

CAREER ADVANCEMENT FOR CONSTRUCTION EXECUTIVES

PART I — FOR THE EXECUTIVE CANDIDATE

Frederick C. Hornberger, Jr.



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ABOUT FREDERICK C. HORNBERGER, JR.



Frederick C. Hornberger, Jr. began his career as an estimator for Gulf-Tec Construction Company. During his first year as a construction recruiter, Frederick earned the “Top Recruitment Sales” award for Engineering Personnel Consultants, and was an original pioneer in introducing executive search to the construction industry.

In 1983, he founded his own executive recruitment firm exclusively dedicated to board and senior-executive search for the construction industry, and went on to achieve the “Gold Medal Sales” award and “Agency of the Year” award within the National Association of Personnel Services, and membership into the exclusive Pinnacle Society representing the nations “Top Billers” of recruitment services. Today Hornberger Management Company is headquartered in Wilmington, Delaware, whose practice is international in scope, with affiliate offices in Mexico, Canada, United Kingdom and the Republic of Singapore.

Frederick’s education includes a Bachelor’s degree in Electrical Engineering from Kennedy Western University, a Bachelor’s degree in Economics (Mathematics) and a Master’s degree in Business Administration (MBA) from Loyola University. He has also completed executive training courses from Xerox Corporation and Harvard Law School. Frederick is a Certified Personnel Consultant (C.P.C.) in both the United States and Canada on employment practices and law, a registered expert witness with TASA on recruitment practices, and listed in Marquis’ 1989 Who’s Who in Finance and Industry, 1990 Who’s Who Among Emerging Leaders, and 1991 Who’s Who in the South and Southwest.

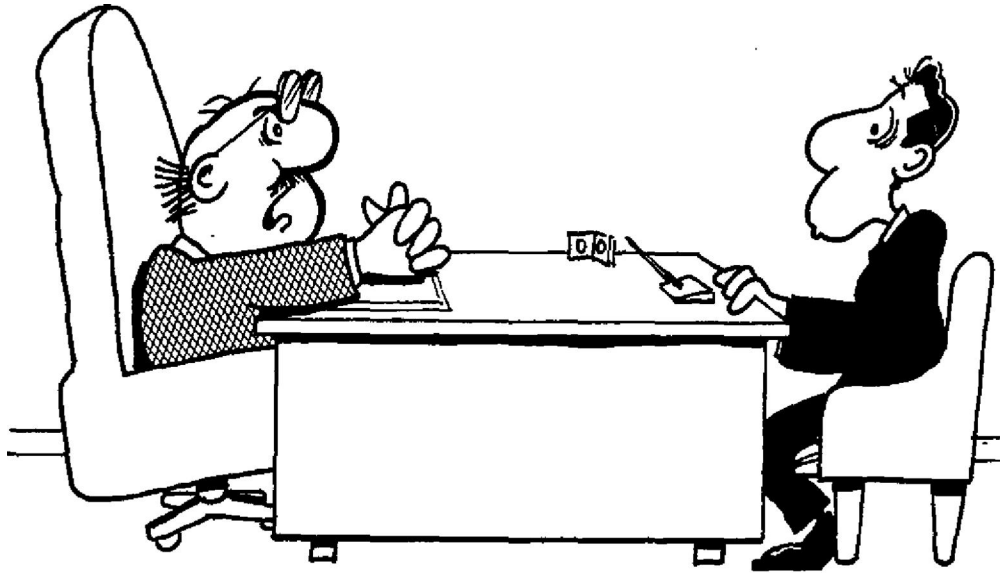
Frederick is a published author whose career related writings include his book *Maximum Career Advancement*, and articles titled “Negotiating Your Income,” “The Right Time to Change Jobs,” “Art of Checking References,” “Why Use an Executive Recruiter,” “Twenty Minute Interview,” “Creating Resumes,” “Resignation Blues,” “Enjoying Your New Job Honeymoon,” “Attracting and Keeping Your Executives,” “Avoiding Counteroffers,” “Hiring Executives on the Internet,” “Reaching out to Recruiters,” “Art of Interviewing,” “Why Use Executive Recruiters,” “Changing Employment Marketplace,” “Internet Job Posting Tips,” and dozens of others which have been published by the Wall Street Journal, Recruiting Magazine, Recruitment Today, The Fordyce Letter, SMPS Marketer, AGC Constructor Magazine, Contractor’s Management Journal, MCAA Reporter, National Home Builders Association, Construction Strategist, Contractor Tools & Supplies, Journal of Construction Accounting & Taxation, employMAX.com, CareerBuilder.com, Mining Record, Recruiters Network, Construction

Publications, Inc, and Executive Recruiter News. Since 1991 he has maintained a lead article in the prestigious Directory of Executive Recruiters by Kennedy Information, and has been frequently quoted on executive retention and executive employment issues for Engineering News Record.

In addition Frederick is a recognized authority and acclaimed speaker on the subjects of “Construction Executive Retention,” and “Recruitment Technology,” having produced some of the most sought after research studies and retention surveys in the industry on construction executives, including his Annual Construction Executive Retention Survey highlighting the “Top Ten Reasons Construction Executives Leave Their Job.”

His studies have been published in construction journals and in retention planning programs across the nation. Frederick speaks regularly at business seminars, educational forums and national conferences such as the AGC National Conference, Construction Presidents Roundtable Conference (CIRT), ENR Top 1000 Contractor’s Leadership Forum, BuildTalk, and Contractor Business Development Association. He is also recognized for his leadership role in advancing recruitment technology online as host and manager of executive career forums on America Online (AOL) and the Internet Career Connection, and founder of the popular alt.building newsgroup hierarchy, and AECJobBank.com, the grandfather of internet job boards in construction.

CREATING RESUMES THAT SELL



“There’s always room in our company for a fine, compassionate person — however, he’s got to have the killer instinct too.”

Frederick C. Hornberger, Jr.



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CREATING RESUMES THAT SELL

*“Interviewers want to know about your past so they can predict your future.”
— Robert Half*

Have you ever wondered why a particular candidate is selected from among a tall stack of resumes? His or her resume pre-sold the candidate. I’ll tell you how to have this edge in your new resume.

Employers typically use resumes to screen candidates for employment. Some read a thousand resumes a year, and typically only give about 30 seconds of reading for each resume they review. These weary readers encounter many candidates with the basic job qualifications, yet they perceive only a few as “right” for the opening. So, that all-important printed page may open or close the door to your career advancement.

Unfortunately, most people don’t know how to write a resume. They make it too long because they want to tell the “full story.” A resume is not an autobiography! It’s a brief, alluring description of your background relevant to the job in question; its purpose is solely to elicit an interview.

Fortunately, you can learn to write effective resumes. I use the plural — resumes — because that is just what you will write. No single resume is appropriate for all openings. So, plan to tailor each one to a specific job opportunity. Here’s how to go about it.

STEP 1. Identify a specific, appropriate, “qualified” job opportunity.

A “qualified” job opportunity is one which will lead to your maximum career advancement because it conforms to your long-term career plan. This qualified job not only holds the right title to serve as a stepping-stone or rung on your ladder; it will train you for your next move. The hiring firm must be reputable — even prestigious, if possible — so that their name on your resume is another plus in establishing your reputation within your field.

STEP 2. Match your qualifications with those for the job

A. On a separate page, list every detail you can find about the requirements for the position you seek. Keep in mind that good “chemistry” is a powerful element in determining most hiring decisions, often going further in securing a position than having the right technical skills. By researching your potential employer before writing your resume, you’ll be ready to present the pertinent facets of your experience, interests, and enthusiasms.

Try to identify “hot buttons” — key qualifications particularly meaningful to the employer, i.e. alumni of the same university, personal hobbies, work habits, and so on. Come up with a clear, specific job description and match yourself against it.

B. On a second page, list your qualifications and experience for this job. Name every qualification you can think of that supports your “rightness,” highlighting those qualifications that match employer “hot buttons.” Get help from others so you don’t overlook anything.

C. On a final page, match your personal list of qualifications with the list of job qualifications. Include all attributes that make you right for the job. Omit attributes that are irrelevant, even if they are fine things in themselves. Organize your list with the most preferred qualities first.

STEP 3. Write the right resume for the job

Be aware that most employers don’t read beyond the first few paragraphs of most resumes, so you have a limited time to arouse interest. Keep it to one page, if possible. Use a simple, easy-to-read format. Remember: your purpose is to get a job interview, not to give a complete history of your working career. List facts, skills, and accomplishments without lengthy explanations. Give the impression you’re an accomplished, confident, understated professional, but never lie or exaggerate — reference checking will almost always expose you. Lure the reader into giving you a personal interview to learn more about you.

Here’s a step-by-step breakdown of the sample resume to follow:

A. Put your full name, address, and telephone number at the top of the page, listing both home and current work address and phone numbers if the resume screener may contact you at either address. Date your resume with the current month and year only if it will clarify your current position.

B. Your first heading should be: OBJECTIVE.

Describe precisely the job for which you are applying, including job title and locale of your prospective employer. This lets the interviewer know you are sure of what you want: the job they offer, in their location.

List remaining headings in order of their importance to the employer in question, based on what hot buttons match best with your background.

C. WORK EXPERIENCE is usually the next heading.

This section contains your work history, including employment dates, employer names and locations, job titles, and responsibilities and accomplishments which emphasize your matched capabilities and experiences. List them in reverse chronological order. Also list your ten greatest work accomplishments, and how they would benefit your new employer. Prioritize them so that the benefits are easily perceived.

Be brief; avoid unnecessary jargon or discussion of the mechanics of your jobs. Begin sentences with active verbs, and avoid the pronoun “I.” Stress your interaction with people by using verbs such as lead, manage, motivate and organize, and adjectives like dependable and supportive. Stress those skills and accomplishments that have made and make you a success.

Group miscellaneous experience, or jobs more than fifteen years old, under headings such as EARLIER EXPERIENCE, or PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE. Exclude information irrelevant to the job opening.

D. EDUCATION is usually written next.

List any college or trade degrees you have earned or are in the process of earning. Mention professional registrations, certificates, courses, workshops, and academic honors or awards pertinent to the job opening. Give degrees, schools, dates, and locations. If you have a college degree, do not list your high school.

E. The final section is usually titled PERSONAL.

Briefly mention your interests, hobbies, publications, awards, speeches, trade organization memberships, offices, and personal accomplishments or special recognition. Do not put your current salary, race, religion, or health. Include community involvement, especially if you hold a leadership position. Here you have a grand opportunity to present personal traits that enhance your character, attitude, and reputation, but be selective. Show that you’ve got the right chemistry to thrive in the job.

It is unnecessary to list your references on a resume. But if you choose to address this issue, the last section should read: REFERENCES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST.

In general, reference information should not be included unless you are unemployed. The objective is to obtain a personal interview without first having your references called. You don’t want the employer to form second-hand impressions (through references) before forming a firsthand impression of you.

If you’re unemployed, however, you may need to provide strong references immediately, in order to dispel any notion there is something wrong with you or your services. If at all possible, secure verbal and written references from senior executives emphasizing strengths suitable to the position you seek.

You’ll find the resume on the following page an excellent sample to follow in your own resume preparation.

Arthur T. Advancer
62 Flamingo Street
Orlando, FL 28730
407•351-9346

Objective: Chief estimator for a mid-sized general contractor, building commercial and residential projects in the Tampa area.

Work Experience:

4/85-present SASHA CONTRACTING, 141 Barry Ave., Orlando, Florida 28805

Senior Estimator responsible for pricing jobs, sub-contract negotiating, and supervising a four-person bid team on commercial projects throughout Florida. Implemented new MC2 computer programming for company estimates. Lead estimator on the following major projects awarded: 1) \$25M Roxy Hotel in Orlando, 2) \$33M Jacksonville Civic Center addition, 3) \$17M Fredericks Office Building in Orlando. Awarded company “employee of the year” for 1989.

1/81-4/85 J. JUNG CONSTRUCTION, 917 Sunridge Dr., Tampa, Florida 34234

Estimator responsible for material and labor takeoffs. Assisted chief estimator on mid-sized residential building estimates, including \$4M Kara Resort Apartments, \$7M Blue Sky Condos, and \$1.7M Don Light residence.

Education:

12/80 B.S.C.E. cum laude Florida State University, Tampa, FL

3/86 A.G.C. Two-week MC2 computer estimating workshop in Tampa, FL.

1/87 Registered Professional Engineer #020010 Florida.

Personal:

Associations: Association of General Contractors— Orlando
Toastmasters International — Orlando
AAA Softball League — Orlando

Civic Awards: 1988 “Young Leader of the Year” — A.G.C.
1986 AAA Softball League City Champions

Publications: Article: “MC2 Computer Estimating”—Contractor Magazine
June 15, 1987

Speeches: 1987 AGC Convention — “Gain the Edge in Estimating”
1986 Annual company dinner — “Why Join a Trade Association”

STEP 4. Write a cover letter addressed to a specific individual.

Richard H. Beatty, author of The Perfect Cover Letter, John Wiley & Sons, NY, suggests that the cover letter can be more important than the rest of the resume in obtaining an interview.

Before beginning the letter, learn the name of the individual who is steering the hiring process. Call this person and tell him or her to be expecting your resume. In light conversation, try to learn enough about the position and the company's corporate culture to guide you in writing your letter. Find out what specific skills and personal qualities are needed in the new position and determine how well you measure up in these regards.

Your cover letter should identify the job for which you are applying and highlight the reasons you are the ideal candidate for the job. Sell your hot button qualifications to the employer — for example, your ability to solve turnover problems, motivate workers, and lead building operations. This is also a good place to include a personal note describing your fanatic appreciation of baseball, old cars, rare stamps any interest that you and your potential employer share . Work on building good chemistry from your very first contact.

The cover letter gives you the opportunity to be more personal than is appropriate in a resume. In your letter, show your enthusiasm for the job. Offer complimentary comments about your addressee's company. (These compliments must be based in fact. Otherwise, they will make you seem ill-informed or worse!)

End with a direct request for a personal interview.

Following is a good example of an effective cover letter:

Mr. Fred Ward
Tampa Builders
1131 Vista Drive
Tampa, Florida 28804

Dear Fred:

It was a pleasure to speak with you last Wednesday. As we discussed, I am interested in being considered for the job of chief estimator with your firm. I am originally from Tampa, and would like to rejoin my family there.

In addition, I would like to participate in the upsurge of building now transforming the Tampa area. You mentioned, Fred, that you are not from this region originally. If you had seen the sleepy, undeveloped backwater of my boyhood, you'd know just why I'm so excited by the growth Tampa is experiencing today. Tampa Builders has been a positive force behind this growth, as I hope to become with my upcoming move.

Tampa has several excellent contractors for me to consider, but I've taken a specific interest in your firm because of your success on the Vista Heights Condominium development, and the fact that you do not yet have a computer estimating department. I am well-versed in the use of MC2 estimating software, and I'd like to show you the cost advantage you could enjoy by implementing a similar program for Tampa Builder's next projects.

I will be in Tampa next Tuesday and would like to visit with you during the day if your schedule allows. Please call me at your earliest convenience. Again, Fred, it was a pleasure to speak with you.

Sincerely,

Arthur T. Advancer
Senior Estimator

ATA/ct

STEP 5. Prepare a list of references.

Your list should include correct names, job titles, addresses, and telephone numbers. Attach any letters of recommendation you may have.

Be sure to contact your references beforehand and communicate the points you want them to emphasize on your behalf. Remind them of your relevant skills and achievements. Let them know they are vital to your advancement. After they have been contacted, thank them personally. Your references can provide invaluable intelligence as you pursue your new position.

