me on Friday. I realize that your time is at a premium, so I have attached my resume so you will have a better idea of my background prior to our conversation. That way, I won’t have to take up valuable time in our phone call describing my background.”

**Do your homework.** Research the person’s company before conducting any networking phone call or meeting. Ask questions in a way that makes it clear that you know a good deal about the company or industry already and want to know even more. I have heard from several alumni who have been very turned off by students and fellow alumni who clearly have done little or no research prior to their phone conversation or informational interview and expect to be told everything they need to know about the company in this brief conversation.

**Network in venues that match your personality.** If you don’t like approaching people you don’t know in public forums, you probably won’t feel comfortable trying to “work the room” at a conference, convention or large reception. If you don’t like making cold phone calls, make your initial contact through email. Matching your networking approach to your personality can help make the process feel much more comfortable.
Whether you are networking through emails, phone conversations, or face to face meetings, know what you are trying to accomplish in each networking conversation. If you are thinking of changing careers and trying to learn more about the person’s job function, have a few initial questions prepared for your first conversation. Let the person know that you want to be respectful of their time and, after 20 or so minutes, ask if another follow-up conversation could be arranged. This will give you time to process the information you just learned, review additional job descriptions for similar job functions, and think of additional questions to ask the next time. It also will give you time to conduct some research on the company so that you can pass on an interesting article you read or some information you noticed in the newspaper about the company.

Get to know your networking contacts and let them get to know you. I often stress that networking is a two way street. If you are trying to learn more about a targeted company you want to work for, you need to do more than learn about the company. You need to allow your networking contact to learn more about you. As your conversation builds, volunteer a bit of information about the type of work environment you prefer, what you have like about previous companies you have worked with, and perhaps even an accomplishment that you are proud of and that really added value. You may even want to share a couple of personal interests you have. As you strive to develop “inside ambassadors” (people on the inside who can move your resume along and/or put in a good word for you), remember that most people will only vouch for someone they feel that they know.
HOW DO I KEEP MY NETWORKING CONVERSATIONS GOING? (CONTINUED)

**Ask for more contacts.** Try not to let a networking conversation end without asking for the names of a couple of additional people you could contact. Gaining these additional contacts will accomplish several things. It will give you additional people to learn from who may have different insights and experiences. Once you have spoken with these new people (or had email exchanges with them), send a brief email to your original contact to thank him/her for introducing you and letting him/her know that they have been very helpful.

**Keep your contacts appraised of your progress.** If you are looking for a job, let your networking contacts know that you have found a position and describe what you will be doing. If you are trying to build visibility in your industry or profession, let them know that you will be serving as a panelist or speaker in an upcoming conference and that you would appreciate hearing about any similar opportunities. And remember: “thank you” is a phrase that cannot be overused!
Many people have asked me if writing cover letters really is necessary when applying for jobs. My favorite answer to this question is “It depends...on how badly you want the job!” In a job search where your candidacy will be compared to numerous (perhaps hundreds!) of other qualified candidates, writing a highly effective cover letter can serve as a valuable differentiator. Here are a few suggestions that can help:

Don’t write generic letters. Writing brief letters that sound “boiler plated” (basic information that is included in every letter you send) will not help your candidacy; rather, they can make it appear that you are not really that interested in the position. Letters that include statements like “as you can see in my resume, I am an excellent candidate for this position” are not convincing.

Emphasize how much you know about the company and/or position. This is your chance to demonstrate the research you have conducted (company website, industry publications, and recent news articles) and emphasize WHY you are excited about working at this company. Tie your own values and what you are looking for in a corporate environment to specific aspects you have learned about the company. Pull specific items from the job description and tie them to the skills and attributes you bring to the job. This extra effort allows you to draw a TIGHT CONNECTION between the company/position and what you bring to the table.

Highlight the networking you have conducted. Obviously, this assumes that you HAVE been networking... In addition to the research mentioned above, indicate what you have learned about the company through your networking conversations with employees. Mention the names of people with whom you have communicated (get their permission to use their names first) and indicate what they have told you that you found particularly interesting or intriguing. By mentioning the names of your contacts, you increase the chances of these people being contacted for more information about you. This allows them to serve as “inside ambassadors” on your behalf.

Provide a glimpse into the person behind the resume. Your resume should focus on your accomplishments, the results you have achieved, and the impact you have had in your roles everywhere you have been. Your cover letter can highlight skills, attributes or personality traits that are relevant to the position and that will show that you are a good “fit” for the company.

Think of your cover letter as an example of your writing ability. Communication skills are an important aspect of most jobs in any business environment. Before you click “send”, ask yourself if you would feel comfortable if this letter were to be forwarded to several people in the company or kept in your candidate file as an example of your writing ability. Before sending your letter, ask someone you know well (spouse, friend, or colleague) to review the letter for typos, grammatical errors and even tone. You will find a sample cover letter in the appendices section in the back of this booklet.
DEVELOPING A TRULY EFFECTIVE RESUME

Obviously, developing a resume is an essential aspect of a successful job search. In fact, your resume often creates the first impression of your candidacy. Just as your attire and body language create first impressions during an interview, the look and content of your resume create first impressions that can make or break your chances of receiving an interview. Here are a few suggestions that will help you develop a truly effective resume that will create an excellent first impression.

Your resume should be a visually appealing, impressive looking document. Pay attention to the font size and style, margins, spacing, and use of white space on your resume. The font size and style of your name should stand out but not be overly large or garish. Using too many bolded words can be visually confusing and counterproductive. Avoid using several different margins in lining up the bullet statements that describe your work experience and education.

Consider including a professional profile to highlight your most relevant skills. If you are changing job functions or careers, a profile can help you bridge the gap between what you have accomplished in your previous work experience and the requirements of the position you are seeking. Your profile would include a brief summary of your career to date “12 years of progressive experience in marketing, sales and business development” along with highlights of your most relevant skills and attributes “Special expertise in international business development and the management of cross-functional teams. Known as a highly motivated, creative professional with excellent analytical skills and the ability to merge strategic thinking with a common sense approach to implementation.”

Use concise, result oriented bullet statements to describe your work experience. Begin each statement with a strong action verb (managed, created, led, initiated, etc.) and set up your statements in an accomplishment format like this: “Created a marketing strategy aimed at penetrating new international markets that brought in 12 new clients and increased revenue by 30%”. If you do not have access to numerical results, use adjectives that you would feel comfortable defending (significant, substantial) that describe the accomplishment. Consider using this approach to describing your roles or tasks: Here’s what I did, here’s what it entailed, and here are the results I achieved/the value I added/the impact what I did had on the department or company. This approach will help you add results to your resume and also help the reader better understand the connection between the actions you have taken and the value you have added.

Include information about the person behind the resume. While recruiters are most interested in the depth of candidates’ skills and accomplishments in selecting people to interview, they are also interested in selecting candidates who are a good fit for their organization and company culture. Include information that could give a recruiter additional reasons to be impressed with you. This information could include leadership roles in community activities, recent athletic accomplishments, special certifications, or language fluency.

You will find several sample resumes in the appendices section in the back of this booklet.
Hi. My name is Tom; will you be one of my references?

Hopefully, this is not how you are selecting the people to provide you with references. Employment references often are an overlooked aspect of a job search and deserve very serious attention. Appropriate job targeting and an effective resume can secure you interviews. Strong performances during interviews can help you make it into the final round of candidates. Will your references help you receive the job offer or hand the offer to another candidate? Here are a few suggestions that can help.

Don't fixate on titles. Providing the name of a former (or current) CEO for a reference can backfire. While the title may appear impressive and the name may even be recognizable, this person may not be very familiar with your work or accomplishments. Your candidacy will not leap forward if this CEO can't remember your role or has to ask “Tom who?” during the reference call.

Prepare a menu of references. Often you will be asked to provide the names of at least two or three people to be contacted. You should have a menu of at least five or six people that you could use depending on the position you are seeking. This will allow you to select the people whose knowledge of you is most appropriate for the position you are seeking. Having more names than you need also eliminates the problem of one of your references being unavailable due to vacation or business travel when they would be contacted.

Select people who know your work. In addition to a direct supervisor, choose a manager who is aware of your accomplishments and the skills you bring to the job. Be very aware of the skills, attributes and experience required by the position you are seeking and make sure that the people you provide as references can comfortably vouch for you in these areas.

Ask permission. Always secure people's permission before giving their names as references. Not only is this common courtesy, but their initial reaction can provide a glimpse into how helpful they may be. If someone seems very enthused and pleased to be asked, you can assume that the person will be helpful. On the other hand, if someone seems reticent about serving as one of your references, you are much better off knowing this beforehand.

Provide more than name, rank and serial number. In addition to providing your potential employer with the name, title and contact information for your references, add a very brief summary that describes the circumstances in which you worked with the person. This information can help your potential employer target specific references for specific information and can help emphasize your strengths and most relevant skills.
Job Market Improving Slowly
Many Companies Project Hiring Increases
Top Executives Report Hiring on the Rise

Do these “headlines” look familiar? We all read the same newspapers and watch the same news programs. The economy seems to be growing and companies appear to be bolstering their ranks. While many companies remain cautious due to the current political environment and are not leaping at the first glimpses of positive news, the employment picture does seem to be improving. What should this mean to you?

The answer to this question is: BE PREPARED! Whether you want to move up in your current company, are thinking of seeking a new position, or are in the midst of a job search, now is the time to make sure that you are absolutely ready when that perfect position appears out of nowhere. So, what exactly does “absolutely ready” mean?

Update your resume. Now is the time to dust off your resume and make sure it is completely up to date. Add any new roles you have taken on as well as any new accomplishment, awards or accolades you have received. If you have included a professional profile or summary on your resume, make sure it reflects your most current and relevant skills and attributes. Review job postings within your company or on outside internet sites to identify specific skills or qualifications that are frequently emphasized in the type of positions you are seeking.
FORTUNE FAVORS THE PREPARED MIND (CONTINUED)

It’s all about results. When describing your current and past roles, have you included the results of your work? When adding these results, remember that numbers are powerful! Whenever possible, quantify your results so that your contribution is clear. For example: “Introduced lean manufacturing practices that reduced material consumption by 25%” or “Developed and implemented a new marketing strategy that increased new business by over 50%”. If you are unable to quantify some of your accomplishments, let the English language be your friend. Use words like substantial, dramatic or measurable to describe their impact.

Have your stories ready. Be prepared to offer a detailed description of any and all accomplishments you include in your resume. “Gee, I don’t remember that much about that job; it was over four years ago” is a less than optimal response. In “competency” or “behavioral event” interview formats, you can expect questions like “Give me an example of a time when you...”

Revive your network. Being in the right place at the right time often is no accident. Reach out to people you have not contacted in a while. Ask them what is going on in their lives (and company) and let them know what you are doing (or seeking). Most people are busy and understand why time would elapse between contacts. Making the effort to get back in touch can help you remain current in the marketplace and will ensure that your “ambassadors” have their ears to the ground.
When conducting a job search, your main objective clearly is to receive a job offer. But what happens if you like the job and the company but the offer isn’t what you expected or need? There are many ways to approach offer negotiation discussions, but thorough preparation is essential. Here are a few suggestions that can help you prepare for and conduct these discussions:

Understand the “negotiation culture” of the company before beginning a conversation. Talk with current or former employees to find out if the company has been willing to negotiate in the past or if they have had a “take it or leave it” approach. Knowing this beforehand can help you decide how to (or whether to) begin a conversation. It can also help prevent you from taking their response personally if they refuse to negotiate.