Employers rarely expect references from a candidate's current employer. They understand the need for confidentiality. Although they might check on your present responsibilities and performance through their network of contacts, you will rarely be required to provide official references from your current employer. If you must provide a confidential reference, however, select a friendly supplier, client, peer, ex-employee, or consultant familiar with your work. Never select a reference source who is in a position to retaliate or interfere with your present employment if your new job doesn't materialize.

Credible references can make all the difference in the final stages of the interview process. Always have a minimum of three reputable character references (that the employer would know and respect) and three work references for potential employers to contact. Ministers and relatives are regarded as poor references because employers assume they are biased in your favor.

Jeffrey Allen has written a book on how to develop winning references, entitled The Perfect Job Reference; John Wiley & Sons, 1990. If you want a written report on your own references, you can write the employer who checked them, or hire an independent reference checking service such as Taylor and Whitehouse, Inc. of Marshall, MN, (507) 532-2202.

STEP 6. Have someone else edit your resume package.

When you have your cover letter, resume, and reference list typed, present them to a master of correct grammar and punctuation for editing. Never send anything that shows poor writing skills, or anything not proofread several times by more than one reader.

STEP 7. Have the final version typed and printed on high quality paper.

Avoid the temptation to use colored paper to make your resume “stand out.” It will, all right, but in the wrong way because color is a subjective preference. Use only white, light grey, or ecru bond paper. And make sure the typewriter or printer ribbon is dark and legible. Dot matrix printing should be of letter quality. Better yet, have it laser printed at a printer who can take your disk.

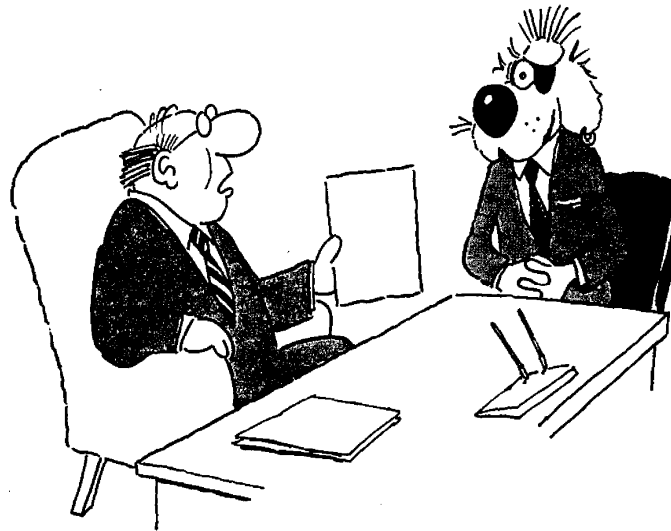
STEP 8. Send mail first class or express.

Mail your resume package to the potential employer via first class mail marked “personal and confidential.” Express mail may be an even better choice to encourage immediate, positive consideration. Use a folder that allows you to keep your papers flat, and include a stiffener so they arrive unwrinkled. Don’t fold them into a letter-sized envelope. If practical, have the resume arrive during the middle of the week to avoid the flood of weekend mail which will minimize your impact. At all times, remember the value of a good first impression.

STEP 9. Always follow any resumes you send with a phone call.

Wait until three to four days after the employer has received your mailed package. Then follow up with a phone call to verify receipt and to answer any possible questions. End your call with a direct request for a personal meeting at a specific time. “I could meet you Tuesday afternoon at 4 pm, at your local trade association luncheon.” Suggest a time convenient for the interviewer.

YOU'VE GOT TO DREAM IT BEFORE YOU CAN DO IT



“Well, Dave. May I call you Dave? Says here you worked in the security division of an automobile wreckage site.”

Frederick C. Hornberger, Jr.



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YOU'VE GOT TO DREAM IT BEFORE YOU CAN DO IT

“If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours.”

—Henry David Thoreau

Now that you've taken stock, you can start to define your career goal. Don't be daunted by the thought that this is a one-time choice you have to get right or suffer with forevermore. It's a process you'll repeat and review as you grow. At this point, you are simply trying to outline a goal to guide your career advancement efforts.

Some examples may help start you thinking. If you love clothing and are good at motivating, directing, and organizing people, you'd probably make a good manager in the fashion industry. If you want to earn \$100,000 per year, love to travel, and enjoy working with people, consider executive sales management as a goal. Consider finance or design if you gravitate toward numerical tasks and are good at analytical reasoning. If you love automobiles, want to live abroad, and enjoy managing many different aspects of business operations, you may want a job with the overseas branch of an automobile company.

You can change horses in the middle of a stream

“Think you can, think you can't. Either way you're right”

—Henry Ford

Thank goodness for the '60s. However you feel about bell-bottoms, psychedelic music, and protest marches, we owe some of our enduring freedoms to this era in which everything seemed open to question. In our grandparent's day, it wasn't unusual for people to pursue one career or even work for one company most of their lives. Today, people who make mid-career changes are accepted and respected for their initiative.

Two clients of mine provide good examples. When I first met “John” (I've changed all my client's names to protect their privacy), he was a successful corporate salesperson, but he wanted more from his career. He took a personal inventory and concluded that his greatest strengths lay in dealing with people. His business education and desire to travel qualified him for a variety of regional or national retail sales positions.

But John didn't want to keep working for others. He envisioned himself owning his own business, selling products and services nationwide from a hometown base.

After consulting with successful salespeople through various sales and marketing associations, John realized that big sales earnings were out there for computer hardware and software salesman. This dovetailed with his skills and interests as an avid computer hobbyist.

John set his sights on owning a small company selling computer-based products to retailers. After further research, he chose to sell software because the demand for new programs is fairly steady, and software inventory costs less than hardware.

John went to work as a salesperson for a large, prominent vendor of software for retailers. Over five years of hard work and careful planning, he gathered the funds, knowledge, and skills to venture out as an independent consultant. Today, he owns a successful software company, and is recognized as an expert in the retail industry.

Margaret changed careers with good results, too. She was frustrated as an accountant. She could handle the work, but wanted more exciting interaction with people as well as numbers. So, Margaret took an inventory of her strengths and interests, and personality tests administered by an industrial psychologist. These tests revealed Margaret's excellent memory, good inductive reasoning, and ability to think on her feet. They also pinpointed an interesting character wrinkle. Margaret enjoys intellectual argument, likes to debate, and relishes the chance to prove her viewpoint the right one.

In light of these traits, Margaret decided to study law with the goal of becoming a litigator. Today, she's a top tax attorney for a prestigious Atlanta law firm. Fighting to hold on to every possible nickel of her law firm's earnings, she herself earns more money (and has more fun in her work) than she ever dreamed possible.

By taking stock of themselves and having the courage to trade successful careers for even better ones, John and Margaret have gone a long way toward realizing their potential.

Art imitates life

Let's see what Arthur T. Advancer's sample job description looks like:

DIVISION MANAGER

Assume full responsibility for mid-sized general contractor building commercial and residential projects in the Tampa, Florida region. Responsibilities include total profit and loss accountability, overseeing sales, estimating, field management, administration, operations, finance and accounting. Compensation to include a salary of \$95,000 per year, bonus potential of \$20,000, company car, full health benefits, pension program, and stock options.

Notice that Art's ideal job reads like a job description posted by an employer or placed in a classified ad. Art is highly specific here and takes an employer's-eye view. You should do likewise.

Feel free, by the way, to choose an ideal job that will make you stretch and grow. Your ideal job may require you to take classes or earn additional degrees to do the job well. That's a

good sign: your ideal job should call on skills and abilities you want to develop along with those you have now.

With your job description in hand — an experiment, a first draft, a mere tentative step, perhaps — you're now ready to start outside research.

Check your dream against reality

*“If a man knows not what harbor he seeks, any wind is the right wind “
—Seneca*

Your next step is finding out how well your ideal job description corresponds to real jobs out in the world. Like our friend Arthur, you may already know what the next rungs up the ladder look like. Or like Margaret, the former CPA, you may be changing ladders altogether. Either way, it's wise to check your impressions against inside information.

Begin by reading some of the myriad books that describe careers. Excellent sources include the Occupational Handbook by the U.S. Department of Labor, the Jobs Rated Almanac by Les Krantz, and Dictionary of Occupational Titles by the U.S. Government Printing Office. Good bookstores and public and college libraries carry these titles along with other almanacs and reference books of general and specific information about virtually every career imaginable.

Ask and ye shall learn

Once you've read enough to feel comfortable that you're on the right track, you're ready to start “informational interviews.” Typically these are brief, low-pressure meetings with potential employers in your field of interest. Such interviews are only for information gathering. Your primary goal should be drawing on your subjects' expertise and market knowledge.

Company recruiters or personnel managers will often provide you with job literature and job descriptions on request. Be sure to seek information about the qualifications, benefits — and drawbacks — of any job.

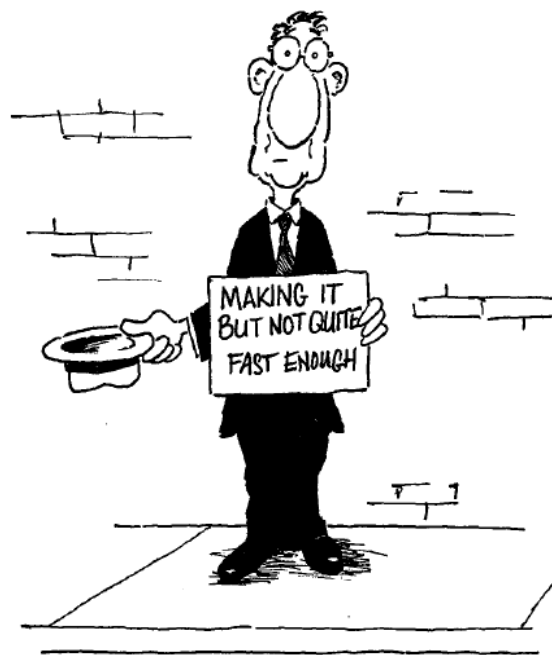
Job qualifications include education, experience, appropriate personality traits, and other characteristics expected of job applicants. Benefits include vacation days, sick days, insurance plans, bonuses; financial, legal, and educational assistance, club memberships, relocation and severance packages, upward mobility, and other fringe benefits such as travel and automotive allowances.

Shortcomings may include limited advancement opportunities and less obvious liabilities such as lack of access to top management, responsibility without commensurate authority, and long, slow moving chains of command. An otherwise attractive job might place you in an under-funded or ill-regarded segment of a company or industry.

Research independently, gathering first-hand, up-to-the-minute information from those performing the jobs in question. When you're unable to gain needed information on your own, independent career counselors may be able to provide valuable assistance.

Research a variety of intriguing jobs that build on your strengths and interests. Take time to be thorough, periodically modifying your ideal job description to reflect what you learn. All your effort will pay off when you set about bagging your dream job.

TALK TO THOSE WHO ARE THERE; DRAW A MAP TO GET THERE



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TALK TO THOSE WHO ARE THERE; DRAW A MAP TO GET THERE

*“Long-range planning does not deal with future decisions,
but with the future of present decisions”*

—Peter Drucker

Now, you're ready to meet with the experts who can give you the lowdown on your dreams. They're what my trade calls “incumbents” — people who hold your dream job. Incumbents can give you otherwise unattainable information, and a deeper understanding of the day-to-day reality of the job you desire.

Talking to incumbents can also spare you hard firsthand experience, as my good friend Dan would be first to admit.

When you were a child, you thought as a child

Dan grew up wanting to work on a railroad. Above all else, he wanted to be a steam locomotive engineer, but he knew he'd been born 30 years too late for that.

As a pre-schooler, Dan rode a Pullman train to his grandparent's house several times each year. Everything about these trips entranced Dan, from the pull-down berths to white linen in the dining car, early-morning views of fields and junkyards — even the ice-cold water served in fummy paper cups with pointed bottoms.

In his mid-twenties, Dan stumbled on an opportunity to work on a small, branch-line railroad. This seemed like an ideal introduction to railroading. Dan would have the chance to do everything from repairing dilapidated track to driving a diesel locomotive.

But it didn't take Dan long to find the flaw in his long-held ambition. Riding a Pullman train and repairing the tracks beneath it are two very different pastimes! Talking to Dan's colleagues-to-be might have helped Dan find out even sooner. Of course, at that age, he didn't mind the calluses (and the detour) as much as you might mind a similar wrong turn in your career tomorrow.

So before you choose a career because it seems exciting, romantic, lucrative or whatever, talk to the people who do the work on good days and bad. Their lives may be very different from your fantasies, and may have less to do with your interests than you assume. The sooner you find out, the better-prepared you are to formulate Plan B.

Polite persistence pays

The good news is, most professionals are flattered by sincere interest in their work and opinions. If you show them respect and courtesy, recognize their busy schedules, and let them know that their advice matters, most will be glad to meet with you. However, staff members may

try to bar your access to the busy professionals they serve. Polite persistence should eventually get you in. Service reps and salespeople reach their quarry this way every day.

If possible, interview incumbents personally rather than by phone. Don't expect more than 20 minutes of their busy schedules. Let them know you've done considerable research already, and arrive prepared with a list of open-ended questions. Explain why you believe your strengths and interests suit you to the position you seek. Describe your perception of the position's rewards and shortcomings, and ask how this compares with actual experience. Also, ask the incumbent how he or she achieved success, and what pitfalls you should avoid. Follow your visit with a brief written thanks for their time and interest.

The following questions will help you make the most of your informant's valuable time. Make copies, add your own questions, and take the list to your interviews.

QUESTIONS FOR INCUMBENTS

1. What are the essential qualifications for your position?
2. How would you recommend that someone with my background acquire these qualifications?
3. What are the rewards of your job?
4. What are the shortcomings of your job?
5. What are your specific functions and responsibilities?
6. Do other companies have similar positions, or do your competitors function differently? How so?
7. What's the fastest way to get to your position? What's the surest way?
8. Now that you have attained this position, what are your goals?
9. Could you suggest a mentor for me?
10. Who else might I speak with to better understand what we've discussed ?

Expect contradictory advice

Try to speak with three to five incumbents holding each job you're considering. You may be surprised to hear very different perspectives voiced by individuals who hold the same position. It's not so surprising when you analyze it. Not only are your sources unique individuals; their companies may differ greatly, and may be faring differently in the marketplace. Try to clarify any confusion by discussing conflicting opinions or advice with each successive incumbent. When you know why your informants feel as they do, your own feelings will become clearer as well.

For example, imagine that you aim to become division manager of a large construction company. In this post, you'd oversee sales, estimating, finance, accounting, field management, and a variety of operations and administrative functions. From where you sit now, that looks like a full plate. You arrange to talk with three incumbents to help you chart your path. Each, you soon discover, believes in a different "best way" to get from your current job to your goal.

Incumbent number one suggests the best route is through sales. Not a yard of dirt gets moved, after all, without a sale first taking place. Selling is clearly the key to divisional performance. Make a name for yourself in sales, he declares, and the way is paved for you.

Number two thinks field management is the fast track. It stands to reason that any successful division manager must know the nuts and bolts of the business. How could he get the most from crews otherwise? As for good salespeople, they can always be hired.

Incumbent number three believes in bean-counting your way to the top. Sound money management is the skill that leverages boom times and makes lean times survivable. “Deal brilliantly with the budget,” he advises, “and the top jobs will fall into place.”

In fact, all these paths can work for the right person with the right company. Your job is to know yourself well enough to predict whether you’re likely to excel in sales, field management, or financial management. Merely being on some theoretical “best path” is no guarantee of success. It’s more important to do your work well.

Be prepared to keep researching your career goal until you feel satisfied with your decision. Don’t quit until you’ve laid doubts to rest. For instance, you may find that the unsatisfactory aspect of an otherwise attractive job is negotiable. Your exceptional experience or notable accomplishments may compensate for a missing qualification. Perhaps the discouraging remarks of an incumbent owe more to personal conflicts than to the nature of the job. The same job on paper is never the same job in reality for any two given people or different companies.

When you’re ready to “own” your career goal, make Thu’ decision and commit to making it happen. You must believe in your goal strongly enough to see yourself achieving it. If you can’t, regroup, re-analyze, and refocus until you can.

Your career plan is a personal treasure map

“The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.”

To arrive where you’ve aimed, you need a career plan. This is a map to your career goal; a map you can systematically follow and measure your progress against. Your career plan will show you where you are today, where you want to wind up, and the path you’ll take to get there. In fact, we’ll develop two career plans for you: a long-term and short-term plan. We’ll look at the long-term plan first because it will guide you in creating a short-term plan.

Your long-term career plan includes a listing of job positions, accomplishments and skills required to reach your long-term career goal. You’ll use a vertical format: career goal at the top, present position at the bottom.

CAREER ADVANCEMENT FOR CONSTRUCTION EXECUTIVES

The following chart shows Art's long-term career plan. Minimum criteria for advancement are placed under Skills, Job Title, Accomplishments, and Time Frame.

Art's short-term career plan comes next. It's focused entirely on the accomplishments and skills he'll require to advance from Senior Estimator (his current position) to Chief Estimator of his current firm.

Long Term Career Plan for Becoming a Division Manager of a Construction Firm

Skills	Job Title	Accomplishments	Time Frame	Income
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sales 2. Estimating 3. Field mgt. 4. Admin. & Operations 5. Finance & Accounting 	A. Div. Manager mid-sized construction company, commercial/resident	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish \$50M division w/ 8% profit. 2. Build reputation for dependability with owners. 3. Control all areas of operation 	1995	\$120K
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assistance to Division Mgr. 2. Business Development 3. Proposal writing 4. Presentations 5. Strategic planning 6. Represent field management team 7. Coordination with Finance and Estimation Depts. 8. Client Maintenance 	B. Marketing Director mid-sized contractor	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bring \$50M new business. 2. Handle front-end involvement and project maintenance. 	1991-94	\$ 85K
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Total bid prep. 2. Budgeting jobs 3. Manage 8-10 estimators 4. Work with Finance and Sales 	C. Chief Estimator mid-sized construction co.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support annual construction volume of \$50M. 	1987-90	\$ 70K
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pricing 2. Subcontract negotiation 3. Computer MC estimating 4. Manage five estimators 5. Demonstrate teamwork 	D. Senior Estimator large commercial building company	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lead estimation on successful bids. 	present	\$ 50K

Short-term Career Plan for Advancing to Chief Estimator:

Title

Chief Estimator, mid-size construction company, commercial/residential building

<u>Skills</u>	<u>Means</u>	<u>Time Frame</u>
1. Prepare total bids.	A. Become lead estimator on major bids. Participate with chief estimator on final bid preparation. B. Ask to take full responsibility for specific bids. C. Develop skills in negotiation. D. Spend time with field management to understand field costs and time allocations.	A. 1990 B. Current C. Current D. April 1988
2. Set budgets and build profit into bids.	A. Participate in establishing budgets and profit estimates. B. Work more with Finance Department C. Study competitive firms' budgets and profits through A.G.C. D. Take finance course work at local trade school. E. Develop relationship with chief estimators through A.G.C.	A. 1988 B. Current C. Current D. May 1989 E. Current
3. Manage 8-10 estimators	A. Ask for larger bid teams of five estimators to lead estimates. B. Take management workshops and course work. C. Develop a department of 8-10 estimators.	A. 1989 B. Current C. 1991
4. Work with finance department and sales on projects and final bid tabulation.	A. Spend time with finance dept. to understand function of profit. B. Spend time with sales manager to understand his job in terms of securing new business, working at coaching field management, and working with estimating and finance to deliver what clients want.	A. 1988 B. Current

Your short-term goals may last from one to five years, depending on how long you plan to stay in your current position. Based on your goal, draw yearly and quarterly plans to measure your progress and guide you to the new job. These detailed plans should include timetables for required skills and achievements.

If you've been practicing my recommendations (not just reading them) you'll have the information you need to put together a career plan. If you have not yet done so, it may be wise to speak with executive recruiters in your chosen industry. Recruiters can describe the most common, proven paths for career advancement, as well as fast-track maneuvers that have advanced executives in your industry. They may also be willing to evaluate the plan you've already developed. What's more, the recruiters you contact now may someday help advance your career.

To locate a competent recruiter, ask an executive in your industry for a referral. You might also consult the Directory of Executive Recruiters by Kennedy Publications (603-585-6544); the Recruiting and Search Report (904-235-3733); the National Association of Personnel Consultants Directory (703-684-0180); or the Association of Executive Search Consultants Directory (212-949-9556) for a listings of search firms. A good reference book is How to Get a Headhunter to Call by Howard S. Freedman; John Wiley & Sons, NY.

Try to chart at least three long-term and short-term plans from job incumbents and at least three from executive recruiters. Noting how well these plans suit your own strengths and weaknesses should help you identify the plans most likely to succeed for you. Match your chosen plans to your own willingness to take risks and exert yourself.

Maintain one short-term plan at a time, designing a new plan each time you reach the goal of your current plan. And starting today, maintain a career advancement file into which you put news articles, reports, memos, letters, performance reviews and commendations — every “stroke” that will help you reach your goal.

ZEROING IN ON YOUR TARGET



"I'd have to say that retirement is my ultimate goal."

Frederick C. Hornberger, Jr.



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ZEROING IN ON YOUR TARGET

*“Choose a job that you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life.”
—Confucius*

Most people have something in life that they love to do. The most fortunate people feel that way about their work. If you’re bothering to take charge of your career, your goal should be finding work that you love. Getting there is a process of discovery. You’ve got to know yourself and your chosen field well enough to arrange a happy marriage.

The first three chapters of this book will help you start on your discovery process. I’ll take you through some self-assessment exercises and suggest ways to research jobs suited to the strengths and interests you identify. You’ll wind up aiming toward a specific job title in a specific industry. For instance, you might aspire, to be comptroller of a leading athletic shoe manufacturing firm, director of research and development for a medical technology conglomerate, VP for public affairs in a state university system, or president of your own tropical fish and aquarium supply company.

Why should, your goal be so concrete? Having a clear specific goal will help you anticipate where you’re heading. You’ll be better able to predict the kinds of people you’ll work with, the pressures you’ll encounter, the laws, regulations, traditions, technology, and competition (to name just a few factors) that will shape your work environment.

What’s more, the clearer your goal, the easier time you’ll have reaching it. Not because you’ll have less work to do, but because you’ll know what skills, contacts, and experiences you’ll need to succeed.

Let your whole life flash before your eyes

It’s time to take a personal inventory.

Set out two blank sheets of paper and find your favorite pen. On one sheet, list your strengths. On the other sheet, list your interests.

Take your time with this exercise — take several passes at each list. Consider every facet of your history and personality... What past accomplishments, assignments, and responsibilities have been particularly enjoyable? What are your hobbies? List your peak experiences during vacations and free time.

In assembling your list, think of your strengths as qualifications for future jobs, not your current position. You already have your present job; you don’t need to prove how well it suits you. Your next job moves are the ones you care about. Look for strengths that may help you justify these moves.

For ideas, let's look at the sample list of "My Strengths" compiled by a hypothetical friend, Arthur T. Advancer. Art is an employee in the construction industry whose well-planned career moves. Feel free to jot down notes about yourself next to Art's list.

MY STRENGTHS

1. Assertive
2. Self-motivated
3. Able to handle detail comfortably
4. Analytical
5. Hard-working
6. Degreed and registered engineer
7. Knack for doing jobs economically
8. Employees under my supervision have excellent safety record
9. Accomplished at estimating commercial/industrial construction
10. Familiar with new building materials and construction methods
11. Require very little supervision
12. Good team player
13. Have positive, cooperative attitude
14. Flexible, adjust to change cheerfully
15. Good management skills
16. Leader of Year, Associated General Contractors
17. Stable employment record
18. Good record of journal publication, speeches to industry gatherings
19. Involved in community service, gaining good company publicity
20. Introduced computerized methods, increasing company productivity

Arthur's thorough. He's included every conceivable reference to his training, skills, qualifications, and accomplishments.

Now that you've looked through Arthur's list of strengths, here are some open-ended questions to help you identify your own.

WHAT ARE MY STRENGTHS?

- What achievements can I list? Which of these are standouts?
- What were my favorite classes in school, and why?
- What compliments have I received from others?
- What skills do I possess? What are examples of these skills?
- Am I best working with groups or working alone?
- Do I learn best by listening or by reading directions and written material?
- Am I good at explaining things to others?
- Do I finish most tasks quickly?
- Do I have to re-do many tasks because of detail-oriented mistakes?
- Am I an analytical or conceptual thinker?

In writing your second list, your list of interests, let your mind roam free. Into this grab-bag, pile all your hopes, aspirations, desires, and ambitions. Don't be grimly practical or realistic — yet. That will come during your research and interviewing phase. For now, daydream about an ideal job... Think about your past successes, and then visualize a future work environment in which you're productive and happy. Identify the areas you feel passionate about in your life and your career, and head relentlessly in that direction.

Here's Arthur T.'s interest list. Again, feel free to jot your own ideas next to Art's. This is a workbook, so make notes in it! (If some librarian in your past has made you uncomfortable about writing in books, copy Art's list and write on it.)

INTERESTS

1. Like living in Tampa, Florida.
2. Want full control of projects as long as I stay on schedule and within budget. Too much oversight bothers me.
3. Want to manage larger staff.
4. Would enjoy working for a mid-size general contractor.
5. Hope to keep solving technical problems.
6. Desire work requiring accuracy and mastery of detail.
7. Enjoy high level of direct contact with owners, architects, engineers.
8. Like seeing estimates through to bid presentation.
9. Plan to take courses in advanced building composites, manufactured structures, and estimating fast-track jobs.
10. Hope to serve as corporate liaison with Habitat for Humanity or similar non-profit builder.
11. Want the increased pay and responsibility my achievements merit.

As you can see, Arthur has a handle on his interests and their order of their importance for him.

In noting your interests, think of how they might relate to your work, and how your work could advance or interfere with these interests. For example, if travel is your great passion, a job with a multi-national conglomerate might offer travel opportunities, even temporary assignments abroad, which would be hard to arrange on your own. On the other hand, if you're a civic activist, say, or the leader of a Boy Scout troop, a job with lots of overnight travel could prove disruptive.

To help develop your list, answer the following questions:

WHAT ARE MY INTERESTS?

- If I had a free day, what would I like to do most?
- What have I always enjoyed doing with my free time?
- What jobs have I most enjoyed doing and why?

- What jobs have I liked least and why?
- What tasks have I most and least enjoyed doing?
- What type of working environment would I prefer?
- What type of environment is intolerable for me?
- For what kind of boss would I most and least enjoy working?
- Would I prefer working for a stable salary, for commissions, or for bonuses based on performance?
- Do I like to manage others?
- Am I comfortable being managed?
- What motivates me to perform?
- What hours would I prefer to work?
- Do I prefer a set schedule, or setting my own schedule?
- What level of risk/reward do I prefer?
- Will I risk my position for a “dream project” that could make my career?

Don’t get stuck — get help!

How are your lists shaping up? Developing your lists of strengths and interests is likely to be a challenge because you’re close to the subject and caught up in day-to-day work. If you’re not making satisfactory headway, consult a professional. Career planning counselors specialize in helping people evaluate themselves. They can run a battery of tests to help reveal your interests and aptitudes as they relate to today’s job market. You’ll find Career Planning Counselors on university and college campuses, within major corporations, and at independent counseling centers such as Omnia Career Counselors, 1-800-247-6618; the John C. Crystal Centers of Crystal-Barkley Corp., NY; or through the Consulting Psychologists Press, at 577 College Ave., Palo Alto, CA, 94306. Also check the Yellow Pages under vocational, career, job, or employment counselors. The National Board of Certified Counselors, in Alexandria, VA, can supply a list of counselors in your area.

For help on a budget, the self-help classic What Color is Your Parachute? by Richard N. Bolles can help you assess your strengths and interests as they relate to career choice.

Once your lists are relatively complete, rank each item in order of importance. Then ask family members, friends, peers, and even your superiors (if they’re sympathetic) to review your lists and offer their perspective. Keep refining these lists until you’re satisfied they accurately reflect your character.

When you’re satisfied with your lists, you’re ready to develop an ideal job description.

PERSONAL INTEGRITY — THE KEY INGREDIENT IN ANY CAREER

Frederick C. Hornberger, Jr.



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PERSONAL INTEGRITY — THE KEY INGREDIENT IN ANY CAREER

*“Rather fail with honor than succeed by fraud”
— Sophocles*

To be truly successful, you must have great personal integrity. Although you may know people who seem to profit from personal treachery or shady dealings, their success is unlikely to last. Make no mistake about it: integrity is critical to maximum career advancement: I’m talking about being trustworthy, ethical, honest, and dependable to the core — and most importantly, being consistently so others glimpse your personal integrity through your behavior, reputation, life-style, scruples, morals, ethics, and personal and social maturity.

You may think you have little control over your integrity — that your character is hereditary, like eye color or intelligence. You may believe that integrity is a function of your environment — that you will be no better or worse than the people who raised you and the friends with whom you grew up. Indeed, heredity, environment, and culture all influence your character. Nonetheless, your attitudes and behavior are ultimately yours to control. They are your responsibility, and others will judge you accordingly.

Here are some thoughts and actions that will help cultivate your integrity.

Learn to like yourself!

*“To love oneself is the beginning of a lifelong romance.”
— Oscar Wilde*

Look in the mirror each day and say something positive about yourself. Praise and reward yourself for jobs well done. Compliment yourself for good ideas. If this feels funny, it shows you need to practice self-praise more regularly. We all need daily, positive “strokes.” All too often, we may be the only available source! At the same time, don’t kid yourself. Praise yourself for those strengths you have; resolve to attain the strengths you have yet to develop.

Don’t put yourself down or speak negatively about yourself. It’s self-demeaning and contagious! When you make mistakes, remind yourself you’re still evolving and that every mistake you choose to learn from moves you closer toward personal success. When you build self-esteem, you generate self-confidence which is key to optimum performance. Three excellent books in this area are The Psychology of High Self-Esteem by Nathaniel Branden, I’m OK You’re OK by Thomas Harris, and Think and Grow Rich by Napoleon Hill,

A friend of mine once learned the importance of self-esteem the hard way. He came to me as a business development manager earning \$85,000 annually, some 15% more than average for his field. I presented him with the exact opportunity he needed to achieve his long-term career goal of becoming a Division Manager. Although his credentials were impeccable, he

became intimidated because his peers viewed him as too inexperienced. He started reminding himself of all his shortcomings as he and others saw them, steadily losing confidence all the while.

In the big interview, he choked when asked about his shortcomings and why they should hire him over an incumbent VP of operations. With self-esteem on his side, he could have answered the question with confidence — and won the job.

Bridges are not for burning

Your career depends on constructive, supportive relationships. We all run across people we can't tolerate, but being vindictive or hostile can cripple your career. Don't allow another's envy or attacks to rattle you.

Instead, forgive and forget. Move ahead only with a clear conscience. You never know who may reappear (to your dismay) somewhere down the road.

I knew a vice president of finance who had gone far in six years after college graduation. His technical abilities were outstanding; his people skills were average.