Get the offer in writing before doing anything. Prepare a list of questions to obtain information that is important to you that may not have been covered in your verbal offer or initial offer letter. Make sure you understand the details around components like signing bonuses, performance reviews/bonuses, health care coverage (your contribution vs. the company’s), pension/401k (your contribution, company match, and vesting periods) as well as items like flexible work arrangements/work at home options, onsite child care and/or company gym/fitness programs. An apparent differential of $5-10,000 may disappear quickly with more favorable terms in some of these components.

Eliminate the word “negotiate” from your vocabulary. Begin the conversation by saying that you would like to better understand all aspects of the offer or discuss any potential flexibility in the offer. Using the word negotiate can set up an adversarial relationship that can become unproductive.

Don’t bring up or try to change numerous aspects of the offer. Pick one or two that are most important to you and be prepared to provide a rationale for your requests. Conduct yourself in these discussions in a manner that will reinforce and validate the company’s decision to offer you the position. Be very careful not to poison the environment you are joining.

Be flexible and creative in offering alternatives. Recognize that some of your requests may be impossible but others may not. When discussing salary requests, offer a range that you have in mind rather than a specific salary you need. If an increase in salary is not possible, ask about the possibility of a signing bonus or an increase in re-location assistance. If vacation time is important to you, you may be able to negotiate extra days (or weeks) in time off. Be realistic about your “drop dead” compensation needs or key aspects of the offer and be prepared to say no if they cannot be met.

Make it clear that you want the job and that you want these discussions to have a positive result. In these discussions, the win/win experience is that you are accepting a job that you really want and that the company is gaining an employee that will be a valuable member of their team.
NEGOTIATING IN A DIFFICULT JOB MARKET

Over the last couple of years, many people have asked me if they should even try to negotiate a job offer they receive in this difficult job market. Some feel as though they are lucky even to receive an offer and that they should quickly accept it before the employer changes his/her mind. Others are contemplating negotiating their offer but are feeling much more gun shy then they ever did when times were better. They would like to negotiate some aspect of the offer but recognize that they may be in a “buyer’s market” and must be careful. Is there a right way to proceed? As maddening as this may sound, the answer depends on several factors: the length of your job search and reality of your financial situation, the competitive realities of the position you are seeking, and the value and uniqueness of your skills and experience. Perhaps the most important factor is the manner in which you conduct the conversation.

Beware the long, long, long, long winding road. If your job search has gone on for many months (or years) and you have received no interviews or job offers, you may be tempted to accept any job offer you receive out of fear that no others will come your way. While this may be tempting, you still should be careful about accepting a job if you are convinced that the salary is in no way sufficient to allow you to meet your financial obligations and responsibilities or if the role is nothing close to what you want. You may want to cobble (or continue to cobble) together several part-time or temporary roles or contract assignments that will allow you to meet your obligations and continue to search for the right position. If your job search has been extremely unsuccessful for a long period of time, you should seek advice. I know a Director of Graduate Professional Development that would be very willing to talk to you....

Understand the pressing needs of the company/industry and the uniqueness of your skills. Even in a struggling economy, some positions are in demand. If you bring a very unique skill set to the job (rare or specific language fluency, hard to find certifications, or a proficiency in state of the art software used in the industry), your bargaining position could certainly be enhanced. If this is not the case, remember that there are probably several (or many) highly qualified candidates that could be hired if you don’t want the job and conduct yourself accordingly.
Be careful what you ask for and how you ask for it. Don’t even think about trying to negotiate until you have received a job offer, preferably in writing. Once the employer has decided that you are the best thing since “sliced bread,” you are in a much stronger position. It is now time to remember these suggestions that can help:

- Understand the “negotiation culture” of the company before discussing your offer. If possible, talk with current employees or network through the career advisor network to learn about past practices or current guidelines that may be in place at the company.
- Seek to understand all aspects of your offer. This could include your contributions for items like health insurance and 401K plans, and potential flexible work arrangements to name a few. Don’t be afraid to ask questions and gather more details.
- Eliminate the word “negotiate” from your vocabulary. Ask if you can arrange a meeting or phone call to discuss potential flexibility in your offer. Emphasize that you are excited about the offer and really want this to work.
- Don’t try to negotiate many aspects of the offer. Pick one or two that are most important to you. When providing a counter-offer, provide a range rather than a specific figure. Respect the realities of the current economy and don’t ask for the moon.
- Don’t poison the environment you wish to join. Conduct yourself in all discussions in a manner that will reinforce and validate the company’s decision to hire you.
- If the salary cannot be changed, ask for an early performance/salary review (within six months of starting)
- Be realistic about your “drop dead” compensation needs or key aspects of the offer and be prepared to say no if they cannot be met.
More and more companies are conducting their initial screening interviews over the telephone. The benefits to the company are obvious; telephone interviews eliminate travel costs as well as many of the logistics of initial in-person interviews. They also allow the company to talk to a larger number of candidates from a wider geographic dispersion at the outset of a search.

If you are the candidate, what does this trend mean for you? Here are a few suggestions that can help you conduct telephone interviews effectively:

**You may be able to talk your way into a telephone interview.** Budget constraints may limit the number of candidates selected for in-person interviews. In your cover letter, follow-up emails, and networking activities, state and re-iterate your interest in discussing your candidacy over the telephone at the company’s convenience. To the company, conducting six telephone interviews rather than five adds very little cost to the process. Your initiative and persistence may be seen as a positive sign and you may get your “foot in the door” for an opportunity you might not have received.

**Avoid using cell phones.** Cell phones are a wonderful (!?) convenience and are replacing land lines in many homes and schools. They also can be very problematic when conducting phone interviews. Static, dead zones and dropped calls will not help you make a positive impression. Asking your interviewer to bear with the interference, background noise or prompts from incoming calls will not demonstrate your interest in this position. Whenever possible, conduct these calls from a land line in a quiet room with no distractions.

**Be prepared with props.** A phone interview allows you the luxury of spreading out your resume, cover letter, and commendations on the desk in front of you. You also can spread out your key agenda topics, major skills to emphasize and questions to ask. This can help you use the time to your utmost advantage.

**Be concise and clearly indicate when you have finished answering a question.** In a phone interview, there are no visual clues to help you know when to finish an answer or provide more detail. Answer each question clearly and concisely and ask the interviewer if he/she would like you to go into more detail. This will help avoid awkward pauses followed by both of you talking at once.
I'm not really a big learner...some people really love learning and picking up new things, but that's just not me. I'd much rather work at a place where the job is stagnant and doesn't change a lot.

How big do the bonuses get when you make Associate? I hear it's some serious cash.

I would be a great asset to the events team because I really like to party.

The above quotes were taken from the article “43 Weird Things Said in Job Interviews” by Rachel Zupek, a writer for careerbuilder.com. The article, which appeared in CNN.com several years ago, provided a collection of crazy interview responses hiring managers have received. While I'm sure you have never responded to any interview question in this way, the fact is that many people get very nervous during job interviews and say things that wish they hadn't or forget to bring up things that wanted to emphasize. Here are a few suggestions that can help you overcome some of your nervousness and feel more in control.

Know the location logistics. While this may sound obvious, be sure that you know the exact location of the interview as well as where to park. In city locations, you may want to know the exact public transportation stops and walking directions from the closest station. Either way, you should consider making a test run to the interview location so that you will know how much time to allow. Being late to an interview or arriving at the door out of breath and sweating will not set the desired first impression.

Understand the interview format. If you are not automatically provided this information, contact the recruiter or HR Representative before the interview to learn about the interview format. Ask questions like: How long do you expect the interview to last? How many people will I be seeing and what are their names and titles? Will the interviews be one-on-one or in a group format? Is there anything special I can bring or prepare? Knowing this information beforehand can help you allocate the proper amount of time for the interview and avoid being blindsided. Realizing during your interview that you didn’t allocate enough time and will end up being late for an important meeting in your current job is a very bad thing. Knowing who you will be speaking with (even though the exact line-up may change at the last minute) will help you prepare for the types of questions you may receive and develop a list of appropriate questions to ask.

Slow down. Many people tend to talk fast. Nervous people tend to talk even faster. Take a deep breath before beginning your interview and take a breath before answering each question. Will yourself to slow down a bit so that you are answering at a conversational speed and tone. You want to come across as enthusiastic and energetic, not frenetic and out of control.

Prepare an interview agenda. Make a list of key skills, attributes and/or accomplishments that you want to emphasize in your interview. Make sure that these items line up closely with the major qualifications from the job description. As you go through your interview, check off the items that have been covered in your answers to questions you receive. As the interview is drawing to a close, be ready to cover the remaining items in a very brief closing statement before you ask your questions.
YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS ARE IMPRESSIVE, BUT HOW WILL YOU ADD VALUE IN THIS JOB?

In previous articles, I have stressed the importance of describing your work experience from an accomplishment perspective rather than simply listing your duties and responsibilities. This is especially important when conducting a job search (or seeking a promotion) in this very challenging economy and job market. Remember: as your career advances, it is not enough just to have done something. You have to show when and how you have been successful at what you have done.

Focusing on your objectives can allow you to describe yourself by what you achieved or by the value you have added. This definitely will help you differentiate your resume and interview performance from those of many other candidates. Clearly this is much more effective than simply including in your profile that you are a “result oriented professional.”

Accomplishments that can be measured or quantified are the most powerful; however, don’t let a lack of data or specifics deter you. Remember this approach: Here’s what I’ve done, here’s what it entailed (or the context around it), and here’s the result I achieved (or the value I added or the impact I had. Here are three different ways you might describe an accomplishment in one of your roles:

- Revamped my department operations by implementing a new sales order system and new materials management process, resulting in a 25% increase in profitability
- Revamped my department operations by implementing a new sales order system and new materials management process, resulting in a substantial increase in profitability
- Revamped my department operations by implementing a new sales order system and new materials management process. This system and process has been very successful and has been adopted throughout the company

These variations of accomplishment statements can provide excellent examples of how you have added value in your past jobs but, when writing your cover letter or preparing for an interview, don’t forget to provide examples of how you can add value in the position you are seeking. As you research the company and study the job description, be prepared to demonstrate your knowledge of the company’s products, competitive positioning, new initiatives, and marketing or operational challenges. Tying what you learned from your past accomplishments and the skills you have developed to specific roles in the job description or challenges facing the company can help you differentiate you from other candidates and help convince your potential hiring manager that you have the most to contribute and can add value on “Day One.”
“Why should I hire you?” is a question many candidates are asked in job interviews. It also is a question many candidates struggle with. They don’t want to appear arrogant, yet they want to convey self-confidence. They want to show that they definitely can do the job, but they don’t want to appear to be putting down other candidates. What if the interviewer doesn’t ask the question at all? Does that mean he/she is not really interested in hiring you?

The best way to prepare for an interview is remember that whether your interviewer asks you this question or not, it definitely is on his/her mind. If you are in the final round of an interview process, your interviewer certainly is wondering “Who has the best skills?”, “Who will fit in best with my team or the company?” and “I need to get this decision right; which one should I hire?” Here are a few suggestions that can help you prepare.