My friend was closing in on an out-of-town job opportunity which would have made him the youngest senior vice-president in a major utility company. After the final, promising interview, the firm checked additional references. Apparently, an office clerk he once alienated left the company and became secretary to a senior executive who was a good friend of the potential employer. When the clerk described her run-in with the candidate; he was removed from consideration. Had my friend cleared up that old relationship, I think he would have had the job.

Go the extra mile

“The idle are a peculiar kind of dead who cannot be buried.”
— Chinese proverb

For maximum career advancement, do more than you are required to do and deliver more than you promise. If you do only what you're paid to do, you're entitled to nothing extra. So if your boss needs you to do an extra hour of work, give two hours. If your client needs a longer warranty, give him that and more. If your sales quota is \$20,000 per month, sell \$25,000. Giving more is the quickest way to get more.

I have a client with whom our firm has done business for five years. Over that time, several occasions arose in which our client needed us to consult with them. We normally charge fees for such consultations, but waived them to affirm our loyalty and commitment to their long-term interests. On occasion, we even referred candidates for appropriate job opportunities at no charge, again for the same reason.

Do we calculate the cost to us? Of course. Does it always pay off? No. But when we hold the client's best interest in mind, we generally win in the long run.

Bring enthusiasm to everything you do

“If you aren’t fired with enthusiasm, you will be fired with enthusiasm.”
— Vince Lombardi

Enthusiasm is critical to success in everything you do, not only for yourself, but for those around you. Enthusiasm draws others to you. Positive energy is always contagious. We all respect those with passion, passion to live, passion to love. By bringing enthusiasm to the workplace, you spread sunshine.

People with enthusiasm are persuasive, and communicate self-confidence. People are always more persuaded by the depth of our beliefs and emotions than by any logic or knowledge we advance. Persuasion isn't converting people to your way of thinking, it's converting them to your feelings and beliefs.

Enthusiasm sends a clear message to others that you like who you are, who they are, and what you're doing. Monitor your enthusiasm throughout your work day and see how effective you are in getting support from your peers, bosses, and subordinates.

Your appearance does make a difference

Management may not know much about your work, but they see your appearance. Right or wrong, people judge you in part by how you look. Do a personal evaluation on your appearance. Chances are, you can improve your appearance substantially by simply paying closer attention to the details. Try to look your best whenever you leave your home. Choosing higher-quality clothing, keeping your hair cut, being clean-shaven, shining your shoes, and wearing a smile every time you encounter others will make a big difference in your overall presence.

For work, I recommend you mimic the dress code of your senior management. If anything, dress a bit more conservatively than the top brass at your company.

A good compendium of image books and consultants is [Professional Image Publications](#) by Jacqueline Thomas, Staten Island, NY.

Executive etiquette is more than manners

“A good conversationalist is not one who remembers what was said, but says what someone wants to remember.”

— *J.M. Brown*

Personal integrity includes knowing and practicing proper etiquette. There are proper behaviors for every business situation, and it is incumbent upon you to learn it and practice it. Letitia Baldrige’s book, Complete Guide to Executive Manners, Rawson Associates, NYC, 1985, will help you develop poise and grace.

I have personally seen professionals lose career opportunities because they had poor table manners. By happy contrast, I’ve also seen a candidate of mine demonstrated such a command of etiquette that he won an outstanding position.

This candidate and I were invited to a private function hosted by the prospective employer. Many respected individuals were in attendance. He had dressed properly for the occasion, understood the art of business entertaining, was effective and courteous in his conversation, showed grace and poise in dining, remembered people’s names — in short, did everything right. What won him the job was an act of perception that went beyond mere good manners. As the meal progressed, an older gentleman sitting in the corner went almost unnoticed until my candidate took the time to draw him out. As it turns out, this retiree had been highly successful decades before, and relished the opportunity to talk about it with such an interested dinner partner.

As toasts were shared, my candidate toasted the accomplishments and stature of his new friend. This won over the retiree’s proud daughter, who also happened to be the wife of the host. Her endorsement helped win my candidate the job.

Develop a personal code of ethics

“If you are not big enough to lose, you are not big enough to win.”

— *Walter Reuther*

Establish your own code of ethics, and be willing to hold your ground regardless of temptation or cost. Let others know what standards you live by, and do not disappoint them or yourself.

The most respected and admired people are always the “good guys” who win ethically. Short-term gain cannot justify the risk of losing our reputation and the victory in having won by fraud.

In my experience, ethical missteps may be the most common cause for career stagnation. Once your integrity is open to question, in even a single incident, there is little hope for forgiveness in a competitive, unforgiving marketplace.

Our firm and its counterparts encounter numerous candidates — otherwise well-qualified — who cannot be placed due to breaches of conduct. Theft of time and assets, unprofessional outbursts, overindulgence of alcohol at business and social functions, lies of omission, and other such indiscretions are all unacceptable.

In a book like this, I can't give you the moral strength required to always make the right choices. I can, however, suggest an easy yardstick you can use.. Before you act, before you yield to temptation, imagine yourself in the final interview for your dream job. Would what you are about to do or say improve your chances of advancement?

Is your word your bond?

“The price of greatness is responsibility.”
— Winston Churchill

People who do what they say they will do — the people you know you can count on — are the most highly valued employees wherever they work. Emulate them.

It's in your day-to-day interest to always come through. This gives you the grounds to expect the same of others; and after all, your commitments often depend on your co-workers' efforts.

Doing what you promise only part of the time is not good enough. It can cost you your credibility. So be conservative with your promises. I once presented an exceptional job opportunity to an architect. She was happily employed and not looking, but after lengthy discussions she decided that the new opportunity was indeed for her.

Her interviews resulted in an offer. She accepted, but upon turning in her resignation, she received a counteroffer which she also accepted despite our vigorous counseling that counteroffers are recipes for disaster. Within six months, her old firm had replaced her as overpriced and disloyal. The firm that courted her six months before shunned her as untrustworthy. She had accepted their offer once and gone back on her word. Don't you make such mistakes.

Punctuality shows respect

“80% of life is showing up.”
— *Woody Allen*

People like to be treated with respect, and in business, punctuality is more than good manners. It is a clear way to demonstrate good faith. By meeting your time commitments, you build belief that your other promises and contracts are trustworthy.

Try not to make time commitments you cannot keep. If you will be late, call beforehand to re-schedule. I’ve seen good jobs lost because the candidate ignored this simple courtesy.

Confidential indiscretion

“There is no right way to do something wrong”

No chapter on integrity would be complete without addressing the subject of “confidential indiscretion?” If there is one thing that can destroy a promotion, or even a career, it is earning a reputation for being indiscreet. It can take only one breach of confidence to lose the trust of a valued associate or employer.

Breaches of confidence, whether it be company trade secrets, client privileges, gossip, or simple jest — however innocent-seeming — can leave you marked for the duration of your career. These violations are not easily forgiven.

Interviewers will often look for bad-mouthing and sharing of company secrets during interviews. Many interviewers consider inability to keep confidential information secret the worst breach of integrity — worse than lying or stealing.

Evaluate yourself to see if you share secrets or gossip to gain attention. If you feel that improvement is needed, work to develop the necessary self-confidence and maturity to resist the temptations of tale-bearing.

Quality first for the 1990s

“The highest reward for a person’s toil is not what they get for it, but what they become by it.”
— *John Ruskin*

American business seems to have sacrificed quality in pursuit of short-term profits. The quick fix, the fast buck, the quest for instant gratification has created many problems we now have to face as a nation and a part of the world economy. We have been providing less for more, while our competitors focus on providing more for less.

I’m convinced this decade will show a recommitment to quality in our values, education, service, and products. Play a leading role in this trend.

Play with a winning attitude

*“Winning isn’t everything, but wanting to win is.”
— Vince Lombardi*

Your attitude is your choice. Anxiety, fear, worry, guilt, motivation, enthusiasm, and happiness are all reactions we permit ourselves to experience. You may feel you have been dealt some bad cards in life, but it’s up to you not to dwell on them. Hold quick “funerals” for your disappointments. Forget them and move on.

Our attitude is not determined by circumstances, but by how we respond to circumstances. Don’t be a victim of your past. You can change your attitude, by changing the way you react to the events around you. Even stress is only a product of how you perceive, define, and react to the world.

Our greatest power is the power to choose! We can decide where we are, what we do, and what we think. No one can take the power to choose away from us. It is ours alone. We can do what we want to do. We can be who we want to be. Respect other people’s opinions, but don’t allow others to define who you are. If you base your self-image on others’ approval, break the pattern. Rejection is a part of life. No one can make you feel inferior without your consent. One of the best guides I’ve read on attitude improvement is the classic The Power of Positive Thinking by Dr. Norman Vincent Peale.

Get motivated!

Motivation is fundamental to achievement in any field. As I have noted, it’s far easier to generate motivation when your job interests you, calls on your strengths, and presents achievable challenges. But great achievers bring motivation to almost everything they do. They believe they can succeed. You, too, are capable of great achievement, but you must begin by choosing to succeed.

IF YOU'RE WILLING TO WORK, BE WILLING TO LEARN HOW



"Higgins, recently it has been brought to my attention that your resume may not be entirely accurate.."

Frederick C. Hornberger, Jr.



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IF YOU'RE WILLING TO WORK, BE WILLING TO LEARN HOW

“The world is full of willing people, some willing to work; the rest willing to let them.”
— Robert Frost

It takes more than hard work to be successful. It takes “working smart” — developing efficiency and effectiveness on the job. Here are some practical tips toward that end.

Use your time in pursuit of goals

“We always have time enough, if we will but use it aright.”
— Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe.

Begin every task with clearly-defined goals. Then use these goals as standards for measuring your progress. Be specific: use dates, numbers, and qualitative measures so you can note not merely when you’ve done something, but how well. Break large tasks into smaller tasks to make them more manageable and easier to monitor. Handle the tough tasks first or when you’re at your best. Consult with your boss and clients to be sure you agree on goals. Then plot these goals, objectives, and related tasks on paper to make them tangible, clear, and do-able. Set deadlines you can commit to.

For example, you might set a goal of making \$20 thousand in gross revenue for your sales efforts this month. Statistically, you’ve learned that it takes an average of 100 business development calls to secure an order for your \$5 thousand service. Quick math tells you that you’ll have to make around 400 calls to reach your financial objective. This translates to 100 calls per week 20 calls per day. Now you have a tangible, measurable daily goal, and you know the behavior necessary to reach your monthly objective. Make sure to hold yourself accountable.

As you work, remain open to new and better ideas. Ask your boss and your mentor for advice on the best way to accomplish your tasks. For example, tell your boss: “I want to become good at managing people. How am I doing now? What do you think I need to do to improve my performance?” You may need to assert yourself to get the necessary feedback, but you must know at every opportunity how you are doing and where you stand.

Always plan out your day the night before when tomorrow’s goals are fresh in your mind. Plan your work — then work your plan! David Campbell has written a great book on goal-setting: If you don’t know where you’re going, you’ll probably end up somewhere else; Argus Communications, 1974.

Do what's important

“Ideas are funny little things; they won’t work unless you do.”

Distinguish between tasks that are merely urgent and those actually important to your career. It may seem urgent, say, to get more staples, because you have just inserted the last few into your stapler. But it’s not as important as finishing that major report due tomorrow, even if you have to borrow a stapler to finish it! Give priority to important tasks. Work in urgent tasks around the important ones, and delegate them when you can. You are not uniquely qualified to get more staples, for example — anyone can do it for you.

Tackle your difficult projects early to get them out of the way. Otherwise, they’ll weigh on your mind and reduce your efficiency in doing other tasks. Schedule important tasks that require high energy for those periods when you are at your best — typically the mornings.

Build perseverance with purpose

“Never, never, never give up.”
— *Winston Churchill*

Too often the only characteristic that separates those who succeed from the rest is perseverance. Victory is often won by those who can hang in there the longest, steadily inching their way to success.

Success is not an end but a process; developing the self-discipline to get up every day, day in and day out, hurdle after hurdle, one foot after another, until you’ve accomplished what you set out to accomplish.

To develop perseverance, you should identify a purpose greater than the trials and frustrations encountered along the road to success. A friend of mine had a goal to be the Vice President of Operations for a mid-sized general contractor by the time he was thirty years old. I can remember him reading everything he could get his hands on about the responsibilities, skills, and accomplishments needed to qualify for such a position. He took night classes to advance his education in negotiating contracts, learned as much as he could in both estimating and project management, and worked the financial department of his company on the weekends to learn construction finance. He reached his goal, but he endured many setbacks. What impressed me was his unflagging commitment to fulfill his purpose.

He hung symbols of his purpose on his bathroom mirror, car sun-visor, and office wall so that he couldn’t forget the reason he worked so hard. These quotes and images carried him through the tough times, and I’m certain if he had not continually reinforced his commitment with daily reminders, he could not have paid the price of success for the full eight years.

Schedule your commitments; commit to your schedule

“I never lost a game, time just ran out.”
— Vince Lombardi

Time is the most limited resource in your career. Ultimately, you may succeed in doubling your salary and raising your departmental budget. But you will never raise the number of hours you are allotted each day. Therefore, you must manage this fixed resource wisely by getting the most done in the least possible time. This requires good planning, scheduling and self discipline.

DayTimer® makes an excellent series of personal calendar/organizers. Other manufacturers make similar systems, and most give you a choice of page formats, ranging from “week-at-a-glance” to those devoting an entire page or two to one day, broken into half-hour or fifteen-minute segments. Reflection and experience will guide you to the format best for you. The important thing is to get a personal scheduling notebook, and use it. Two excellent books on scheduling are The Time Trap by R. Alec Mackenzie; McGraw Hill, NY, 1972, and How to Get Control of Your Time and Your Life by Alan Lakein; The New American Library, NY, 1973.

Mentors: your sponsors to career success

“Good judgment comes from experience, and experience comes from poor judgment.”

With the many choices you must make throughout your career, it is imperative to surround yourself with wise counsel. Most executives speak to have attributed their success, especially in the early stages, to mentors. Mentors can be found in every industry, and they generally enjoy giving their wealth of experience for the benefit of an ambitious, appreciative student. Try to cultivate a mentor within your present company, as well as one who can share an industry-wide perspective, for each level of your career advancement.

To locate a good mentor, start with the job incumbents who helped you develop your long-term career plan. You might also contact your local S.C.O.R.E. (Service Core Of Retired Executives) for a retired pro. Your mentor should be your own personal counselor, teacher, and guide, so search your field to find the best.

Manage paper — don’t just shuffle it

Minimize the number of times you handle a piece of paper. A business consultant devised a clever phrase to help you handle paperwork efficiently.

It is T-R-A-F — TRAF. It stands for:

Toss in the trash.

Refer to someone who can do the job at least 70% as well as you can.

Act on important matters immediately.

File for future reference or attention.

Do one of these with each incoming piece of paper, and you won't waste time shuffling through stacks of paper again and again. And again.

Find a working retreat

Everyone needs a retreat — a place of refuge — to do concentrated work without interruption. Your personal retreat might be a private office or an unoccupied office somewhere in your building — preferably with a non-working phone! It might be a hotel room, a desk at the library, or even a roomy closet or the boiler room. Whatever place you choose, use it to concentrate and achieve results. Develop the habit of using a working retreat by incorporating such time into your regular schedule. You may find this time to be your most productive, and also your most pleasurable.

Keep face-to-face in its proper place

Discourage drop-in visitors by keeping your door shut when you're working on a project. Resolve issues standing up in the hall rather than seated comfortably in your office. If you must meet with someone, try to do it in their office. It is less offensive to leave someone else's office, when you must, than to eject someone else from your office.

In developing your work schedule, include daily time to cultivate and maintain business relationships. By giving your peers, subordinates, and boss high-quality, focused attention — even if it's necessarily brief — you won't alienate them by sticking to the rest of your work schedule.

Practically speaking, it's wise to explain your schedule to others so that they can respect it, and assist you in adhering to it. As long as your associates feel that you'd rather attend to them, they'll support you in sticking to your tasks. This may mean finding time before and after work to socialize with your colleagues. It's time well-spent.

Others can help you accomplish your work when they're motivated by respect and affection. You might welcome others in for conversation while you're doing simple tasks such as sticking labels on mailers. Who knows — they might even offer to help.

Keep meetings productive — and keep them to a minimum

While meetings are a necessary fact of organizational life, things are discussed rather than accomplished during meeting time. Consequently, the time you spend in meetings seldom advances your career. Send delegates or substitutes to meetings when possible. Use conference calls often. Many meetings should not occur at all, but when you must hold meetings, establish a

clear agenda and set a time limit. Keep the meeting as small as practical, and schedule near lunch or the end of the day to assure a prompt, natural ending time. By showing up for your meetings on time, you let others know that you deliver what you promise yourself, in this case.

People less motivated than you may use meetings as a mini-vacation from their real work. Don't you be their travel agent! Michael Doyle and David Strauss have written an excellent book on the subject entitled How to Make Meetings Work; The Berkeley Publishing Group, NY, 1976.

Dictate — and supercharge your output

Because speaking is more natural than writing, you can often quadruple the quantity of your correspondence by using a dictation recorder. With a recorder, you can concentrate on your message and not worry so much about the mechanics of expressing your thoughts.

Dictating is also faster and better than written note-taking in many situations. In the car, for example, you can dictate while you drive. If you have avoided tape recorders, overcome your "dictaphobia." Take note, however, that dictation is not just oral rambling. It's highly focused speech — a learned skill which can also improve the quality of your thinking. See Jefferson Bates's book on this subject: Dictating Effectively; Acropolis Books, Washington, D.C., 1986.

Delegate early and often

"It's amazing how much you can accomplish if don't mind who gets the credit."

Delegating well means assigning appropriate tasks to others, motivating them to do well, and rewarding them for good performance. Good delegation permits you to accomplish more than you could alone. Yet you'll still get the lion's share of credit. Here are some guidelines for delegation:

A) Give yourself the important tasks.

A task might be important to you because it is sensitive, critical, difficult, visible, or requires knowledge or expertise that you alone possess. Out of enlightened self-interest, you should perform such tasks yourself.

Assign all other tasks to your support staff. Delegate work to people whose skills are sufficient, even though you may be able to do the work better or faster. It's been said that if someone else can do your task 80% as well as you can, then that task should be delegated. Whatever your time is worth, doesn't it pay to have those who earn less do all that they can to free you to make every working minute more profitable? You're responsible for developing other people's skills and talents as well as your own.

Set clear deadlines. Give your staff leeway — then reward good performance and good ideas.

B) Develop a competent, trustworthy support staff.

Decide how you want work done in your office, and let your staff know. Educate them in the latest technical skills and efficiency methods.

Provide a supportive atmosphere for staff and have faith in their skills. Allow them to come to you with questions. Monitor their work periodically and provide regular feedback, but allow them to function without your constantly looking over their shoulders. Be anxious to give praise and reluctant to find fault. Recognize not just your top producers, but the honest efforts of every staff member. People who feel good about themselves produce good results.

Focus on objectives, not problems. Admit when you have made mistakes, and graciously accept the responsibility. Never blame others for your own mistakes. They'll zap you back if you do!

A good reason to delegate and train your subordinates is to develop promotability without crippling your department. It's easier to rise to the top when you've built a solid foundation of support staff from which you can rise. Lawrence Steinmetz has written a noteworthy book entitled The Art and Skill of Delegation; Addison-Wesley, MA, 1976.

Make sure your message comes across

“My people count on what hay.”

Good communication means letting others know, at all stages of a project, how you feel about what is being done. Create a feedback system that lets you know how things are progressing and how others feel. Confront problems and deal with them as they arise. Observing the following suggestions will help you foster good communication. •

A) Keep it simple.

Concentrate on communication that is simple and straightforward. This will minimize the times people say, “I thought you meant...” after doing a task incorrectly. Expand your vocabulary to allow you to communicate with different audiences, being particularly wary of using jargon with people who need an explanation in layman's terms.

B) Be brief and clear.

Verbosity can weaken the impact of your message and confuse the points you want to make. Verify that your message is clear. Ask listeners to explain your instructions in their own words.

Proper grammar and an above-average vocabulary are essentials to career advancement. Avoid qualifiers, off-color language, and slang.

C) Listen attentively without interrupting.

After communicating what you want understood, ask for feedback to assure understanding. Give others the opportunity to react verbally to your communication. It is estimated that 90% of a speaker's message is communicated non-verbally through tone of voice and body language. Learn to ask questions and repeat what is being said to let the speaker know you understand. Take notes so you don't forget your good ideas that arise while the speaker is talking. Otherwise, you're apt to tune your speaker out while clinging to your own exciting thoughts. Listening Made Easy, by Robert Montgomery, AMACOM, NY, 1981, is an excellent treatment of this subject.

D) Always commit instructions and agreements to writing.

Avoid the misunderstandings that arise with the passage of time by putting it in writing. Get feedback on your written and oral instructions. Have staff members read or repeat your instructions and explain their understanding of what they are to do to verify that you've communicated clearly. If you haven't, clarify your instructions and note how the ambiguity arose for future reference.

Handle problems as soon as they arise

“Deal with problems or they will deal with you.”

Prompt resolution of problems lessens their impact on the organization. When you resolve staff problems with dispatch, they recur less frequently and have fewer secondary effects. Furthermore, your prompt intervention illustrates that you're paying attention and have a positive concern for your staff and your company. You might want to consult Edwin Bliss's book on this matter, Do It Now; Charles Scribner & Sons, NY, 1983.

If you're going to be prompt, however, “count to ten” before acting. Don't burst in on people in the first flush of your emotion. Take the person (or persons) aside. Focus on the *g* and not the person. Let the person know that you like him or her as a person; then let them know how you feel about his or her behavior. Identify the behavior, not the individual, as “bad.” Stay calm. If you have problems in this area, you might profit from reading Keeping Cool Under Fire by Theodora Wells; McGraw Hill, NY, 1980.

In presenting criticism, be factual and clear. Tell your staff members specifically what they have done, how it makes you feel and why. Discuss the goals you agreed upon earlier. Explain your feelings of the moment while emphasizing that they are better people than their actions have shown in this instance. Make sure that they understand the seriousness of the

situation. Describe the behavior you would like to see. Listen to their point of view, and make sure they feel understood. Get them to agree that their behavior will be corrected. End by letting them know how important they are to you. Finally, make sure you recognize and compliment them when the desired behavior occurs. A book that may help you be patient with trying staff members is Robert Bramson's Coping With Difficult People; Anchor Press, NY, 1981.

Keep abreast of current state-of-the-art techniques, training, and education

“There is hardly anything in the world that some men cannot make a little worse and sell a little cheaper.”

—John Ruskin

“It’s no accident that the world’s leading technology company, IBM, spends \$500 million per year on training, educating, and re-educating its employees,” says Paul Hawken in The Next Economy. To do your best job, you must keep up with new ideas for improving efficiency and effectiveness. Join reputable industry associations and subscribe to trade newsletters and magazines, which you should read voraciously. This will keep you up-to-date on the latest information, tools, and techniques.

Once you know how your organization should handle its workload — say, with new computers, new software, or machinery that is safer for the environment — you must face the process of establishing a new, unfamiliar work routine. This is one of the greatest challenges to any manager and staff. In a sense, you volunteer to become inefficient and incompetent in the short run in order to become more efficient and productive in the long run.

You’ll do best if you prepare yourself and your staff thoroughly, and enter the process with realistic expectations. Do as much reading, research, and consultation with experts beforehand as possible. Meet with your staff before you implement the change to inform them and to allay their fears. Make the change when the workload is lightest and you are between major projects. Foster a good relationship with the necessary experts — you don’t want to ask for help and have someone say, “Who did you say you are?”

As you make the change, keep a sense of humor and be especially flexible. Reduce your workload, if required, by delegating, re-assigning work, or extending deadlines. Have the more confident and adept members of your staff help the stragglers. Once you’re all up to speed, you’ll not only be more efficient, but more confident. You’ve all faced a challenge and prevailed.

Where’s My Thanks?

Unfortunately, you are only as good as your last victory, and your recognition won’t always be swift or satisfying. Your smaller day-to-day victories seem to go unnoticed and are

simply expected of you. Even worse, the big victories may go with little or no thanks from the big brass.

In the business world, everyone has a great deal to do, and a great deal to worry about. A job well done will often go without recognition, and seeking strokes and attention from others will guarantee you frustration. No one will give you enough of what you feel you need.

In reality you need to develop your own system of rewarding yourself if you want to feel good about a successful project. Thank yourself by taking a long weekend trip to somewhere fun. Go to an expensive restaurant, or treat yourself to new clothes — give yourself the appreciation you need. Above all, maintain a healthy and satisfying private life, so that when your hard efforts at work go unnoticed, you will not be set back.

You can't get to the top on 40 hours a week

***"After all is said and done, there is always a lot more said than done."
— Alfred Neuman***

In today's marketplace, global competition is tougher than ever before. Consequently, long hours and heavy workloads are becoming the norm for career advancement.

Develop the habit of hard work and the ability to be single-minded. Recognize that it takes 40 hours a week just to keep the competition in sight. Only after that does the race to the top begin. Hard work has always been a common denominator in success, especially in the early stages of one's career. The will to succeed and the stamina to hang in there when everyone else goes home make the difference in many successful careers.

Few successful achievers will deny the fact that success takes long hours. I can seldom schedule an appointment with the more successful people I know unless I'm prepared to meet them after hours or on weekends. Attempting to meet them during normal working hours is all but impossible.

This is a demanding way to live, beyond question. But there is also little question at the end of the week as to who has gained the most. And those hardworking winners are the people with whom other winners want to do business.

Are you a profit center?

Harvey Mackay, the envelope magnate and noted business raconteur, suggests you ask yourself whether you're bringing in more money than it costs to keep you around. Seek to improve your value to your employer by continually developing yourself and your job. Don't wait to be trained; train yourself. Use your job description as a mere baseline of responsibility and look for ways to extend your authority, influence, and power.

Don't let yourself be part of organizational fat, unless you're prepared to be trimmed. In fact, with the prevalence of acquisitions, mergers, and takeovers today, none of us know when some event or circumstance will force unnecessary employees out of their jobs. The only security we have, therefore, is the acknowledged profit we contribute to our business or firm.

What you (fore)see is what you get

“We are never to cross a bridge until we come to it but this world is owned by men who have crossed bridges in their imagination far ahead of the crowd.”

— Speakers Library

Albert Einstein said that “imagination is more important than knowledge.” Napoleon Hill said “Anything that your mind can conceive and believe, you can achieve.” Indeed, the most valuable time a person can spend is in thinking; encourage it in your people and in yourself.

Take advantage of the times you are driving, on a plane, at a doctor's office, or before being served your meal in a restaurant to exercise your imagination and draw on its limitless bank of ideas. Keep a paper and pen handy for such occasions. It's been said that nothing happens until somebody has an idea. And, as Victor Hugo observed, “No army can withstand the strength of an idea whose time has come.”

Steven DeVore speaks of “an almost universal trait” among Super Achievers.

“It's what I call Sensory Goal Vision. These people knew what they wanted out of life, and they could sense it multi-dimensionally before they ever had it. They could not only see it, but also taste it, smell it, and imagine the sounds and emotions associated with it. They lived it before they had it. And that sharp, sensory vision became a powerful driving force in their lives.”

A humorous book on becoming more innovative is A Whack on the Side of the Head by Roger Von Oech; Warner Books.

Show grace under pressure

“In some attempts, it is glorious even to fail.”

— Longinus

Achieving maximum career advancement means taking risks — and accepting the consequences gracefully.

Some of your risks won't lead to immediate success. Some of your goals may prove unattainable. Try to learn from your mistakes. After countless experiments and refinements, Thomas Edison created the first practical electric light bulb. When asked how he did it, Edison replied, “I ran out of mistakes to make.”

Setbacks occur with every career. When they happen to you, be sure not to view or label yourself as a failure. View failure as a learning experience which can help you prevent future mistakes. Learn to hear the difference between “I failed at such-and-such,” and “I’m just a failure.” Be kind to yourself in adversity. Most great people take chances and fail. They later go on to achieve success by separating their failures from their own sense of worth.

Remember: one success can outweigh 100 failures. The way you handle mistakes can make you a respected leader. If you stay cool and effective in the face of adversity, you will invite support, and gain the confidence of others.

Will you please make a decision?

“No problem can stand the assault of sustained thinking.”
— *Voltaire*

There’ll be times in your career that you’ll be pressed to make a snap decision. Sometimes the risk in making a decision is greater than making a wrong decision.

By definition, leaders are decisive. Whether you believe leaders are born or made, you can teach yourself to be decisive. The trick is to start small. Practice making small, low-risk decisions more quickly. Accept all possible outcomes, good and bad, before you commit to the decision, and then live with the outcome. As these decisions work out, you’ll develop greater confidence to “go with your gut”.

It’s been estimated that 80 percent of all business decisions should be made on the spot, 15 percent need time to mature, and 5 percent need not be made at all. Most decisions are not only adjustable, but revocable. You will rarely have all the information you might like to make a decision. Get used to this shortfall! Remember, it is often more important to be decisive than to be right. John Arnold has written a book entitled *The Amacom*, NY, 1978, which I’ve found very helpful.

Salesmanship is key in every field

“I believe that you can get everything in life you want if will just help enough other people get what they want.”
— *Zig Ziglar*

“Everyone lives by selling something.”
— *Robert Louis Stevenson*

“When a person tells you, ‘I’ll think it over and let you know’ you know.”
— *Alan Miller*

In business, nothing happens without a sale. Whether we like it or not, we are always selling ourselves, our ideas, attitudes, beliefs, services, and products.

Selling is therefore an integral part of career advancement. Everyone ought to take at least one good course in basic salesmanship and the art of persuasion.

Sales is also an excellent career path to the top. In his popular book The Success Profile, Lester Korn tells us that the field of sales and marketing is viewed as the fastest route to the top of the corporate ladder in the 1990's. I agree.

Selling does not have to be a complicated or daunting process. Selling is nothing more than helping people get what they want. People will buy only if they can see the benefit to them and believe that it outweighs the cost involved. Your sales job, then, is to identify a prospect's needs and show him or her a beneficial way to meet those needs. This kind of selling is non-manipulative. It requires common sense rather than dazzling powers of persuasion. As F.W. Woolworth once brilliantly put it, "I am the worst salesman, therefore I must make it easy for people to buy."

Selling is not as complicated as some people believe and generally involves five basic steps:

- (1) Develop rapport, credibility, and trust with your prospect. We all prefer to do business with people we like and believe.
- (2) Ask questions that help identify your prospect's needs.
- (3) Explain the benefits of your product, service, or idea in light of your prospect's needs. (Of course, it is important to be able to substantiate your claims.)
- (4) Encourage your prospect to affirm his or her needs and the fact that your offering satisfies these needs.
- (5) Ask for a decision to act, and close the sale. Build your body and spirit to go wherever your dreams take you

"All the things I like to do are either immoral, illegal, or fattening."
— Alexander Woolcott

A healthy body and a rewarding personal life are keys to maximum career advancement. Fitness gives you the energy to apply your efforts to their fullest. Personal satisfaction — spiritual commitment, warm relationships, energizing interests, and hope in the future — gives you balance. When your personal life is in order, you needn't look to your job for more satisfaction and meaning than it can be expected to provide.