**Network, network, network!** From the moment you apply for the position (if not before), search for people in the company with whom you can network. Utilize these conversations to learn more about the company’s culture, structure and place in the market. This information you gain can complement the research you have conducted from the company’s website, industry publications and newspaper articles. Ask these people for permission to use their names or reference your conversations in your upcoming interview. Emphasize specific aspects of the company that especially interested you. Conveying how much you know about the company’s culture and organization and how you see yourself fitting in can help you convince your interviewer that you belong with this company. Mentioning their names can increase the chances of their being contacted by the interviewer for additional information about you.

**Demonstrate how you can add value in the job for which you are interviewing.** You definitely should emphasize your past accomplishments in an interview, but don’t stop there. Pont out that many of the skills you utilized and developed that led to these accomplishments are very transferable to THIS job. In your initial interviews, ask questions that allow you to learn more about major priorities of the job or major initiatives facing the company. In later interviews, be prepared to offer an outline of what you might do in the first thirty days on the job. Include what your priorities might be, how you would assess the short and long term needs, and/or how you would go about building an effective team.

**If you honestly feel that this is the perfect job for you or that you would love to work for this company, don’t be subtle.** The key word in this sentence is “honestly”. Many interviewers can tell stories of how candidates have tried to convince them that this is the perfect job for them only to turn down the offer for a competing company or a completely different job. If your enthusiasm is not genuine, most people will see through it. As I have mentioned in previous articles, it’s hard to convince someone else of something when you are not convinced yourself. Use your follow-up emails and/or notes to reiterate your strong interest in the job and company and WHY you are the right person for the job.
**PREPARING FOR AND MASTERING THE INTERVIEW**

*How do I make a really strong first impression?*

*How can I emphasize my skills and accomplishments when the interview formats and questions are often different?*

*How can I act confident when I don’t feel it?*

These are a few of the most common questions I hear from people who are preparing for an upcoming interview. Here are a few suggestions that can help you view the interview as an opportunity to look forward to rather than an exercise in overcoming anxiety.

**Understand the nuts and bolts.** Again, make sure you know the location, format and length of the interview beforehand. Where exactly will the interview be taking place? How many people will you be seeing and with whom will you be meeting? Will the interviews be one-on-one or in a group format? With the questions be resume or competency based? Will any type of case interviews be included? Is there anything special you should bring? If you are unable to get this type of information from your contact person, ask the alumni you network with before the interview if they recall the format of their interviews and if they know anything about the people with whom you will be meeting. Knowing this information beforehand will help you feel more in control and keep you from getting “blindsided” during the interview.

**Know yourself.** Prepare a profile that BRIEFLY describes your career to date and emphasizes your most relevant skills, areas of expertise, and how your qualifications match what the company is looking for. Be prepared to provide concrete examples of what you can do for the company, not just what you have done in the past.

**Answer open-ended questions directly and concisely.** Use this profile as a foundation to answer open-ended questions or prompts like “Tell me about yourself...” that begin many interviews. Most candidates do a poor job of answering these type of questions because they haven’t thought through what they really want to say. As a result, they ramble on and on about their background, hoping that they are including what the interviewer wants to hear. Instead, think of these questions as opportunities to tell your interviewers what you want them to know. After completing your response, you can ask your interviewer if he/she would like you to go into more detail. Your interviewer may ask for more detail about something you just spoke about or may simply want to move on to the next question. Either way, beginning an interview by concisely articulating the skills and expertise you bring to the job, the type of tasks and roles you have excelled in, and the value you can bring to the company can help ensure that these subjects are introduced into the interview. You also will demonstrate that you have very strong communication skills and that you know yourself well. That can get the interview off to a great start!
EXCELING IN BEHAVIORAL AND COMPETENCY INTERVIEWS

Behavioral and competency questions are among the most common interview formats experienced by candidates for a wide variety of professional positions. This format is predicated on the belief that past behaviors are predictors of future actions and is designed to solicit concrete examples of times and situations when specific competencies (or behaviors) have been demonstrated. Despite the popularity of this format, many candidates do not handle these questions as well as they could nor do they leverage them to their maximum benefit. Here are a few suggestions that can help you prepare for and excel at these types of questions.

Predict the competencies that will be probed. Competencies that will be probed in your interview should not be a mystery or a surprise. Make sure that you obtain a copy of the full job description prior to your interview (while this may seem obvious, some companies are more organized than others). Review the job description carefully and thoroughly to identify the competencies or skills that are deemed most important for the position. While you may find general competencies like excellent communication skills, strong analytical abilities or leadership potential, you may also find more specific competencies like excellent platform training skills, the ability to communicate with and influence people at all levels of the organization or the ability to creatively solve complex business problems. Develop “stories” that describe situations where you have demonstrated these competencies.

Understand the purpose of the question and refine it to your advantage. The level of detail in the behavioral and competency questions you receive may vary widely. For example, you may receive a question like “Give me an example of a time when you were a leader.” A better version of this question would be “In a moment, I’d like you to give me an example of a time when you were leading a project and your leadership skill and style (what you did and how you did it) had an impact on the project and its success. When you have decided on the project you wish to describe, give a BRIEF Synopsis of the project including its scope and duration and then focus your answer on what YOU did as a leader and how the project turned out.” Clearly, the second version of this question provides the candidate with a much clearer picture of what to do. If you receive a question in the simple version, answer it as if it were asked in the more thorough version.

Use the “STAR approach” (situation, task, action and result) in developing your story. Your story should begin with a VERY BRIEF description of the situation (scope and duration of the project) and the task you or your team were addressing. You should then describe your role and the specific actions you took along the way that demonstrate the competency being probed. Finish your story with a description of the results achieved (how the project turned out).

Interruptions are not bad things. Many interviewers using this format are trained to tell candidates that they may be interrupted during their answer to provide additional detail. They may use this technique to probe answers that seem canned or to solicit more details about a part of your answer that particularly interests them.
Handling (And Enjoying) Case Interviews

No, the title of this article is not a misprint.

Think of case interviews as word problems based on real life business situations. The case interview is no longer the province of the consulting industry; companies hiring for financial, marketing, operations and even entrepreneurial opportunities are increasingly using case interviews to screen applicants on their ability to think quickly and logically about business problems, demonstrate analytical skills and “comfort with numbers,” and showcase listening and interpersonal skills. There is a high probability that you will encounter case interviews at some point as you conduct a job search or advance in your career.

Demonstrating that you can “handle” case interviews can help you be viewed as a good candidate. Demonstrating that you excel at and enjoy case interviews can help you be seen as an excellent candidate. While cases come in many shapes and sizes, two common types of cases involve business strategy/operations and market sizing. Both should be seen as opportunities to demonstrate your overall business acumen as well as industry expertise and insights.

Business strategy/operations cases may present a situation or business problem related to the function for which you are interviewing, but often will require you to address strategic, marketing, operations, and finance areas as well as revenue, cost and profit issues in your answer. Case discussions should be seen as a dialogue that allows you to identify key issues and drivers, ask questions, sift through relevant and irrelevant information gained, and make recommendations you can defend. An example of this type of case might be something like: “Imagine you are working with a Fortune 1000 company that wants to expand its overseas operations in order to increase its international market share. To do this, they will need to free up a significant amount cash from their current operations to invest in this new direction. What should the company consider doing to accomplish this?”
Market sizing cases often are used to gauge your comfort with numbers and ability to analyze a market strategically and logically. You will need to make assumptions, build on information used, and show an understanding of the industry (and business in general) to arrive at a conclusion. An example of this type of case might be something like: “Imagine you are working with the new CEO of a company that has long been a leader in the manufacturing of audio components for the home and automobiles. He is thinking of jumping into the market for high-end, plasma/high definition televisions. The approximate price point will be around $12,000. He wants us to size the market for this type of television and advise him on whether or not to enter.

Here are a few suggestions that can help you “handle” (and perhaps even enjoy!) case interviews:

Your approach often is as important as your result. Develop a logical approach (or framework) to the case and follow it. If you feel that the key drivers of this business problem are inventory control, communication with the sales force and coordination between production and marketing personnel, state that at the outset and address each area in that order.

Ask questions and vocalize your thoughts. Good consultants, general managers or entrepreneurs do not make decisions based on limited data. Ask questions in a way that demonstrates your knowledge of the area and don’t assume that the interviewer can read your mind (a vast majority cannot).
You have completed an interview for a position in which you are very interested. You thought the interview went very well and you want to cement a positive impression with the people who interviewed you. What should you do and...what should you NOT do?

Collect business cards from everyone you met. While this may sound elementary, many people know they SHOULD do this, but many forget. If your interviewers don’t have any cards with them, ask them to write their email address on one of your cards or ask your recruiting contact to give you a list of everyone’s email addresses before you leave. Don’t allow a lack of information to delay or hinder your follow-up efforts and actions.

Follow up immediately! The electronic world we live in makes immediate follow up easy. It also makes it essential. Within a few hours of your interview, send a brief, personalized email to everyone you spoke with letting them know that you enjoyed the interview and are extremely interested in the position. In each one, mention something specific from your conversation that impressed you or that you found especially interesting. In the subject line, include something like “Following up on today’s interview” rather than a standard line or words like “Interview” or “Follow-up”. This slight difference may decrease the chance of your email ending up in junk mail and increase the chance of it being noticed among the 100 other emails the person received that day. While it may be tempting to wait a day or so to follow-up, consider this: If you are the last candidate to be interviewed, a debriefing conversation may take place immediately or soon after your interview. Having your follow-up email arrive the day after the job has been offered to someone else will not be terribly helpful.

Use your follow-up email to highlight a relevant accomplishment or something you want them to know that didn’t come up in the interview. You want your interviewers to make a decision on your candidacy that is based on a COMPLETE picture of your qualifications. Using your email to provide additional information or to clarify an answer you gave in the interview can be very beneficial if it is received prior to a hiring decision being made.

Follow-up on your follow-up. Consider sending a personal note on your stationary or on a note card a few days after your interview. If you do this, keep your message VERY SHORT and take care that your handwriting is neat and legible. It also helps to know the person’s upcoming travel schedule; if they are about to leave town for a vacation or business trip, take into consideration that that won’t be seeing your card for quite some time.

If you follow-up with a phone call, leave a brief, articulate voice mail message. When calling, remember that it is likely that you will not reach people live. Be prepared to leave a very brief voice mail that makes it clear that you know that they are busy and that you simply want to reiterate your strong interest in the position and thank them for their time. Leaving a long, rambling, and repetitive message can harm your candidacy and reverse the good impression you made in the interview. Don’t ask for the status of your candidacy or request that they get back to you. Definitely don’t call them every few days or come across as a stalker in pursuit of a decision about the offer.
For many people, networking is an unpleasant activity associated with a job search. It involves sending emails and making phone calls to people (many of whom they don’t know) who can share information about a company or position of interest or who can provide additional contacts that can broaden their network. Once their job search has been completed, all networking activity comes to a screeching halt.

People who approach networking in this manner do not do justice to the activity nor do they reap the full benefits. Here are a few suggestions that will help you see how effective networking can help you advance your career.

**Improve in your current job.** Many people find that their managers are either too busy or out of the office too much to be available for job related guidance or questions. Identifying people who have similar jobs or simply keeping in touch with people you networked with during your job search can provide you with some excellent resources and can help you improve in your current job. This is especially important if you are starting a new job. In today's demanding environment, you may be expected to hit the ground running very quickly. Having and utilizing a professional network can help you do just that.

**Develop your mentoring skills.** People who excel at mentoring and developing people are incredibly valuable to any business or organization. If you work in a small office or company, there may be very few opportunities to practice or demonstrate these skills. Make it clear to people who contact you that you are willing to help them and remain in touch. One great way to do this is to become an EMBA Alumni Career Advisor. You can contact me for more information about becoming an advisor.

**Become known as an expert.** As you advance in your career and build expertise, gaining visibility in your company (and ultimately in your industry) may be essential to your continued advancement. As you network with other professionals, indicate your areas of special expertise and mention your interest in any potential speaking opportunities that may arise. You will be helping yourself gain valuable visibility and helping others develop a list of people they can contact if they need to organize a meeting, panel discussion, or industry conference.
If Your Job is Giving You Lemons, Make Lemonade

The job you have long enjoyed is no longer the same. As a result of numerous layoffs and restructurings, your work load has increased, you have less support and you can cut the tension in your office with a knife. In a healthy economy and job market, you might have left this job long ago, with or without a new job. In this economy and job market, you feel lucky to have a job at all. The concept of enjoying your job, feeling challenged and being eligible for promotions and a long term role with the company seems very foreign at this point. You can’t help but feel like your new strategy is to “grin and bear it” and wait for the economy to turn. What else can you do? The answer is: more than you think. Here are a few actions you can take right now.

Look for ways to expand your role and add more value. Although working harder and doing more may seem illogical in your current environment, demonstrating your value and increasing your brand can greatly help your job security. More importantly, as you seek ways to add more value, look for roles or areas that will better utilize your strengths and things you do well and enjoy. Identify some challenges your company is facing and present ideas and proposals that can address them. Demonstrating additional skills, especially those may not have surfaced or been needed in your current role, can help you survive future lay-offs or restructurings and convince your managers that you have long term potential. You might even start enjoying your job again!

Don’t go it alone. Chances are very good that you are not the only person who is feeling frustrated or nervous about the economy, job market or current job situation. Revive your network and reach out to former colleagues and friends with whom you may have lost touch. While whining and complaining about your situation will solve nothing, sharing ideas, success stories and potential leads can be very productive. Identify people who can help you learn more about different industries, job functions and career advancement strategies that others have successfully utilized.

Fortune favors the prepared mind. Sound familiar? If you haven’t already done so, now is an excellent time to dust off your resume and think about potential next steps in your career. Whether you are preparing for a new position in your company or considering conducting an outside job search, your marketing materials (resume, cover letters, and references) cannot be taken for granted. If you are trying to advance in your company, your resume needs to be just as effective as those of outside candidates with whom you will be competing. This is especially important if you will be interviewing with or presenting your ideas to people in your company who don’t know you or who are not familiar with your work.
Managing Your Career (and Future) in a Challenging Economy

Many television programs and newspapers continue to enjoy reporting a never-ending barrage of negative economic news. In many companies, morale is predictably at an all-time low, with some employees waiting for the axe to fall and the rest worried about what their future with the company (if there is one) will entail. With all this going on around you, how can you be expected to stay positive and focus on your job and career? The answer is... you must! Here are a few suggestions that may help you manage your career and future in this extremely difficult economy.

Excel at anything and everything you are asked to do. While this may sound like old fashioned or obvious advice, it has never been timelier. In times like these, you should view absolutely nothing to be outside or beneath your job description or place in the organization. Now is the time to show your boss and management what you are capable of. Volunteer for different roles or lend your help to projects that could use an extra hand. Seek out opportunities to work with different managers so that your talents and contributions will be more widely noticed. Companies contemplating large layoffs often will need to restructure how they do business. Some job functions will be eliminated and areas of responsibility will change. You need to ensure that the value you can add to the organization (not just to your current position) is clear.

Seek out training tightly connected to the organization’s (or your) future direction. While it is true that corporate training budgets often are among the first to be cut in difficult times, don’t let this stop you from obtaining additional skills or certifications that can make you more valuable to your organization. Talk to your H.R. Director to see if there are relevant training sessions scheduled in the near future. Volunteer to make up the time spent in these sessions and make it clear that your day to day tasks will not be affected. If no training is available, don’t be deterred. Seek out opportunities that might be offered outside your organization through professional industry groups or nearby colleges. If your organization is not able to reimburse you as much as before (or at all) consider this to be an investment in your future direction.

Dust off and update your resume. If you have been at your current company for a number of years, it is likely that your resume is not current. Make sure that your resume is in a concise format (two pages maximum) and that you include the results achieved, value added, or impact made as much as possible. Even if you are not looking to leave your company, your resume needs to describe the “current you” and reflect the skills and attributes you possess that are in line with the types of positions you will be pursuing.

Revive your professional network. This is an excellent time to get back in touch with former colleagues and classmates and update them on your current activities. Use all resources available to identify people who work in job functions that interest you. Let them know that you are contemplating a move within your company to a new function and would like to learn more about this area. The more you know about an area that interests you, the easier it will be to convince others that you are the right person for the job.
CHANGING CAREERS REQUIRES A PRAGMATIC APPROACH

If your job search involves a change of job function and/or industry, you need to give serious thought as to how you are promoting yourself in your resume. Here’s a fun exercise: close your eyes and imagine you are a recruiter or hiring manager and are about to review all of the resumes that have been submitted for an advertised position at your company. If you want, you can take the easy road and imagine you are reviewing only the resumes that emerge from a scan of the key words you entered to limit the number of resumes you review to those who meet the qualifications you set up. Either way, if you fell asleep during this exercise you may have woken up screaming.

Regardless of the process used to review resumes, recruiters and hiring managers spend only seconds reviewing resumes on an initial pass. Does your resume provide information that catches their attention quickly and makes them want to read more? Try this test: fold your resume in third and see if the information in the top third describes any of the skills, attributes or accomplishments that are relevant and required for the position you are seeking. Here are a few ideas that can help:

**If your change is dramatic, so is the need for a profile.** If your background is engineering and the position you are seeking is marketing, or if your experience is in the retail industry and you targeting the pharmaceutical industry, leading off with your work experience will get your nowhere. Go back to our initial exercise (but don’t close your eyes). Why would you read further if the applicant has not held this type of job or been in your industry before? Create a profile that concisely captures skills, attributes and accomplishments that directly relate to those required for the position you are seeking. Begin your resume with this profile so that these relevant skills will see the light of day.

**How do I know what companies are looking for?** Go to any job board and review or print out several job titles/descriptions that grab your attention. Review the skills and qualifications for all of them and identify several that are most commonly included. Compare these to your accomplishments and the skills need to achieve them. While you may have gained/developed many skills over your career, you need to “advertise” the fact that the very skills that led to your accomplishments can transfer to this new and different position.

“Get smart” on this new industry or job function. Expect a level of skepticism about your knowledge of the industry. Learn about trends and current events in the industry. Identify the major players (and their competitors). Don’t wait for this skepticism to emerge in the form of a question. Demonstrate your knowledge throughout your conversations and in the questions you ask. Your goal should be nothing short of this: you want your interviewers to be writing this on the form they complete: “He/she knows as much about our company and industry as anyone I interviewed, including people who had been in the industry or job for several years”
"My career is not advancing the way I want it to."
"I like my company, but I can't seem to get the company to realize that I can do more than I’m doing in my current job."

Sound familiar? I have heard similar statements from alumni and EMBA students over the years. Obviously, you decided to obtain an MBA to increase your knowledge of business and move your career in a new direction. So why aren't things going according to plan?

First, you need to accept a radical thought: An MBA will not advance your career. The skills and knowledge you gain and can demonstrate will advance your career. Here are a few thoughts and suggestions that can help:

**Identify ways in which you have differentiated yourself from your peers and/or colleagues.** Have you been promoted quicker than the norm? Have you been selected for any choice assignments or especially visible roles? Have you developed new skills in your current role or from your MBA that could add more value to your department or company? Make a list of these answers and discuss them with your manager before or during your next performance discussion.

**Actively participate in committees and task forces to which you are assigned.** Like many people, you might have participated passively when working on committees that were not directly related to your job. While this might be understandable, it represents a lost opportunity to demonstrate new skills and show that you can contribute in ways outside of your current role.

**Utilize your performance review to show how you can add additional value and contribute more.** Develop an action plan that addresses any areas in need of improvement and that leverages your areas of strength. Request follow-up meetings to discuss potential new tasks to be added, and be sure the results of these discussions are added to your next review. Putting these discussions in writing can demonstrate your initiative and make your ideas more difficult to ignore.

**Get to know people outside your immediate department or office.** Learning about what other people do and how other departments are structured can help you better understand your company and give you better insights into projects and assignments. It also can help you be in the "right place at the right time" should an opening arise that interests you.

**Come to terms with your company's culture and office politics.** Recognize that no two company cultures are identical. In what kind of environment do you function best? Does your company operate on a "face time" culture or are people judged purely on their contributions? Does it vary by individual managers' supervisory styles? Attempting to force a square peg into a round hole can be counterproductive for everyone. Seek out managers whose styles are compatible with yours. Active networking and increased communication can help you accomplish this.
If you suddenly find that you dislike your job, don’t wait for someone else to come to your rescue. The person with most to gain from a change is you. Here are a few suggestions that can help you take action:

**Is your job the problem?** If your job responsibilities are a poor match for what you do well and enjoy, look for ways to bring your strengths and interests to the job. Identify ways that you can bring value to the role by emphasizing your strengths and demonstrating that you have skills that may not be apparent. Most companies really do place some type of premium on getting things done, especially if it influences the bottom line. Your manager may recognize this added value and be willing to refine your job a bit. Stranger things have happened.

**Is your manager the problem?** If you work for a manager who watches the clock as you arrive at work and leave for the day or who believes that face-time is more important than accomplishments, ask yourself if this is one person or is it indicative of the company as a whole. Get to know other managers or find out about the work done in other departments. There may be other managers whose supervisory styles and value systems more closely match your own. If you like to get extra work done early in the morning so that you can help your kids with their homework or attend a game or performance in the evening, look for a manager who has created a similar schedule around his/her own needs and would be more receptive to your work style.

**Are your colleagues the problem?** If your colleagues enjoy chatting during some of the day and then staying later to get their work done, let them know that you have a different style and like to work in a different way. There’s nothing wrong with saying something like “I’d like to talk but I need to finish this project by 6:00pm so that I can attend my son’s concert. Could we talk another time?” Chances are some of your colleagues would prefer to work differently but have just followed the herd. You may be doing them a favor as well as yourself.

**Is the company the problem?** If you have tried some of these steps to no avail or if the source of your dissatisfaction really is company-wide, you may need to consider conducting a job search. Nothing ventured, nothing gained!
Knowing Yourself is Important When Changing Careers

Many people I speak with are interested in changing job functions within their company or making significant career changes. For some, the change represents a move from a technical role (engineer, software developer or scientist) to a business-oriented role (product marketing, strategic planning or business development). For others, the change represents a move from being an individual contributor to a manager.