If you spend quality time with family and friends, you can better persevere through the drudgery, uncertainty, and self-denial that even the most dynamic careers involve. Your faith, family and friends are your emotional lifeline. Enlist their support in your success. Let them

know when you are under stress rather than bottling up your feelings and making them guess what's on your mind. You and your loved ones will benefit from your openness.

Above all, keep your life in perspective. Career advancement is an important and serious undertaking, but it's no excuse for losing your sense of humor. Learn to laugh at yourself and relish the unpredictability and absurdity of life. When things appear hopeless, try to look at things in a humorous way. Think of how you'll tell the story ten years down the road. This will help relieve your tension so you can get back to solving problems and achieving your career goals.

Even though most of your work may seem purely mental, a fit body is one of your best allies for success. When you're fit, you have greater stamina, vigor, and self-confidence. You can rise to emergencies and put in long hours on occasion. And when you're fit, you improve the odds that you will enjoy the long-term rewards of your success in good health. What's more, you project a vibrancy and self-respect that attracts others.

See your physician for a complete physical, and develop a regular exercise program. Then follow it! Home exercise equipment that gathers dust does you no good.

Eat a nutritious diet supplemented with high-quality vitamins and minerals. Try to average at least seven hours of sleep per night. Good nutrition and adequate rest are essential to sharp thinking and to handling heavy work pressure. (If I sound like your mother did when you were in grade school, it's only because she was right all along.)

Hard work and travel pose real temptations to stray from a healthful diet. At restaurants, extravagant menu descriptions may tempt you to order cholesterol-drenched dishes that a caring spouse would discourage you from eating at home. And when you work long or irregular hours, you may be prone to buy junk food from vending machines just to keep yourself going.

Advance planning goes a long way here. On the road, develop your own personal menu of dishes that will be satisfying yet healthful — seafood, pasta, and poultry, for example, instead of red meat smothered with cream sauce. Get in the habit of ordering these, and save the belly-busters for truly special occasions. As to the lure of junk food, bring fruits and nuts from home instead. In fact, it doesn't hurt to have an emergency supply of non-perishable foods in your office: dry or canned soups, crackers, dried fruit and the like. Then, you'll never have to choose between quitting sooner than you'd like or eating something that will come back to haunt you.

For health and budgetary reasons, you might also be wise to consider bringing lunch from home part of the time. Bringing lunch from home has lost its stigma as penny-pinching. With refrigerators and microwaves becoming standard workplace appliances, bringing leftovers in for lunch makes delicious, efficient good sense. It's not wise to brown-bag it every single day, however. Unless you bring in enough food for everyone, you'll lose too many opportunities for productive socializing.

Regular exercise and a healthful diet will let you use your body and mind with maximum efficiency. It's one more facet of "working smart".

BUILDING A DEPENDABLE NETWORK OF RELATIONSHIPS



"I'm trying to learn to delegate stress."

Frederick C. Hornberger, Jr.



<http://www.hmc.com>

<http://www.constructionexecutive.com>

BUILDING A DEPENDABLE NETWORK OF RELATIONSHIPS

“Personal relationships are the fertile soil from which all advancement, all success, all achievements in real life grows.”

— Ben Stein

“It’s not what you know,” some wise observer said, “it’s who you know that counts.” In truth, who you know has a great deal to do with what you know and when you know it. Your network of colleagues, friends, mentors and advisors can provide information, advice, and feedback essential to maximum career advancement. You just can’t progress as far or fast on your own.

Successful people tend to know more key associates than do their less accomplished peers. They remember and maintain contacts from their past while continually seeking out new, beneficial relationships. They keep these relationships in good repair, so when they need a favor or need an edge over their less well-connected competitors, it’s theirs for asking.

In short, networking is essential to corporate life. We always feel more comfortable dealing with people we know.

Develop interpersonal skills

“Hear no Ill of a friend, nor speak any of an enemy.”

— Ben Franklin

Hiring and promotion decisions are often made on the basis of a candidate’s “people skills”. Personality can override credentials. Being seen as a person who will fit into the team can gain you entry into a firm and speed your promotion through the ranks. So your career — and the people you work with every day — deserve your best interpersonal skills.

Career advancement requires one to be likeable. Develop a considerate personality. Be diplomatic and equally polite to your colleagues at all levels of employment. Maintain a relaxed and open bearing.

When approaching others, be sensitive to their points of view, their needs, and personal preferences. Find areas of common interest rather than stressing your differences. Accommodate to their level of education and experience, and stretch yourself to put them at ease. Be a good listener; draw people out. A good book on developing relationships is Dale Carnegie’s How to Win Friends and Influence People; Pocketbooks, NY.

One helpful technique is that of asking open-ended questions rather than yes or no questions. “What are your feelings about...” “What’s your analysis of...” and “Tell me about...” are more inviting than “Don’t you agree that...”

Make a strong effort to remember names. Remembering the names of your colleagues and associates, especially if your contact is brief and occasional, reflects your respect. The sweetest sound, it's been said, is the sound of one's name on the lips of another person.

To better recall names, repeat the name of a person when you first meet, and use it at least twice more in your initial conversation. Thinking and saying the name while looking at the person helps imprint the name/face relationship.

Word association can also help you remember names. If Maple Cox is a new acquaintance, try associating her with a fox resting under a maple tree — that is, if Maple has a relaxed personality. Otherwise, you might picture the fox jumping into the tree. The sillier or more unusual your image, the more likely you are to retain it.

Treat your support staff and peers with respect; give them encouragement and rewards for a job well done, and they will try even harder the next time. Seek your staff's advice and admit your own limitations. Be specific about your needs, and follow up with a compliment, a thank you note, or a phone call. Those who help you will be pleased that you recognized and valued their skills.

A word of caution: be sincere in your interactions. Don't use people or flatter them just to grease the wheels of your career. Most people can spot a phony. Don't you be one. Self-centered managers often feel stymied in their careers. Why? Because their co-workers throw stumbling blocks in their path. When you're being considered for promotion, your co-workers will be asked their opinion of your work and character. That's when any selfishness or insensitivity will come back to haunt you.

I heard it through the grapevine

“All business is people business.”

Scattered throughout every company is a network of informed individuals: the company grapevine. People in this network stay tuned in to what's happening to the company, its employees, and its competitors. Members may include well-read executives, knowledgeable secretaries, sociable managers, talkative peers, — anyone, regardless of position, who stays well-informed.

The grapevine can pinpoint company and industry movers and shakers, identify who is well respected and who is not, alert you to job openings, warn you of pending mergers and layoffs, and provide other information relevant to advancing your career. Folks on the grapevine know of a developing personality clash, personal success, or failure.

Your company grapevine also tracks changes at the top, changing business directions and conditions, and virtually every other factor which effects your job. Keeping abreast of the

grapevine can help you ride the wave of change and save you many hours of personal research time.

As with any institution, formal or otherwise, getting the most from the grapevine requires proper etiquette and protocol. Most importantly, you must give to the grapevine if you hope to receive — but be careful. Giving should take the positive form of promoting others who deserve recognition and attention. It should not include information considered confidential or strategically sensitive. When you deserve recognition, relate your accomplishments with modestly.

Receiving information from the grapevine involves asking probing questions about who gets things done, where the real power lies within the company, what the climate is regarding changes of organization or policy, etc. Maintain gentle control of the conversation and avoid gossip and hearsay. You are only interested in useful, non-tawdry information. In important matters, consult multiple sources to confirm the accuracy of your information.

To avoid becoming known as a gossip or busybody, make your use of the grapevine moderate. You'll be surprised and pleased to discover how effective the company grapevine can be when used to communicate positive attitudes and to dispel false rumors. The best way to begin identifying informants within the grapevine is by getting to know the people in your own organization. Take some cake back from lunch to your secretaries. Bring in some baked goods or produce from your home garden. Do favors for people, and listen to their problems and aspirations. The more interested and open you are, the more you'll learn from others.

For an excellent guide to cultivating successful relationships, read Is Your Net Working? by Anne Bow; John Wiley & Sons, 1989, and Networking by Mary Scott Welch; Warner Books, 1984.

Don't let your Rolodex gather dust

***“There is no such thing as a self-made man. You will reach your goal
only with the help of others.”
— George Shinn***

Many people use business card catalogs or Rolodex files to build a handy reference on their business contacts. You should do the same. Enter personal and business information on each entry as you learn it employment history, birthdays, family members, hobbies and interests, and so on. You'll discover that a few pertinent comments will convey the impression that you're genuinely interested in your contacts, and have a steel-trap memory, to boot!

Information is power. Cultivate contacts with colleagues who have information of value to you. Harvey MacKay's Rolodex Network Builder, from the Rolodex Corporation Publishing Department, is a good book on the value of developing this important system.

Every trade or industry has its experts — people who know the right answers and do an excellent job regardless of circumstances. They become the best at what they do because they personally enjoy doing jobs right. Like you, these experts are committed and ambitious. Winning their friendship and enlisting their aid will increase your chances of success because you can count on a job well done if they assist you. If they're not on your side, their clout can often turn them into formidable roadblocks.

Focus your efforts on those experts who fully match your commitment to excellence. Some are already recognized leaders. Others are “sleepers” — people who quietly do outstanding work. Discover some sleepers. Encourage them in their jobs, give them support and concern, and generally do for them as you would have a mentor do for you.

Likewise, identify the people in your industry who have clout. Make time and find reasons to meet and communicate with them. Their influence will give you direction and help you make things happen more quickly.

Don't wait for a crisis before beginning to build mutually dependable relationships. Join a country club, do political or social-action volunteer work, and get involved in your trade or professional association, making sure to seek out those participants who can help you and vice versa. Get to know people on a first-name basis. Invite someone to lunch; send a thank you note, or a birthday or holiday card; attend business-related social functions. Bring something wonderful from home to share: home-baked goods, a favorite book, recording, or video. Take care of those you depend on.

Variety is as important as high visibility. Vary the facets you expose to others so they don't pigeonhole you as merely a club member, sports fan, or a do-gooder. If your genuine enthusiasms are varied, your business associates will tend to view you as well-rounded.

Of course, you won't spend equal amounts of time with each member of your network. But it is essential to treat everyone in your portfolio as an equal, regardless of their position. Be neither overly deferential to your superiors or overbearing with subordinates. You never know who may be in a position to help or thwart you in the future.

There's no better time to rely on your industry contacts than when you need a job. In today's climate of buyouts and mergers, good employees are sometimes left out in the cold without a job. I know two project directors who met with such a fate. One had developed a solid network of industry contacts and relationships, and within three weeks had an offer from a major competitor with greater earnings potential. The other project director, a selfish loner, may still be looking through classified ads.

Build yourself a reputation of excellence

“I will always cherish the initial misconception I had about you.”
— *Unknown*

Your reputation is the aggregate of all the things that people think and say about you. For maximum career advancement, it's not enough to have an excellent reputation. You must develop an excellent reputation among those in position to help and reward you.

Have you ever considered how far your reputation extends? Are you known only by a small group of fellow employees, or do you have a reputation throughout the industry? There are practical ways to expand your reputation, yet few people bother. If you do, you'll enjoy a distinct edge over your peers.

The following are sure steps to broader recognition.

A. Maintain high visibility

It's not enough to be good at what you do; you must be seen being good at what you do! Seek high-visibility projects. Write articles for publication, give an occasional speech... join respected professional associations — be where the action is. Try staying late several nights a week to affiliate with top achievers and gain management recognition. If you become recognizable — even memorable — you'll be called to mind when important projects or jobs come up.

B. Become active in your trade or professional association

Perhaps the easiest way to gain recognition beyond company walls is to join a trade or professional association in your field. This will expose you, regionally and nationally, to those who matter in your industry. To make best use of this exposure, be more than just a member. Become highly involved.

Head up a committee, give a seminar, bring in a guest speaker, represent your association politically, do whatever it takes to become known in your industry as a knowledgeable, hard-working person. The most active members in trade associations are people who make their work their hobby. When you, too, take up this hobby, you'll find it wonderfully profitable.

A good way to gain recognition is to volunteer as publicity director for your local trade or professional association. By acting as spokesperson, you gain natural opportunities for media exposure. You'll find yourself making live appearances, speaking to civic groups and serving as a panel member on topics related to your industry. Expect to submit articles and announcements as well. Don't worry if writing isn't your long suit. The main point is to be a fertile idea person and good information-gatherer. Others can help write articles for you.

The advantages of your involvement in an association go far beyond reputation alone. It helps you stay on top of industry innovations, market conditions, and the moves of your competitors! Your contact with other highly motivated individuals will inspire and energize you. You'll gain the chance to watch and learn from successful executives in other companies. Most importantly, when you're researching jobs, these contacts can help you.

If you're unsure what trade associations serve your industry, consult the Encyclopedia of Associations; Gale Research Company, Book Tower; Detroit, MI 48226; (800-877-GALE).

C. Introduce yourself to the media

You don't need to be a public figure to introduce yourself to the media. Contact local newspaper, radio, and television reporters — particularly those who cover business topics — and describe your professional expertise. Offer to comment on topics and questions in your field of work through interviews or writing articles. Be friendly, not pushy. If you keep in contact with reporters, chances are good that they'll call you when a story breaks.

When you do get a chance to comment, be brief, clear, and concise. Particularly for radio and television, you'll be edited into "sound bites" — segments lasting only seconds — inserted into a story. Your prospects for being aired are greater when you reach the point quickly and quotably.

D. Do the "write" thing

***"If copy from one author, it's plagiarism; if copy from two, it's research."
— Wilson Mizner***

Getting published gives you an important, added credential. Writing articles for trade, professional, business, or specialty magazines is a good way to get exposure and leads. And it's easier than you think. Most editors are hungry for writers with a good technical grasp of their field. If you demonstrate expertise, an editor will often polish your writing for you. You can also hire ghost-writers if necessary. Their fee will be well worthwhile in light of your enhanced professional stature.

A good book on writing for publication is *Writing Nonfiction That Sells* by Sam Sinclair Baker, Writer's Digest Books.

E. Plan and produce a seminar

***"The only things worth learning are the things you learn after you know it all."
— Harry Truman***

Plan and organize a seminar for the employees of your own company. Often the best way to assure yourself knowledge in a field is to teach it. You can use speakers other than yourself,

but be sure you are seen as the primary idea person. If your topic is of general interest, present a version of your seminar to the public, perhaps under the sponsorship of a civic or business organization. Your employer may allow you to run your seminar during working hours in recognition of its public relations value for the firm. Or the company may assist you in other ways, such as providing audio-visual equipment or printing extra handout materials. The sooner you discreetly publicize your efforts, the more likely you are to get help.

F. Inform superiors of accomplishments outside the firm

Once you've completed a project outside your company, make sure that the right people hear about it. Submit all pertinent articles, seminar brochures, and newspaper clippings to your boss and anyone else who may help advance your career. Do so in a way that indicates you're supporting the firm, not just tooting your own horn!

When you write professionally and speak in public, associate yourself with your employer. This will reflect well on you as an ambassador and diplomat when reports come back to your superiors.

G. Promote yourself — don't push yourself

*"After all is said and done — sit down."
— Unknown*

In calling attention to your deeds and achievements, take care not to become obnoxious or to sound like a braggart. The secret to effective self-promotion lies in getting others to do your talking for you. Inform others; make sure they see what you are doing, then let them do the bragging. People who see your successes will want your assistance in their own projects. When asked how they can thank you for a job well done, ask the officers or leaders of organizations for whom you have done presentations or completed projects to send letters to your boss or your firm's president.

TIMELY CAREER MOVES



*“Come on, Robinson. You’ve been traded to L.A. for two VP’s and a lawyer.
You should feel flattered.”*

Frederick C. Hornberger, Jr.



<http://www.hmc.com>

<http://www.constructionexecutive.com>

TIMELY CAREER MOVES

In today's fast-changing employment marketplace, you've got to be ready to move upward when the timing is right. When you've achieved the skills and accomplished the tasks you included in your "short-term career plan", you're ripe for advancement.

Here's an additional factor: most of us have periods when we're "hot" at work and other periods when we are less creative and successful. For maximum career advancement, move when the timing's right for you. Waiting for your employer to promote you can sometimes obstruct your career growth. Your company, after all, doesn't plot its job openings or the promotions of your superiors with your convenience in mind! Stick with your career plan.

When your short-term career plan is completed and you have the skills and experience to advance, develop a new short-term plan. This plan will define the skills and experience necessary to advance *one job past the new job you are seeking*. You'll use this plan to evaluate your potential new job's contribution to your long-term goal. Evaluate each new position not just in terms of pay, prestige, and working conditions, but with regard to skills you can learn and achievements you can claim. Being able to view your career decisions with the right perspective is one priceless benefit of having a clear goal as a guidepost.

Does moving up mean moving out?

When the time is right for you to advance, let your management know you're willing to take on added responsibility. Be enthusiastic about your work and your company. Discuss your new short-term career goal and plan. Ask what plans have been made for your advancement. If Management's plans don't coincide with your own goals, discuss possible alternatives with the people who make promotion decisions.

If your employer shows a positive interest in your promotability, try to learn about planned promotion dates, job title, salary and benefit improvements, new responsibilities, and other pertinent information.

Then, consider the advantages of staying with your current employer:

- Most good companies pay competitive salaries, and often reward longevity with above-average pay in the long run.
- A record of job stability now may be helpful if your later job moves are frequent and numerous.
- The vast majority of promotions are made from within, so career advancement is often quicker within your own company.

— Promotion and grooming for internal advancement makes you more valuable in the eyes of competitive future employers.

— Staying may net you preferential treatment for later promotions. Outside hires don't enjoy the same trust, loyalty, and understanding as in-house personnel. Many major firms claim to fill all senior-level openings from the ranks of their own junior-level employees. Therefore, many rising executives pass up outside opportunities, recognizing the advantages of in-house promotion.

At the same time, weigh the potential disadvantages of staying put:

— In-house promotion can damage your career timing. Your firm might put your request on hold during a slowdown or suddenly deem you “irreplaceable” in your present position. This is a costly compliment.

— Your plans for advancement may take an undesirable detour if your company decides they need your services in some area other than the one you've chosen.

— It is often attractive for the employer to hire from outside to diversify the firm's strengths. Hiring employees from competitors can bring competitive information and perspective to the firm, increasing its market savvy. An outside employee may transfer proven skills to the new job, eliminating costly training.

— You still may lose your anticipated promotion to an outside contender, even with firms which pride themselves on internal promotions.

— Salary raises may not equal the levels offered by outside firms.

— A job change may bring fresh perspective and new challenges. The new environment can broaden your professional network, literally doubling your exposure within the industry.

Weigh the above pros and cons against your career prospects in the open marketplace.

If your timing is right, but your current employer can't provide an opportunity, move to a firm which can. Some of the best advancement opportunities may be found outside your current organization.

If you're qualified to advance and decide to look outside, search for reputable competing firms with appropriate job openings. Using your network of relationships and your executive recruiter, research the marketplace thoroughly before accepting any offer. Each career move is critical. An unwise choice can seriously damage your future advancement. Look for a reputable firm with good training, education programs, and a track record of moving people upward and onward, both within its own structure and within the industry. Don't move to another firm unless you're completely satisfied that you'll meet your career advancement goals by doing so.

Keep your outside search a secret

*“A slip of the foot you may soon recover, but a slip of the tongue you may never get over.”
— Ben Franklin*

If you begin looking outside your organization, keep your search a secret. If you share your intentions with anyone, you risk losing your job before finding a new one. This will make finding the next one far more difficult and stressful. Don't put your job in peril through carelessness!

Secretaries and even your closest friends may find it irresistible to share your secrets. Word travels fast. The only way to protect your current job is to keep your search absolutely secret. Remember: it's not a secret once you tell someone.

Executive recruiters can protect your secrecy and save you time and expense conducting the search yourself. Moreover, executive recruiters are paid to place candidates in ideal positions — positions in which they will shine and thrive. Should you elect to work with a recruiting firm, have their recruiters contact you outside office hours. Emphasize your need for confidential treatment. Always speak with the recruiter personally about a specific opportunity before he or she submits your credentials to the hiring firm.

Have you ever heard of hiding something out in the open? Well, you can disguise your job search this way. Make investigating the job market a habitual activity, like reading stock reports or cruising by new-car lots. By staying involved with the marketplace, you'll raise fewer eyebrows when your interest in a particular opportunity becomes serious.

Don't feel guilty about your search. Exploring career opportunities doesn't mean you have to leave your current employer; it could make you feel better about your current employer and show you ways to advance within your firm.

What to do before accepting an outside interview

Research all attractive-sounding job opportunities before committing to a phone or personal interview. Use your industry contacts for advice and information on the firm and the position in question.

Good sources include ex-employees, competitors, businesses that serve the firm, industry recruiters and industry associations. In this last case, your questions will not be taken amiss. Desire to learn about the competition is a common, legitimate motivation for being involved with industry associations.

If you conclude that the opportunity is worth pursuing, have the employer contact you rather than risk being caught initiating the contact. Your managers expect their top people to be sought after; it flatters their own judgment. It may even encourage your employer to offer you a

promotion or a raise for fear of losing you. But heaven help you if you're found responsible for initiating such contact! Use after-hour phone calls to minimize risk of exposure, save time, and allow you and your potential employer to evaluate each other before meeting face-to-face.

Keep your first meeting casual

Hold your first meeting in a comfortable, neutral setting. Your local airport, trade association, hotel lounge, or country club offers a suitable location. A non-business atmosphere gives the public appearance of a chance meeting, and allows both parties to feel noncommittal and relaxed. If the meeting goes well, consider a more formal meeting at the office of the potential employer on the weekend or after hours.

In every contact — written, by phone, and in person — you must be at your best. Communicate informality, if appropriate, but always be prepared. (Chapter 6, on interviewing, will tell you how to prepare.)

Leave on good terms — but by all means, leave!

Once you receive an offer worth accepting, leave your employer on a positive note. By showing your boss and firm due respect, you encourage future support you well may need someday.

If you're given a counteroffer, don't accept it. Surveys show that eight out of ten employees who accept counteroffers don't complete the following year with their employer. The National Business Employment Weekly (a publication of The Wall Street Journal) published an excellent article on this topic: "Counteroffer Acceptance, the Road to Career Ruin" by Paul Hawkins, December 11, 1983.

Why shun counteroffers? Because the factors that caused you to consider an outside move generally remain in force. Besides which, your current employer will lose trust in your loyalty. Furthermore, accepting a counteroffer may permanently damage your reputation with your would-be new employer. This firm may conclude that you were merely using them to gain leverage — you weren't in earnest as a candidate. Never underestimate the value of your perceived integrity in this situation.

The best response to a counteroffer is to listen politely perhaps even sleep on it, but decline. If your current firm denied you advancement before you secured an outside offer, it will probably thwart you next time you feel ready to advance. What's more, your firm may start looking to replace you the day you accept the counteroffer. Your plans for leaving will not be forgotten.

As you leave, strive to preserve the goodwill you've established as a hard-working professional. You might want to tell your boss something like this: "John, I need to discuss

something with you. I've been made an exceptional offer by a another firm, and I've decided to accept it. My wife and I have given this opportunity a lot of thought. As much as I'd like to advance within this company, we feel the new opportunity is in our best long-term interest."

"We deeply appreciate all you and the firm have done for us here. I don't think I would have been presented this exceptional opportunity if not for your support and leadership. I want to thank you. I hope I can leave with your good wishes. You've been a friend as well as a boss."

You might also consider handing in a diplomatic letter of resignation like the following sample:

March 22, 1991

Mr. Bill Jones, President
Cajun Contracting
141 Barry Avenue
Orlando, Florida, 28805

Dear Bill:

I want to thank you for all you have done for me here at Cajun Contracting. It's been a pleasure working with you, and representing the company as Senior Estimator.

Bill, I have accepted an offer with another firm and have decided to tender my resignation as of today. This decision has had nothing to do with the exceptional opportunity you have provided for me here. You and the company have been more than fair, with me, and I genuinely appreciate all your support.

I wish Cajun Contracting continued success, and I want to thank you for allowing me to be a part of your team. Please feel free to contact me at any time if I can be of further assistance, in answering questions you may have, or in helping with a smooth transition.

Sincerely,

Arthur T. Advancer
Senior Estimator

ATA/ct

Before leaving the firm, take time to speak with each of your support staff, peers, executive personnel, and others with whom you've worked. Be sensitive to their reactions and keep your conversations positive. Regardless of any prior problems you had, explain that your reason for leaving is that you have an exceptional opportunity for advancement, in meeting your

personal and business goals and not that some problem which seemed insurmountable has encouraged you to leave. Anything negative you say may result in someone's resentment and could hurt your reputation. Express your appreciation and tell your colleagues you'll miss them. A little time spent nurturing relationships before leaving for your new job may build invaluable contacts, references, and support for your future.

Starting the new job on the right foot

In starting a new job, it's important to remember that each organization plays a different version of the same game.

How you handle the first few weeks is vital to success on your new job. People may pay closer attention to you now than later in your tenure. So put your best foot forward, and jump into the new job with energy, intelligence, sensitivity, and good cheer.

Use your first few weeks to orient yourself to the demands of your new job. Work with your boss to establish standards of performance which will prepare you for your next advancement. Remember, after all, your new job is just a way station. Make certain your boss knows you welcome specific advancement opportunities, are open to learning specific skills, and are willing to tackle additional responsibility in the areas identified in your short-term career plan.

Move carefully and slowly at first. Ask questions, and listen more than you speak. Review your predecessor's records; observe, study, and learn how things are done and by whom. Don't assume that all companies work alike.

Take time to establish rapport with your new boss, colleagues, and subordinates. Ask for constructive criticism. When it's offered, feed it back to demonstrate your understanding, and express thanks for your colleague's input.

As you begin your new job, be particularly mindful of your attitude and behavior. You are the one exploring new territory. Employees around the office will watch the "new kid on the block" closely for the first few days and weeks to observe your attitudes and performance. They want to learn your style and find out where they stand with you. Because you have the potential to create problems for them and reduce their control of their environment, they may note your mistakes more readily than your successes. Be patient. If you work diligently, professionally, and courteously, your co-workers will soon come forth with respect, warmth, and acceptance.

The following guidelines will go a long way toward helping you look good during your all-important “honeymoon” on the new job.

1. Show a positive interest in your co-workers. Learn about their history, interests, and outlook. Take time to develop rapport.
2. Be consistent in your behavior and style when you meet people — in groups or individually. People need to know that you are genuine and predictable.
3. If you’ve relocated, seek your new colleagues’ help (after hours) in finding resources and amenities. This shows you value their input.
4. Don’t drink alcohol during the day, no matter what colleagues do!
5. Be conservative and moderate in everything except your enthusiasm for your work and co-workers.
6. Focus on the “people side” of business for the first week or two. Set out to know people on a warm, personal level.
7. Understand clearly and deliver what is expected of you by your supervisor and subordinates.
8. Let everyone know you are there to help and support their success.
9. Catch people doing something right every day, and tell them. This builds positive, supportive relationships.
10. If you must criticize someone, do so in private with that person.
11. Observe all company rules to the absolute letter.
12. Be aggressive about your production, your work ethic, and the goals you set for yourself, but do not be aggressive about corporate change. You must first understand the company and its people before pushing for change.
13. Resist the temptation to reject your predecessor’s plans; instead, make your agenda appear like their unfinished business.
14. You may ultimately need to build your own team, but try to give the present team the chance to prove themselves. Avoid quick personnel changes.

WHEN IS THE RIGHT TIME TO CHANGE JOBS?

Frederick C. Hornberger, Jr.



<http://www.hmc.com>

<http://www.constructionexecutive.com>

WHEN IS THE RIGHT TIME TO CHANGE JOBS

Today's job market is rich with opportunity. Reminders abound. A friend accepts an exciting new position. Neighbors move for that once-in-a-lifetime promotion. Hot executives dominate the news. It's enough to make you wonder if it's time to change jobs?

That's not an easy question to answer. After all, a new job might bring you higher pay, more authority, greater responsibility, a better chance for advancement — even a better working environment. On the other hand, making a move for the wrong reason can send you down a treacherous path and away from your ultimate goal.

Consider the tales of two former clients. Their names are changed, but their stories are true. Jim Peters dreamed of becoming Sales Manager for a national construction firm. Having spent five years as salesman for a Georgia-based construction firm, he believes it's time to move on. He's feeling underpaid and is seeing no room for advancement. After quietly talking to a few local firms (who are hiring sales people with his level of experience), he accepts a higher-paying job with an architectural firm.

Four years later, Jim is ready to move again. While he enjoys his boss, the work is more difficult than his former job, and the chances for advancement are non-existent. What's worse, the 10% raise Jim engineered by job-hopping was also paid to his successor at his former construction sales job.

Given his disenchantment with architectural sales, Jim opts to return to construction sales. Learning that Washington, DC is one of the hottest building markets, Jim starts to hunt there. But no firms are willing to increase his salary because his experience in architectural sales commands no premium. One firm offers a job with no salary increase. Jim accepts, rationalizing there will be opportunity for advancement later. Jim relocates to Washington. But disappointment surfaces a few years later when his hoped-for promotion fails to materialize. Jim eventually purchases a fast-food franchise with his brother-in-law.

Bill Doyle, a civil engineering student with top academic honors, dreams about heading a design team for one of the top national engineering firms that design luxury hotels. But no civil engineering firms recruit at his college. His resumes generate no interviews from his target employers. Instead upon graduation, he settles for an offer from a local power utility company.

Three years later, Bill hears of the exceptional salaries civil engineers are earning in the Texas oil fields. This time, a resume mailing yields an offer and 25% salary increase with a major oil firm. Bill bites. Five years later, the oil slump hits, and Bill is laid off. After six months of searching, he finds a job designing pulp and paper plants for a 20% pay cut. Eventually, Bill

finds his way back into hotel design — as an individual designer — not a Manager — for a national chain of rather boring hotels.

Unfortunately, both Jim and Bill made fundamental and common mistakes. They were willing to change jobs for better offers, but their moves never advanced them towards their ultimate career goals. The end result was a lot of movement that didn't lead to a desired destination.

Don't let the same thing happen to your career goals. With basic career planning, you can find the right jobs and know when to accept the right offers.

The following career planning method uses straightforward common sense. Don't be fooled by the simplicity. The difficulty comes in execution. You'll need discipline, self-evaluation and commitment.

A two-step, sure-fire plan

My advice boils down to two points: adopt a career goal and then develop plans to execute it. These two steps allow you — not fate — to control your advancement.

Your career goal should be a specific position within a specific industry (i.e. you might wish to be an Executive Editor of a technical publications company or the Chief Engineer of a major auto parts manufacturer).

Your job plan will have two elements. Your long-term plan will be a list of all the jobs you must hold to reach your career goal. This plan should include not only job titles, but all the skills and experience needed for each post. Your short-term job plan will list the skills and experience needed to move up the next rung of the ladder.

For most of us, there is no shortcut. Only with a goal in mind, can you know when you've arrived. Only with a plan, can you be confident that you'll arrive on schedule — or at all.