Often, these changes require different competencies, skill sets or approaches. For some people, the desired change becomes a logical transition of skills they already possess. For others, it can be an awkward transition that seemed destined for failure.

Why does this happen? The answer is simple: some people know themselves much better than others. Here are a few questions to ask when considering a career change.

Is this new role a good match for your skills and attributes?

STUDY the job description and understand the requirements and expectations of the job as well as the skills and attributes deemed most important. Read through your performance reviews and make a list of the areas that received the highest ratings. How well do these areas compare to the skills and attributes emphasized in the new role you are considering?

Do you know what it takes to be a manager? Managing people can be rewarding. It also can be frustrating. Are you the type of person who can deliver tough messages when needed — or are you the type who internalizes issues, procrastinates and has a hard time conveying "bad news"? Do you like the idea of hiring the right people and building a team or would you prefer delegating those roles to someone else?

How will you feel being held accountable for other people? If you are accustomed to being held accountable for your work only, how will you feel being held accountable for the work of a group or department? How will you handle members of your team or department who are not holding up their ends of the project?

Will you enjoy motivating other people? Do you enjoy coaching and developing people to help them succeed or do you feel that people should simply do their best work every day and should not need to be motivated? How will you motivate people?

Answering these types of questions before you change job functions or careers will help you make the right decisions. Taking the time to get to know yourself is worth the effort.
**WHY WON’T THEY SEE ME DIFFERENTLY?**

For many people, trying to change job functions within their company can be a difficult and frustrating experience. They were originally hired into a specific function, have performed well in that function for several years, but would like to move into a different role within the company. They feel that they have more to offer and can add value in different ways. The problem? They can’t get the company or their manager to see them differently. If this situation sounds familiar, here are a few suggestions that can help.

**Find a mentor.** Identifying and utilizing a mentor in your company can be a tremendous help in changing your job function (or career). Find someone who knows the ins and outs of the company and can serve as your informal advocate. Hopefully, he or she will know people in different departments or areas of the company and help you to increase your visibility. This person also can guide you to specific areas that may be the best match for your interests and skill sets.

**Demonstrate your interest and the value you can add.** No matter how well you perform in your current role, you may not have the opportunity to show that you possess skills above or beyond your day to day responsibilities. Volunteer for committees or task forces outside your department that can give you visibility with different managers and employees. Participating on these committees also can give you the opportunity to show that you have skills and insights in different areas and that you can add value in different ways. The more people you impress, the more avenues you can navigate.

**Actions speak louder than words, but results speak even louder than actions.** Whether you are updating your resume or preparing for a meeting with your manager, focus on the results you achieved or the value you added in the tasks you performed or projects you led. Showing how you have differentiated or distinguished yourself from others can help people see you in a new light. This new light can lead your career in the direction you choose.
Over the years, I have spoken with many people who have accepted new jobs. In our initial conversation, they were very excited about the new position and the opportunity it represented. Soon after, they told me a very different story: the job was nothing like what was described in the interview. In one case, the role consisted of mostly administrative tasks and included none of the client visibility or interaction that was promised. One person told me that the reporting structure was completely different from what he was told. I also once heard of an instance where a person was told on the first day that the salary quoted on his offer letter was an error and that the company would not be able to pay it.

Fortunately, these types of situations are very rare. Unfortunately, they do happen. Most people never think anything like this will ever happen to them but, as the adage says, “Once burned, twice shy.” While you may never be able to prevent miscommunications or disconnects 100% of the time, here are a few suggestions that may help.

**Talk with several people from the company, not just one.** Asking the same questions of several people can help you gain a better perspective of what things are “really like” in the company. In the interview, you may have received a positive response to your questions about flexible work hours, telecommuting or your new boss’s management philosophy, but a little probing with your future colleagues can make you feel much more comfortable that you are getting the real picture. If two or three of your future colleagues in the same position as yours do not have the type of client visibility you were promised, you have uncovered a cause for concern.

**Ask for a copy of an organizational chart.** While some companies may not have a formal organizational chart (especially small companies), ask for a formal (or informal) copy so that you will better understand the organization and how different departments communicate and interact. You can review this chart later to make sure you heard correctly during the interview. You also can use this information to ask questions in later interviews or during your offer negotiation conversation.
Keep a paper trail. When sending a follow-up email after each interview, include a summary of a few of the most important points discussed or promised in the interview. For example:

I am very excited about the position of Client Service Manager we discussed. In our conversation, you mentioned that I would be the main liaison with all Bio tech clients in the Carolinas and would be directly responsible for maintaining strong relationships with our most valuable clients. This is exactly the type of role I am looking for!

In your next interview (or offer negotiation conversation) you can refer to this email or ask a confirming question designed to make sure you understand the role correctly and that you and your interviewer are on the same page.

Don't burn bridges. Even after accepting an offer, follow-up with and maintain a good relationship with the people you interviewed with at other companies during your job search, especially the recruiter or HR contact. Hopefully, your new job will be a fantastic opportunity and a long term commitment. If it isn't you may be able to revisit conversations with other companies who also found you to be a strong candidate.
MANAGING A MID-CAREER JOB TRANSITION

The term “mid-career job transition” has many definitions. To some people, it may mean that their first job out of school is not what they thought it would be. For others, it could mean that they are forced to find a new job after over 20 years with a single employer. Others think of it as an opportunity to try something very different after a long career in one specific function or industry. Whatever the situation may be, mid-career job transitions can be nerve wracking and, for many people, downright frightening. Here are some commonly asked questions and some suggestions that may help:

How do I know when it is time to leave my current company?
How do I avoid appearing frustrated, angry or bitter when laid off or passed over for a promotion?
How do I know when I’ve accepted the right job?
Should I stay or should I go?

In addition to being part of the lyrics of a once popular song, this question torments a great many people who are looking to advance their careers. Many people expect their boss (or their company in general) to recognize automatically their good work and the value they add as well as their interests and future potential. Some frequent complaints are “My boss doesn’t appreciate me”, “They don’t want to see me differently” and, my personal favorite, “No one understands how valuable I could be to this company.” When I hear these complaints, I usually ask one simple question: what have YOU done?

Before you decide to leave your company, try this exercise. On a blank piece of paper, write down every action you have taken to market yourself to your boss and others in the company. Have you utilized your performance review to have a discussion about future directions that interest you? Have you networked with other managers or people in other departments to learn more about the company and become more visible? Have you volunteered to join committees or taskforces to show that you can contribute beyond your current role? If your paper is virtually empty after this exercise, you may want to stay and work harder at marketing yourself. If you have filled several sheets of paper with numerous specific actions you have taken over the past several years to no avail, then it may be time to look elsewhere to accomplish your goals.
Managing a Mid-Career Job Transition (continued)

How can I look happy and motivated when I feel angry and bitter? If you have been laid off or passed over for a promotion you felt you deserved, it is perfectly natural to feel angry or bitter. It is, however, extremely unproductive to show that you are angry or bitter. It may help to give yourself a few days of well-earned wallowing time, but these emotions must be pushed below the surface when conducting networking activities or job interviews. You may want to ask your family or friends (especially those who are likely to give you an honest answer) how you are coming across to them. Remember that companies are looking for people that can apply their skills and contribute in a positive manner. I know of no company that is looking for people who are depressed and feel victimized.

Before accepting a job, due diligence is a very good thing. Think of the interview as a two way street. Just as the company is trying to make sure you are the right candidate, you should make sure that the company is the right place for you. Talk to as many people in the company as you can to determine the real culture of the company. If career advancement is important to you, ask questions like “How has your career progressed in the company?”, “In my interview, the company frequently was described as a meritocracy. How have you seen this demonstrated?”, or “How are performance reviews handled in the company? Are there opportunities in these reviews to discuss career directions or interests being developed?”
Finding and Utilizing a Mentor

Everyone knows that finding and utilizing a mentor can help you manage and advance your career. Whether you are a recent college graduate or a seasoned executive, having someone to turn to for guidance, advice, or as a sounding board to your ideas can enhance your performance and help your career move in the right direction. If finding a mentor is that important, why doesn’t everyone have one?

Start in the interview. If having a mentor is important to you, ask your interviewer(s) if the company has any type of formal (or informal) mentorship program. Even if the company has no program, use this discussion to show that you want to get off to a great start in this position, view joining the company to be a long term commitment, and are interested in your career development.

Find a mentor. As a new hire, it can take you a while to get to know the people in your department let alone the entire company. As you talk to some of the newest hires, ask them if there was anyone they found to be particularly helpful in their first few months on the job. It is usually wise to stay away from your direct supervisor or someone who will be evaluating your performance as this dual role can be awkward for everyone.

Start slowly. Asking people to be your mentor within 30 seconds of your initial conversation can definitely scare them off. As you get to know a person better through work and/or social settings, see if the person has similar interests or if his/her career has moved in a direction of interest to you. Ask some basic questions and gauge the response. If the person appears positive about the company and willing to offer suggestions and advice, you may have found yourself a mentor.

Define the role. Some people may view serving as a mentor to be a very involved and time consuming role, especially if they have never been in this role before. When discussing a mentorship role, make it clear that you realize that the person is very busy and that you are only interested in a few minutes of their time on an occasional basis. Ask the person for his/her preferences about discussion formats (in-person or telephone) and frequency (quarterly or every 6 months).

Be prepared. Before any appointment or conversation, send your questions or desired agenda to your mentor in advance. This will show that you value his/her time and will give your mentor a chance to think about and prepare for the conversation. It also will show that you are organized and prepared for the conversation and that you want to use your time together wisely.

Look outside your company. If you work for a very small company or can’t seem to find someone who meets your mentorship needs, consider utilizing one or two of our Alumni Career Advisors in this role. Remember that these alumni have volunteered for this role and have indicated a willingness to help fellow alumni or current students with questions or issues with their careers. As you identify Career Advisors to contact, review their profiles to determine the level of assistance they are willing to provide.
Return the favor. As your career advances, don’t forget how helpful people were to you along the way. Become a mentor to others in your company. Becoming known as someone who enjoys and excels at mentoring and developing people will make you extremely valuable to any company you join.
ELEVATING YOUR MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVES

For many people, career progression has never been an issue. Based on their outstanding performance, they moved from entry level positions to mid-level management quickly and impressively. Their advancement continued into higher level management roles and they assumed that this upward path would continue into executive ranks and, ultimately, to a CEO role. Suddenly, their careers seem to be stalling and these executive roles do not seem attainable. What is going wrong?

The reality is that what got you to this level may not be what gets you to the next one. Just as some people made the jump from individual contributor to manager while others did not, some people manage to elevate their management perspectives while others do not. Here are a few suggestions to consider:

Develop your people rather than solve problems yourself. Jumping in and solving problems yourself may have given you lots of visibility and the reputation as a successful problem solver in the past, but this approach will not bring you to the next level. Successful executives need to develop their people and give them opportunities to grow and solve problems on their own. While this may be more time consuming and less ego-gratifying, it is essential to your continued success and upward mobility.

Political animals do not rule the forest. Dealing with office politics, adapting to changing corporate cultures, and gaining visibility may have helped get you where you are today but these traits need to evolve when moving into executive roles. The successful executive needs to recognize how developing relationships can affect their success, but coming across as a self-serving “political animal” can be extremely counterproductive. Instead, become known as a “pied piper” who is able to get colleagues and subordinates to go out of their way to help out on important projects or volunteer for a committee because it was you who asked.

Work style matters. In many cases, a person’s early career advancement may have resulted from the combination of outstanding individual performance, an intense work ethic, and the willingness to do whatever it took to succeed. These traits may make you a great individual contributor, but they don’t necessarily make you a great leader. An executive who appears tired and exhausted all the time does not inspire confidence. Executives who are able to maintain their own energy level and keep others from burning out set an excellent example for those around them. Executives who involve key people in important projects, value and recognize their contributions and draw attention to their successes will create an environment where everyone will want to excel.

Think of the future but keep your eye on the ball. Successful executives need to be constantly thinking about new approaches, products, and strategies, but they can’t forget about the present. Your success in developing a suite of new products may be irrelevant if you are not paying attention to the implementation and profitability of your current products and operations.
As you plan your career, assess each advancement opportunity carefully. Are you moving towards or away from what you enjoy doing the most?

Don't tell your boss or colleagues that you can do more, show them. Many people spend more time complaining about their situation than doing something about it. Rather than grumble about what you are not doing, seek out opportunities to demonstrate new skills or accept more responsibilities. Join committees or task forces that will allow you to work with and impress new people. Do a great job on any role you are given. Let these new bosses or colleagues become your informal advocates when a promotion or new position becomes available.
“People who are skilled at identifying, hiring, developing and retaining top talent are the most valuable people in any organization.” Many executives have been known to make this statement when giving advice on building a successful career. Clearly, you cannot develop and retain outstanding people unless you can identify and hire them. To do that you need to become an outstanding interviewer. Here are a few tips that can help you improve this valuable skill.

**Identify the most essential attributes/competencies needed for the position.** Begin with the attributes most valued by your organization as a whole and then identify the three most essential competencies required by the position. Ask your line managers to review the job description yearly to ensure that it is accurate and up to date and ask them what has been missing in the people who have not succeeded in this position. Ask your new hires to “reality test” the job description as well.

**Utilize a variety of interview formats.** Just as you don’t build a house by using only one or two of the tools available, become familiar with and use all of your “interview tool kit”. Include a blend of open ended questions along with specifically worded resume based, behavior/competency and case/hypothetical questions. Ask open ended questions to determine if candidates have an ordered thought process and can articulate their thoughts in an impressive manner. Ask competency based questions to determine what candidates have actually DONE in relevant situations (past behavior is a good predictor of future behavior). Ask resume questions to learn how and why candidates’ careers have advanced or what they have learned from each position. Ask case/hypothetical questions to identify candidates who have great ideas and are highly creative. Give them the opportunity to convince you that this position is the perfect next step in their career.

**Be specific about what you ask for and articulate your questions carefully.** One way to ask a competency based question/prompt is: “Give me an example of a time when you were a leader.” A better way is: “In a moment, I’d like you to give me an example of a time when you were leading a team project and your leadership skill and style (what you did and how you did it) had a dramatic effect on the success of the project. When you have identified a project to describe, give me a BRIEF snapshot of the project and its duration and then tell me what you did as a leader.”

**Remember that you are marketing your company through your behavior as an interviewer.** As the recruiting environment becomes more competitive, the top candidates you identify often will have other offers and opportunities. Be thoroughly prepared for every interview you conduct and make it clear that you have reviewed that candidate’s resume, cover letter and the notes from previous interviews prior to the interview. Allow time for the candidate to ask questions and answer these questions directly and honestly. Participate actively in the follow-up process and be accountable for landing top candidates. Developing and retaining top talent starts with hiring top talent.
**Success Stories: Changing Industries in a Difficult Job Market!**

Many people conducting or considering job searches have spent years in industries that have been very impacted by our current economy and job market. To many of them, it seems pointless to look for jobs in their current industry, yet they worry that they lack the experience or skill set that will allow them to land positions in a new industry or job function. With this in mind, I would like to profile several people who have conducted successful job searches.

“Harriet” left a position at John Deere as a Dealer Development Manager and accepted a new position with HealthSouth as Director, Marketing Operations. In her role with John Deere, Harriet acted as a small business consultant, reviewing and analyzing financial statements, improving organizational processes, and conducting customer/employee interviews. The role provided her with a great opportunity to look at a business from the top level and offer recommendations that could make the business more profitable, more efficient and continue to grow.

Harriet’s goal in her job search was to return to the sales and marketing world, where she had over nine years of previous experience. She also wanted to make a radical shift in industry. Due to the national attention to healthcare and the momentum for change, she felt that this industry would require strong leadership and direction and she wanted to enter what she felt was a very exciting new industry. She wanted to bring a fresh perspective and apply her business acumen to help guide HealthSouth through these changes and was attracted to the idea of working to help patients have easy access to quality healthcare.

One of her biggest concerns in interviewing for this and other positions was how to handle the perceived gap in knowledge. Her recently acquired MBA definitely helped show her ability to successfully take on new challenges and learn new subjects, which would apply to learning a new industry. She also stressed that her major strengths such as successfully building relationships, creating solutions to sales challenges and managing finances all were universal skills that translate across virtually all industries. In addition, she analyzed her top accomplishments in the manufacturing industry and demonstrated how these lessons and successes could be applied directly to the health care industry.

**In her own words, here is some advice Harriet would like to share to others attempting to switch industries or conducting a job search in general:**

“Networking does work! Leverage your contacts. I received an interview for this job due to a former colleague who offered to distribute my resume to some of his best contacts. I was pleasantly surprised and appreciative of the efforts of the people I’ve worked with throughout my career and how willing they were to help me start this new chapter in my career.

Keep your mind open to new opportunities. Pursue all leads. You never know what may materialize that will pique your interest and lead to your next opportunity.

Have confidence. At times, a job search can be exhausting, frustrating and demoralizing. Looking for a job is a full time job. Stay positive and keep yourself busy. I met lots of new contacts by getting involved in new organizations like the American Marketing Association and Advertising Age Talent Works.. I was fortunate to have a great support group comprised of friends, family, colleagues and mentors who reminded me of my strengths and helped me to believe that I could succeed in whatever came next.”

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“Nancy” accepted a position as Senior Proposal and Marketing Analyst with the Elster Group, a world leader in advance metering infrastructure and integrated solutions to the gas, electricity and water industries. Her last job was with Sony Ericsson as a Marketing Analysis Manager /Senior Product Manager. In the summer of 2008, Nancy and her husband adopted a baby girl from Vietnam. Nancy left her job at Sony Ericsson that August to acclimate her daughter to her new home and country. Once her daughter became more independent and had adapted well to her environs, she decided to return to the workplace.

Nancy began her job search using a multi-pronged approach. First, she targeted industries with promise (energy and data storage) and companies within those industries that particularly interested her. Then she located employees with similar positions at her target companies through LinkedIn and arranged networking conversations. In parallel, she conducted a lot of independent research on these companies, reading press releases, diving deep into product literature, and becoming familiar with the each company’s history and competition. This information helped her write individualized and targeted cover letters for positions that interested her.

Nancy heard about this job at Elster through their chief recruiter, with whom she had established a good relationship after inquiring about a different position which, it turned out, had been interrupted by a long hiring freeze. The recruiter had kept her updated about the company’s hiring situation and, at Nancy’s request, forwarded her credentials to a member of the Marketing team, who immediately wanted to arrange an on-site interview. Unfortunately, Elster’s board froze this position at the last minute. During this delay, she searched her school’s alumni directory and contacted a classmate and Elster employee. This person generously agreed to meet with her and shared some great information about the booming energy industry and Elster’s friendly, entrepreneurial environment. Over the next few months, Nancy pursued other opportunities but continued to check in with the recruiter about the status of the hiring freeze and to reiterate her interest in the position. To her pleasant surprise, she received a phone call from the recruiter a month or so later and, following a very successful on-site interview, she was offered the position.

What did Nancy do well in her job search?

First: After receiving little response to resumes submitted in the beginning of her search, she tightened her resume and tailored it to showcase her strategic product management experience and skills.

Second: In her interviews, she started paying extremely close attention to the pressing problems that interviewers described during the interview. In one case, the faces of her interviewers lit up when she asked them what she, in her role, could do to make their jobs easier and more successful.

Third: She remained upbeat and persistent in the face of hiring freezes and delays. She also overcame the frustration of receiving very positive feedback from interviews conducted yet receiving either no response at all or rejection notices many weeks later.
“Bill” was laid off from Nortel Networks Corporation after spending 11 years with the company with roles in IT operations, software development, business development, and product management. Bill described his successful job search in a blog he wrote for the Wall Street Journal. Excerpts from his blog are below.

I started by identifying smart energy as a concentration area for my job search efforts. I began networking with business school classmates and former colleagues by expressing my interest in working on smart grid applications in product management. Since my objective was to remain local, I identified and narrowed down target companies based on my concentration areas.

I knew that I needed to do a combination of things if I wanted to make a successful career transition into another industry. First and foremost, I needed to educate myself on the industry and the current environment, identify and network with people in the industry, scan and apply to jobs opportunistically, and finally establish and maintain job networking dialogues with targeted companies. As part of my networking, I contacted a former classmate who worked as a smart energy product manager at Elster Integrated Solutions. In the conversation, I learned that the company had recently reviewed mid-year budgets and a hiring wave was underway. My classmate provided details about a pending position and I expressed my keen interest.

I applied for the position and went through a total of three interviews. The first was a phone screen with the company’s recruiting team in which I was asked a series of technical screening questions to validate my professional credentials and technical aptitude. After passing this screening, I underwent a company visit and was interviewed by three separate teams consisting of the company’s executive management, product management and software development teams. The team interviews went well; I was able to gain valuable information about the role and positioned my candidacy by demonstrating that I offered skills and experience in areas where I perceived gaps. My third and final interview was with senior executives who were not available during the second round. After this interview I was offered the job and I accepted.

What did Bill do well in his job search?

First, he had an extremely organized approach to networking. For each position he considered, he tracked the job title, the date discovered, the employer, the hiring manager and the how his efforts were progressing. While this was a time consuming process, it helped to consolidate information and provided him with a dashboard he could sift through to prioritize his efforts.

Second, Bill spent a significant amount of time informing his networking contacts that he had accepted this new position and thanking them again for their assistance. In this dynamic environment and difficult job market, it pays to keep lines of communication open, especially if a colleague or former classmate needs your help or you need theirs.

Third, he spent time before beginning his new position thinking about a “90 day plan” that would help him arrive at some initial priorities and allow him to hit the ground running. This preparation was noticed by several of the executives and managers he worked with and helped him to get off to a strong start.
Sample cover letter (Edward Graham)...........................................................................................................59
Sample chronological resume (project management) ............................................................................................60
Sample chronological resume (marketing) .........................................................................................................62
Sample functional resume (leadership/management) ..........................................................................................64
Sample functional resume (technology/operations) ............................................................................................66
Sample chronological resume hybrid (consulting) ............................................................................................68
Sample one page resume (less work experience).................................................................................................69
April 20, 2013

Steven Powers  
Best Opinion Consulting  
First Union Capital Center  
Suite 1800  
Washington, DC 22936

Dear Mr. Powers;

I am currently a student in the Executive MBA Program at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) and am working full time while pursuing my MBA. I am extremely interested in the Consulting Manager position at Best Opinion Consulting that was posted on your website.

From the research I have conducted, I have learned that manufacturing is one of your firm’s strongest industries and that much of your 22% growth in revenues last year has come from your work with mid-sized companies in that industry. I recently spoke with Susan Smith, a Manager in your Atlanta office and VCU alumna, about her experiences consulting with several small manufacturing and retail companies. In our conversations and e-mail exchanges, she described at length the close interaction she has had with her clients and the type of supply chain improvements her team has implemented. I came away from our conversations very impressed with the consulting approach and culture of Best Opinion.

My experience with Whitehall Industries has given me significant exposure to the types of business issues common to companies of this size. In my current role as Divisional Manager, I initiated and led monthly internal supply chain review meetings. As a result of our team’s efforts, procurement lead time was shortened by an average of three weeks, saving the company over $3MM in the first year alone. Prior to this role I was promoted three times in four years and was singled out by the CEO for my work on several high profile projects in the company.

I feel that my industry experience, success in team environments and expertise in the procurement and supply chain areas will add substantial value to your clients. I am very excited about the possibility of further discussing this position with you. You will find a copy of my resume attached; please let me know if you would like any additional information.

Thank you very much for your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

Edward Graham

Enclosure
Accomplished and results-focused project manager with demonstrated success in delivering complex projects that involve multiple parties and matrixed resources. A strong leader with well-developed communications skills, dedication to excellence, and talent for delivering client requirements on-time and on-budget. Received Worldwide’s Achievement Award in recognition of leadership and perseverance. Offer diverse project management expertise, combined with proven strength in strategic planning / road mapping and comprehensive project execution. Specific Expertise in:

- Strategy & Execution
- Process Improvements
- Project Management
- Budgetary Control & Oversight
- Benchmarking & Evaluations
- Forecasting / Resource Allocation
- Team Leadership
- Client / Vendor Relations
- Training & Mentorship

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

WORLDWIDE SYSTEMS, Inc. Research Triangle Park, NC 2005 – Present

Senior Project Manager – Technical Services (2007 to Present)

Lead 3 teams of IT Analysts with full accountability for planning, coordinating, and delivering key projects related to building and sustaining IT systems architecture. Identify and communicate project scope, priorities, and strategy to IT and business teams. Partner with upper management to pinpoint short- and long-term goals and to develop roadmaps, metrics, and financial strategies. Manage vendors; allocate resources; and recruit new talent.

Key Achievements:

- Led the creation of a centralized, end-to-end performance management strategy for the Customer and Commerce organizations that streamlined technical resources and implemented a scalable strategy for application and system performance.
- Tapped by senior management to define a comprehensive financial strategy that effectively managed $240M annual organizational budget and reduced expenses by 20%
- Restructured team processes to integrate with departmental ITIL methodology that improved cross-functional collaboration and ensured process alignment.
- Defined purge and archive strategy for Worldwide Customer Care systems that reduced future storage requirements by $5.7M.

Senior Project Manager – Centralized Operations (2005 to 2007)

Drove successful project completion, overseeing large 70-member team of offshore and onsite vendors, including strategic vendor cost negotiations. Managed resource allocation and $7M budget. Participated in Delivery Leadership Team roundtable to define organization strategy. Interfaced across departments and with stakeholders to meet requirements.

Key Achievements:

- Leveraged successful client engagement talent and effective team leadership to enable team to achieve quarterly client satisfaction targets for the first time.
- Led a 20-member team that complete three critical projects: migrated 24 Perl applications to Solaris 8 for infrastructure upgrade that resulted in savings of $1.5M; transferred 21 java applications from unsupported Borland environment to Websphere application server; and evaluated and tested 21 applications throughout database upgrade to Oracle 9i version.
PROCTER & GAMBLE (FORMERLY THE GILLETTE COMPANY), Boston, MA 1999 – 2005

**Project Manager - Global Procurement** (2004-2005)

Held accountability for managing projects, to include overseeing entire life cycle, partnering across departments, and tracking milestones. Created and monitored project scope, test plans, status reports, and benchmarking charts.

**Key Projects and Achievements:**

- Led 10-member team on deploying robust EDI purchase order and inventory solution across 50 vendors that reduced invoice-processing costs by 80%.
- Developed and implemented business requirements submission procedure for SAP Enterprise Buyer Professional application that increased SAP development team productivity by 20%.

**Project Manager - Global Infrastructure Services** (2002-2004)

Led 30-member global team on a high-profile $10M SAP server consolidation project leading to significant reductions in operating costs and optimized scalability. Oversaw infrastructure readiness, executed server migrations, and delivered tested and fully operational systems. Liaised with stakeholders and executive-level steering committees, providing status and key project information.

**Key Projects and Achievements:**

- Reduced total cost of ownership, increased capacity efficiency, and improved future expansion system scalability by successfully leading technical migration / data center consolidation that led to $1.4M less spending in maintenance and operational costs.
- Managed identification and staffing of resource requirements for global project team of 30+ members; created work definitions to ensure fulfillment of project objectives.
- Collaborated with asset management on HP server retirement schedule that resulted in savings of $100,000 in maintenance contracts.

Previous roles with Gillette through the Northeastern cooperative education program (1999-2002)

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**EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

**MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (MBA), 2008**

VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY, RICHMOND, VA

Graduated from Executive MBA program while working full-time

**PROJECT MANAGEMENT PROFESSIONAL (PMP), 2005**

PROJECT MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE

**BACHELOR OF SCIENCE – BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION, 2002**

NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY, BOSTON, MA

Graduated Magna cum Laude, GPA 3.6

*Beta Gamma Sigma Business Honor Society, & Financial Management Association Honor Society*

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**PERSONAL INFORMATION**

- Lived, worked, and traveled to over 15 different countries, fluent in English, Hindi and French
- Completed the Raleigh half marathon and currently training for the Boston marathon
Hillary Edwards
230 Raleigh Road • Richmond, VA 23223 • 804.825.6456 • Hillary@yahoo.com

PROFILE
Experienced marketing professional with solid analytical and strategic capabilities. Proven ability to lead cross-functional teams and deliver results. Thrive in fast paced, dynamic, and intellectually demanding atmospheres. Passionate commitment to those organizations that integrate innovative business models with an environmental focus. Expertise in the following areas:
- Promotions and Events
- Sports Marketing
- Direct Mail
- Public Relations and Communications
- Corporate Communications
- Branding and Sponsorships
- Environmental Campaigns and Initiatives
- Consumer Analysis

EDUCATION
Virginia Commonwealth University, School of Business, Richmond, VA
Master of Business Administration, 2000
Completed the Executive MBA Program while working full-time

The Colorado College, Colorado Springs, CO
Bachelor of Arts in English, 1994
- Kappa Alpha Theta: Vice President Finance, Rush Executive Committee
- Varsity Women’s Swimming: Tiger Award recipient (for overall team spirit)
- Study Abroad Program through The University of Minnesota: Chora, Greece

EXPERIENCE
The Veritage Group, Charlotte NC (2002 to present)
Marketing Manager
- Overseee and manage the creation of a corporate identity campaign. Developed a website, logo, and follow-on marketing pieces that significantly enhanced brand awareness
- Researched, drafted and presented a comprehensive new business development report which included a market assessment, competitive review, current business analysis, strategic consideration outline, new business strategies, and evaluation metrics. Recommendations are in the process of being implemented and are expected to increase revenue by over 30%

Promotions Manager
- Managed EPA-sponsored promotion which included POP material placed in over 400 retail locations; the direct mail component of the program drove the sale of 687,500 CFL bulbs in four states over a two month period (28% redemption rate)
- Managed a marketing program which introduced a new environmentally-friendly product to the Peoria, Illinois home improvement market; over 650 units were sold in one day

Vice President Client Services (1997)
- Managed promotions, sponsorships, contests, and contractual obligations for 65 clients, 12 sales staff members, and numerous advertising agencies
- Represented branding rights for clients in the UNV football and basketball stadiums
- Created, implemented and analyzed a direct mail campaign designed to drive revenue and increase sales contacts
- Managed all major sales initiatives and presentations
- Allocated all ticket requests

- Coordinated annual radio, TV, and print advertising of $5,000,000
- Organized promotion of “in-house” products through the media
- Spearheaded marketing of a new website, www.ACCToday.com, and page views tripled as a result

PROFESSIONAL AWARDS

ENERGY STAR® Awards
The EPA grants awards to organizations to recognize outstanding energy efficient projects throughout the nation
- ENERGY STAR® Award: Excellence in Consumer Education
- Recognition at ENERGY STAR® Award Ceremony for “Change a Light, Change the World” Promotion

PERSONAL
- Avid traveler and outdoor enthusiast. Actively involved with Habitat of Humanity.
Thomas Jones  
706 Moose Lodge Drive, Danville, VA 24592  
(434) 862-4856  (434) 860-5555  tom.jones@unc.edu

SUMMARY

Over 20 years of achievement and increasing responsibility in leadership and management positions. Proven track record in developing and implementing strategies that achieve tangible results. Proactive and inspirational leader. Highly effective communicator who builds consensus and inspires teams to attain peak performance. Experienced in policy development, operations and execution, budgeting and planning. Demonstrated expertise in:

- Leadership
- Strategic Planning
- Change Management

- Resource Prioritization
- Operations Improvement
- Communications (written and oral)

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Leadership and Strategic Planning

- Led a 300-person organization, effectively and efficiently managing all aspects of personnel, logistics, safety and maintenance. Leadership resulted in the highest personnel retention rate and lowest attrition rate while meeting 100% of assigned worldwide operational requirements.
- Led the effort to revamp training requirements for all aspects of aviation, maintenance, safety and administrative training for over 1500 personnel, increasing readiness and reducing complexity.
- Developed comprehensive legislative and public affairs strategies, closely coordinating with Navy Legislative Affairs, Capitol Hill staffs and Public Affairs.

Change Management

- Led a group of senior advisors to the Chief of Navy Reserve that executed the transformation of the Navy Reserve, resulting in increased operational support, improved manpower systems and better integration with active forces.
- Directed the implementation of a new maintenance planning and inspection system, increasing operational flexibility and asset availability.
- Reorganized and revitalized National Security Strategy course for senior officers from seven U.S. Reserve Components and Allied nations, increasing throughput by 100%.

Resource Prioritization and Operations Improvement

- Implemented a comprehensive standardization program for business processes and instituted operational risk management procedures, resulting in zero mishaps and lost workdays.
- Implemented an innovative computer-based tracking system that increased training and personnel readiness by over 35%.
- Led the first U.S. Navy detachment to Belize in support of national counter-drug efforts, coordinating with U.S. Embassy and interagency staffs, resulting in a success operational test of forward operating location.
Communications

- Directed preparation of annual briefings for key Congressional Appropriations and Armed Services Committee staffs and authored testimony for eight congressional hearings.
- Expertly interfaced with DoD, Navy and Congressional staffs to draft responses to over 250 congressional inquiries, including the highly visible Commission on National Guard and Reserve.
- Demonstrated writing excellence through frequent preparation of reports and briefings. Successfully conducted numerous technical and informational briefings of senior military officers and civic representatives.

WORK HISTORY

Deputy Director, Joint Reserve Affairs Center  2007-Present
National Defense University, Washington, DC

Executive Assistant to Chief of Navy Reserve  2002-2007
Pentagon, Washington, DC

Officer in Charge, Patrol Squadron Sixty-Five  1998-2000
Point Mugu, CA

Training Department Head, Reserve Patrol Wing Pacific  1995-1998
Moffett Field, CA

Other Military Work Experience  1985-1995
Mission Commander, Detachment Officer in Charge, Patrol Plane Tactical Coordinator, Navigator, Mobile Operations Command and Control (MOCC) Officer in Charge, Safety Department Head, Administration Department Head, Reserve Officers Training Corps Instructor, Recruiting Officer, Mine Warfare Officer.

EDUCATION

Master of Business Administration  (2007)
Virginia Commonwealth University
- Graduated from Executive MBA Program while working full time
- Recognized local and international team leader

Master of Science in Modeling, Virtual Environments and Simulation (MOVES)  
Naval Postgraduate School.
- Selected as the 2002 George Phillips Outstanding MOVES Graduate

Bachelor of Science in Systems Engineering  (1984)
United States Naval Academy.
- Graduated with Distinction

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Holds TS/SCI Clearance
- Member, Military Officers Association of America
- Past President, Monterey Bay Swim Club
- Coach / Assistant Coach for Braddock Road Youth Soccer & Basketball leagues
PROFESSIONAL PROFILE

- Goal driven professional with 9 years of Information Technology experience. Special expertise in data management and data warehouse strategies.
- Strong leader and problem-solver with strong analytical and consulting skills who combines technical and functional knowledge with business theory and experience to develop full project lifecycle plans and strategies.
- Outstanding communicator and presenter who excels at driving consensus through collaboration, organization and relationship building.

PROFESSIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Leadership

- Functioned as Lead Analyst, Technical Lead and System Architect in developing a web enabled component based system that dramatically increased the effectiveness, accuracy and level of service for clients while leveraging existing data processing systems.
- Managed an internal project involving 5 developers in 3 development centers resulting in the successful implementation of a skills tracking application that allowed managers to more efficiently allocate staff to new projects and opportunities.
- Served as Team Lead on multiple project including assignment of tasks, specification and system analysis, estimation, design, development, testing and implementation resulting in a significant reduction in processing time and a substantial increase in employee effectiveness.

Data Management

- Created and authored corporate data model management strategies that facilitated effective and efficient management data structures through the release process and produced a process with greater accountability and integrity in date definition.
- Developed a formalized procedure to exchange data structure requirements between he Data Analysis and Database Administration groups which reduced turnaround time and communication errors on data structure change requests.
- Authored and edited corporate standards documents that facilitated information exchange and reduced confusion in data definition and requirements gathering sessions.
- Designed relational data structures that accurately modeled business rules and maximized database efficiency.

Operations Management

- Implemented changed to DB2 database structures that decreased processing time for quotes by 50%.
- Streamlined order entry process for an international business unit at a Fortune 10 company, increasing the functionality and efficiency of the system and processes while reducing costs of order processing.
- Applied component based development and object oriented design concepts to develop web applications that leveraged existing legacy systems and new technologies, increased user productivity and reduced application development time.
WORK EXPERIENCE
Corporate Data Analyst, Hospital Corporation of America, Raleigh, NC (4/2003 to present)
Senior Consultant, DiamondCluster, Harford, CT (1999-2002)
Information Analyst, EDS Canada, Oshawa, ON, Canada (1997-1999)

EDUCATION
Masters of Business Administration, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA (2004)
Completed the Executive MBA Program while working full time

Bachelor of Engineering, concentration in Physics and Management, Trudeau University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada (1997)

PERSONAL
Fitness enthusiast (have completed 3 marathons); enthusiastic traveler (have traveled through 17 states and 11 countries) and dedicated reader of business book and magazines
Hannah Smith

3922 Maplewood Drive • Richmond VA 23223  hannah.smith@gmail.com • Mobile: (804) 270-6521

► PROFILE
Enthusiastic, resourceful and results oriented healthcare professional with 10 years of experience and a track record of success in leadership, client services, sales and new business development. Special expertise in spearheading operational improvement initiatives to lower costs and increase profits. Driven by new challenges that require creative problem solving abilities and organizational talent.

► EDUCATION
Masters of Business Administration Emphasis:
Finance, 2004
School of Business
Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, VA

Bachelor of Science
Physical Therapy, 1998
Summa Cum Laude, GPA 3.9
University of North Florida
Jacksonville, FL

Bachelor of Science
Exercise & Sports Sciences
Graduated with Honors, GPA 3.8
University of Florida
Gainesville, FL

► STRENGTHS
• Accomplished public speaker
• Excel in both independent and team work environments
• Exceptional relationship-building and communication skills

► HIGHLIGHTS OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS
• Offered a promotion to Clinical Research Associate within three months of employment; promotions typically offered after 12 months
• Exceeded weekly caseload goal of 30 visits per week by 20% for two consecutive years resulting in increased revenues without increased cost
• Earned the highest number of customer satisfaction awards every quarter from October 1999 to October 2000 out of 25 agency representatives
• Generated the most annual equipment sales revenue for two consecutive years out of 15 agency representatives

► PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE
PAREXEL INTERNATIONAL, RALEIGH, NC (2001-Present)
Clinical Research Consultant
• Analyzed process flows to identify operational inefficiencies and designed and implemented improvement initiatives to streamline data collection practices, which reduced query resolution costs by over 30%
• Developed a formalized procedure to exchange data between Clinical Research Associates (CRAs) and Database Administrators which reduced turnaround time and communication errors on data transfer requests
• Functioned as the Database Educator and Administrator for clinical teams of 15-20 CRAs including the efficient management of the study database, website and project drive, resulting in improved coordination that dramatically increased the effectiveness, accuracy and level of service for clients
• Devised assessment tools and status reports that enabled managers to control costs by efficiently allocating staff to new projects and opportunities, and evaluating performance more objectively to promote greater accountability
• Managed timelines, deliverables and logistical tasks between the client, vendors, and internal departments and investigative sites resulting in project objectives being met on time and under budget

TAR HEEL HOME HEALTH, RALEIGH, NC (1999-2001)
Physical Therapist
• Led motivated and coordinated care teams for 12-15 patients per week and ensured high-quality care through clear, concise, written and verbal communication with physicians, team member and caregivers, resulting in accelerate recovery at lower costs
• Surpassed physician expectations by developing individualized treatment plans for patients with a variety of diagnoses including the implementation of creative solutions for patients with unique needs, which led to both repeat referrals and new business.
• Drove equipment sales revenues by selling recommended equipment that maximized patient function and independence
• Chosen from 25 healthcare professional to teach monthly continuing education classes that resulted in an improved understanding of new medical developments and treatment alternatives

► CERTIFICATIONS & COMPUTER TRAINING
• Licensed Physical Therapist
• Certified Athletic Trainer
Hillary Reagan  
1298 Smith Avenue, Richmond, VA 23225  
hreagan@gmail.com  (804) 703-8975

OBJECTIVE
Seeking a Financial Analyst position in the high technology industry

EDUCATION
Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), Richmond, Virginia  
Master of Business Administration – Expected May 2015  
Selected as one of two recipients for the Dean’s Scholarship (2013-2014)  
GPA to date: 3.8/4.0

Relevant Coursework Includes: Strategic Management, Financial Analysis, Internal Controls, Supply Chain Management, Cost Accounting

Boston University, Boston, MA  
Bachelor of Arts in English and History – May, 2011

Awards and Honors include: Dean’s list 2009-2011, Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society, Awarded First Prize in School Essay Contest, Elected Vice President of English Club

EXPERIENCE
Virginia Department of Health, Chesterfield, VA (2011 to Present)  
Eligibility Program Specialist (2012-Present)
• Performed financial assessments of potential clients ability to pay for medical services based on a sliding scale of income  
• Created a comprehensive evaluation process which weighed clients’ financial assets and demographic factors, resulting in a more equitable and cost efficient expenditure of funds

Eligibility Program Assistant (2011-2012)
• Verified insurance coverage and ensured accurate billing for services provided  
• Managed accounts receivables and communicated status deadlines to client  
• Communicated regularly with a variety of insurance carriers  
• Promoted to Program Specialist after only one year on the job

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT
Event Coordinator for Habitat for Humanity, Volunteer for “Paint the Town Green Campaign” for Richmond, Served as Assistant Instructor for Adult Education Courses

LANGUAGE SKILLS
Bilingual in English and Spanish, basic knowledge of German

PERSONAL
Avid runner - completed eight 10K races in the last year, Enjoy traveling - have Visited 10 states and 5 foreign countries, Enjoy learning about and adapting to Different cultures
John Worth became the Director of Graduate Professional Development at the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Business in December 2012. In this role he is developing a career and professional development program for students in and alumni from the Executive MBA program, presenting workshops and webinars on job search and career advancement topics, and conducting individual appointments with students and alumni. His role likely will expand to include providing career resources to students in other graduate business programs as well.

Prior to joining the VCU team, John was the Director of Alumni and Executive MBA (EMBA) Career Management at the UNC Kenan-Flagler Business School for eight years. In this newly created role he met individually with and conducted workshops for business school alumni and students in the EMBA Programs to assist them in managing and advancing their careers as well as in organizing and conducting their job searches. He created and taught an elective course entitled “Strategies for Advancing Your Career” that was offered to 2nd year students in the EMBA programs. In addition, he wrote a column called “Career Corner” which was sent to all business school alumni and posted on the Alumni Career Management web site.

Prior to joining UNC Kenan-Flagler, John was the Director of Career Consulting at the UVA Darden School of Business for three years. In this role he worked with full time MBA students individually and in the classroom to provide advice on topics including job search strategy, resume preparation, networking, interviewing techniques and offer negotiation.

Prior to that, John spent ten years with Deloitte Consulting as an MBA Recruiting Director, managing the firm’s recruiting programs at many leading MBA schools across the country. While at Deloitte, he spearheaded a task force that revamped the firm’s interviewer training program and taught the program to Partners, Senior Managers and Recruiters who participated in the firm’s campus and experienced hire interview processes.

Over the years, John has conducted presentations at Regional and National EMBA Council Conferences on topics such as Utilizing the Case Method in Teaching Career Management, Providing Recruiting Access in Part-Time and Executive MBA Programs and Developing and Enhancing EMBA Career Management Programs. He also has presented numerous seminars and workshops to EMBA students and business school alumni on topics such as Becoming an Outstanding Interviewer, Managing Your Career, Advancing Your Career through Highly Effective Networking, Preparing for and Mastering the Interview Process, and Organizing and Conducting a Successful Job Search.

He received a B.A in English from Merrimack College and completed graduate work in administration at the University of New Hampshire. In his spare time, John is a fitness enthusiast (though not readily apparent), has completed one 26.2 mile marathon (when he was younger) and, along with his wife Deborah (who teaches piano), tries vainly to keep up with the changing lives of their two “children” Graham (25) and Sarah (22), both of whom are turning out to be very nice people.