To choose a fitting goal, candidly assess your experience, skills, interests, strengths, weaknesses, enthusiasm and aversions. If you find self-assessment difficult, have a close friend help you, or consult a career counselor. Once you have a clear picture of how you best operate, you can select a career goal that conforms to your character.

Questions, questions

Try to get a feel for the day-to-day reality of the post to which you aspire. Research is paramount here. Spend time at the library. Read relevant books and magazines. Talk to executive recruiters. They know what it takes to flourish in a given role. As you begin to clarify your goal, interview people who have achieved it. Find out if you really want their responsibilities and hard work. (Either way, it's best to know beforehand).

To begin establishing your job plan, ask your role models how they rose to their present positions. Chart their career histories and consider the composite result to be a very rough road map. You can't follow their advice verbatim, because the career landscape is always slightly shifting. For example, foreign languages may become important as your business or industry becomes more international. You may need expertise in a process or technology that didn't exist when your mentors were at your stage.

Therefore, be sure to ask your role models two additional questions: What qualifications was his successor expected to have and what knowledge did he lack — but wish he had — when he began this job? As you begin to see the path to your goal, interview people who hold the jobs along your way. The better you understand what lies ahead, the better you can meet the challenge.

When you're ready to go ahead with your plan, timing becomes paramount. You should seek each new job as soon as you're prepared to succeed in it. Moving before you have the skills and confidence can be disastrous to your career and your company. Besides, there's no need to move too soon or too high just because an outstanding opportunity comes prematurely. There are always opportunities for outstanding talent.

Likewise, there's no career benefit in staying on your present job once you've prepared for another one. Loyalty and stagnation are two different things. As soon as you're ready for more responsibility, seek it. As you advance, keep abreast of changes in your industry. Changing regulations, technology and business conditions have the potential to alter both your path and destination. Remain flexible and periodically review your plans and goals.

Keep a high profile

Your reputation within an industry is highly influential in gaining interviews and securing new positions. Never assume that doing good work is enough. It's simply a good start. The best way to develop your reputation (and keep up with the job market) is to become active in a trade association. Serve on a committee in the area of your interest, write articles for your group's journal and agree to speak when invited. These initiatives advertise your commitment to your field.

Cultivate a network of successful people within your industry. Make it clear that you respect their attainment and want to emulate them. Most people will be flattered and happy to help. This network will provide an early warning of the best openings, which are rarely advertised.

If you have the choice, it's better to remain employed and learn about openings through your network than to quit your job and sleuth full-time. Your attractiveness as a successful employee is worth far more than extra hours to shop.

To review, effective career management requires a goal, a plan and good timing. Choose a goal that is worthwhile yet attainable. Develop a plan based on thorough, up-to-date industry knowledge. Seek your next job as soon as you have the skill and confidence to advance. Do these things consistently and well. You will realize your true career potential.

HOW TO EFFECTIVELY RESIGN FROM YOUR JOB

Frederick C. Hornberger, Jr.



<http://www.hmc.com>

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HOW TO EFFECTIVELY RESIGN FROM YOUR JOB

Most of us have experienced the resignation blues. Resigning is never easy, especially when you have worked at a position for several years, and have become part of a team. Some employers and coworkers may take it personally and accuse you of abandoning the ship. However, there are some precautions you can take to make your resignation smooth and amicable.

Make up your mind

By the time you reach the stage of resigning with your current employer, your mind should be clear that you've made the right decision and that you're leaving.

Have you pursued all avenues available within your firm for career advancement? Before accepting another job, give your present job a proper chance. Visit with your boss and other key personnel to find out where your career stands. What future plans are there for you? Give your firm every consideration as you contemplate a change. Be absolutely certain that once your decision is made to leave the firm, that you are able to make a meaningful commitment to the new opportunity.

Keep resignations short, simple and positive

Once you have accepted an offer by another firm, try to leave your current employer on a positive note. Resigning does not have to be a time for sad faces. You have just been given an opportunity to advance your personal goals, and you have your old employer to thank. Hopefully, you have given your absolute best and will be missed. Others might be notably upset because they have been put in a difficult position to find your replacement. Let them know that you intend to assist in whatever way you can. Thank those people who have made your current job a positive experience by preparing you to move onward. By showing your boss (and firm) due respect, you're encouraging future support from them.

When you resign, it is best to keep things short and simple. The more you say, the more questions you may have to answer. Avoid discussing the new opportunity with your present employer. Unfortunately, your current boss is losing an employee. Therefore, he/she may offer you negative opinions and biases that only confuse you. You may find yourself having to justify your personal goals and decisions. This ultimately leads to frustration. In fact, many recruiters suggest that you state that your resignation is strictly for personal reasons (having nothing to do with your current employer or current job opportunity). By keeping things on a personal level, it circumvents your current employer from trying to persuade you to stay. In some situations, it may be best to avoid telling anyone where you will be going.

Your current employer might be eager to learn tips for company improvement so they don't lose good people, like yourself, in the future. Do not get caught in this trap. Once you have left the company, anything you previously said might be used against you. Even constructive suggestions might be misinterpreted. Expect to be the scapegoat for many company problems after you leave. Leaving them with ammunition will only add fuel to their fire.

Typically, your resignation means a lot of work for your old employer. They will be left with the burden of replacing you and with the loss of department productivity due to your vacancy. Chances are that your boss will be caught off guard with your resignation. He/she will not be able to listen clearly to your explanations because of concerns with the department's new predicament. When a key employee resigns, one can never gauge the reaction of a boss. Therefore, it is always advantageous to keep the atmosphere positive and supportive.

If you feel that you may have to function in an uncooperative atmosphere, consider resigning at the end of the day so that you are no longer on company time. If you must have additional discussions with your employer, try to schedule it for the following afternoon (while on "your" time). This way, everyone has the opportunity to objectively face the situation — and you'll be able to leave when you are ready. If during an exit interview you find yourself having to defend yourself or the new employer (or if things begin to get out of control), motion for another meeting — at a different time — when things cool down.

The oral resignation

This is usually the more difficult type of resignation. It may place you in the compromising position of having to explain your good decision. Words are very powerful, and can be particularly charged during this time. Be careful what you say. It is common for the current boss to probe you for information that led to your decision. If you have had a close relationship with your boss, you may feel obligated to share your heart in confidence. Don't fall for this trap! Use your head and discuss personal and heart-felt matters outside of the office. Remember that this boss is still your boss. Whatever you say will be viewed as biased, and may eventually be used against you. At this point you are no longer considered a team player, nor are you considered to have the company's best interest at heart. Often, comments that are either misinterpreted or exaggerated hurt individuals. Constructive criticism is no longer your responsibility, and carries with it a high cost that could affect your good references.

It is always best to sing the praises of the firm and those you worked with. Determine several positive aspects of your workplace, and mention them liberally — even if only about the great lunches or humorous stories told over coffee. You want to be perceived as someone who was positive and moving forward with your old job. People will remember you best by your last impression. Make it your best performance.

You might want to tell your boss something like this: “If you have a moment, I need to discuss something with you. I’ve been made an exceptional offer by another firm, and I’ve decided to accept it. My wife and I have given this opportunity a lot of thought. As much as I’d like to advance within this company, we feel the new opportunity is in our best long-term interests.

We deeply appreciate all you and the firm has done for me here. I don’t think I would have been presented this exceptional opportunity had it not been for your support and leadership. I want to thank you. I hope I can leave with your good wishes. You’ve been a friend as well as a boss.”

If probed for more information, you may want to claim that there is nothing else to say right now. Simply communicate that you are not leaving a bad situation for a better one. You are leaving a good opportunity for one that better suits your current situation.

The written resignation

A written resignation is the easiest because you have time to effectively prepare what you wish to communicate. A written resignation reinforces the fact that you are leaving and not simply threatening in order to re-negotiate your position. Also, there is something permanent about the written word, which often circumvents interrogation.

Under no circumstance should you state any dissatisfaction with the firm or individuals. Not only is it good manners to stress the positive when leaving, but what you write will remain in your file long after individuals and circumstances (that may have caused you dissatisfaction) are gone. You never know when your future paths may cross again.

Remember to keep things short, simple and positive. You may want to write something like the following: “I want to thank you for all you have done for me here at ABC Company. It’s been a pleasure working with you and representing the company as your Manager of Purchasing. John, I have accepted an offer with another firm and have decided to tender my resignation as of today. This decision has had nothing to do with the exceptional opportunity that you have provided me. You and the company have been more than fair with me. I genuinely appreciate all your support and I wish ABC Company continued success. I want to thank you for allowing me to be a part of your team. If I can assist you with a smooth transition, please feel free to contact me anytime.” When it comes to explaining what happened, letters get filed and passed around. They are a means to curtail ambivalence that might otherwise be perceived from your behavior during this delicate time.

The counteroffer

Surveys show that eight out of ten employees who accept counteroffers don't complete the following year with their employer. (NBEW, "Counteroffer Acceptance, the Road to Career Ruin" by Paul Hawkins, 12-11-83).

Why shun counteroffers? Because the factors that caused you to consider an outside move generally remain in force. Besides, your current employer may lose trust in your loyalty. Accepting a counteroffer may permanently damage your reputation with your would-be-employer. It may conclude that you were merely using them to gain leverage and weren't a fervent candidate. In this situation, never underestimate the value of your perceived integrity.

The best response to a counteroffer is to listen politely, sleep on it, but ultimately decline. If your current firm denied you advancement (before you secured an outside offer), it will probably thwart you next time you feel ready to advance. What's more, your firm may start looking to replace you the day you accept the counteroffer. Your plans for leaving may not be forgotten!

Leave on the right note

Before leaving the firm, take time to speak with each of your support staff, peers, executive personnel, and others with whom you've worked. With people and projects, clear up any unsettled business. Be sensitive to their reactions and keep your conversations positive and constructive. Some people may naturally express their own discontent and encourage you to agree with them. Don't. Instead, express your appreciation and tell them that you will miss them. Before leaving, a little time spent nurturing relationships will go a long way to build support in the future.

Also keep in mind that it is professional courtesy to give your employer ample time to transition you out of the firm — typically two to four weeks. However, you should try to leave as soon as possible. As the firm adjusts to your leaving, you want to thwart recurring attempts for retelling your story and dealing with added frustrations and pressures at the job.

ABOUT THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

Frederick C. Hornberger, Jr.



<http://www.hmc.com>

<http://www.constructionexecutive.com>

ABOUT THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

HOW TO BECOME THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

Interviewing requires learning to be what the interviewer perceives as his/her ideal candidate for the job. You will need to effectively communicate the most appropriate qualities that make you the ideal candidate.

In order to do this, you need to do adequate research and be willing to portray the candidate that they are searching for. If the interviewer is looking for an analytical, thorough candidate, then you need to try and communicate that part of you which is analytical and thorough. This is done through effective research, and effective preparation.

1. Research

Research becomes the key advantage to being the ideal candidate. In general, the more responsible and competitive the job, the more research you should do. Employers consider company research as a reflection of your interest, enthusiasm, intelligence and commitment. Research is about convincing the employer that you know what you want and you want them. Executive recruiter Lisa Resanti of Consultec in Dallas, Texas says, “Our employers tell us most candidates do not get hired because they fail to properly research and prepare for their interview. In fact, our employer survey shows there are twelve primary reasons why candidates do not get hired:

- Ineffective presentation of skills and abilities
- An inability to express oneself clearly and succinctly
- Unclear personal and career goals
- Poor personal appearance
- Lack of interest in the job opportunity
- Excessive interest in vacation and compensation issues
- Lack of people skills
- Uninformed about the position or organization
- Poorly written resume
- Lack of confidence or overly confident
- Evasiveness with answers
- Unsuccessful in developing good personal chemistry with interviewer
- Lack of quality questions for the interviewer

Many, if not all, of these primary reasons why candidates do not get hired can be eliminated with proper research and preparation.

Try searching in occupational career guides. Try to get a hold of the current job description. Another avenue would be to consider calling the employer’s office to speak to an

individual who holds a similar position. You could tell them that you are trying to learn about the position because you believe it is one you might want to apply for. Try and find out all that you can about the firm and the position in question. A great idea is to speak with the PR, Marketing or Sales Department in order to obtain further information.

Investigate the interviewer, the job, the company, the department, and the new boss. Begin by using your network of contacts for “inside information.” Contact local trade associations, the Better Business Bureau, the Chamber of Commerce, competitors, industry service agencies, and anyone else who will give you accurate, pertinent information. You might be able to locate past and current employees by contacting the departmental secretary, Payroll, Sales or Public Relations. Sometimes suppliers can be good sources with regard to knowledge of the company’s financial condition. Find out what boards, committees, or associations the management team belongs to. Seek a personal contact that could confidentially refer you to the appropriate association. It may also be useful to go to your local newspaper or library and ask the Librarian for any company-related articles. Ask your family and friends if they know anyone in or anything about the company. Try calling your local college Alumni Department. They may be able to provide you with names of former students who now work at the firm. Gather as much information as possible to learn about the company, its ownership, philosophy, where it’s going, company culture, management team and style, subsidiary interests, market position, reputation, company history, net worth, etc. During the interview, be prepared to identify and discuss three major industry issues, problems and trends.

Contact the firm’s Marketing or Public Relations Department to get brochures and annual reports. Go to a library to examine the Dunn & Bradstreet Directory and Register, the D & B Credit Reports, the Thomas Register, the “Who’s Who” series of books, Standard & Poor’s Corporate Record and Register of Corporations, Executives and Directors, and Moody’s News Reports and Manuals. While there, search other publications such as the Wall Street Journal, Barron’s, New York Times, Value Line Investment Surveys, and other business and trade related publications. If the firm is publicly owned, contact the Securities and Exchange Commission to obtain a copy of the firm’s prospectus and 10K forms (which should indicate recent financial and hiring activities, and the salaries and benefits of the firm’s top executives). For a fee, you can obtain a quick, private source of 10K forms on any public company from:

The National Investment Counsel, Inc.
80 Wall Street
New York, NY, 10005
(212) 988-8860

2. Listing of Print Research Materials

- Who's Who in America, Finance & Industry, South and Southwest: Marquis Who's Who, Inc., 3002 Glenview Road, Wilmette, IL 60091; 312-441-2210 in IL; 800-323-4601 elsewhere. Every two years.
- Reference Book of Corporate Management: Dun's Marketing Services, 3 Century Drive, Parsippany, NJ 07054; 800-624-0324 in NJ, 800-256-0651 elsewhere. Annual.
- Standard & Poor's Register of Corporations: Directors and Executives: Standards & Poor's Corporation, 25 Broadway, New York, NY 10004; 212-208-8786. Annual, with quarterly updates.
- Occupational Outlook Handbook; U.S. Dept. of Labor (U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402).
- American Almanac of Jobs and Salaries: John W. Wright, Avon Books (New York, NY). 1987-1988 Edition, a revision.
- Jobs Rated Almanac: Edited by Les Krantz. World Almanac Publishers (New York, NY).
- Directory of Occupational Titles: U. S. Department of Labor (U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402).
- Jobs – What They Are, Where They Are, What They Pay: By Robert and Annie Snelling, Simon & Schuster (New York, NY)
- America's Corporate Families: Dunn's Marketing Services, Mountain Lake, NJ
- The Corporate 1,000: Monitor Publishing Co., 104 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10011; 212-627-4140.
- Readers Guide to Periodical Literature: Local Library.
- How to Find Information about Companies: Washington Researchers, Ltd., 2612 P Street NW, Washington, DC; 202-333-3533.
- Jobs 1991: Kathryn and Ross Petras, Prentiss-Hall Press.
- Employment and Earnings: U.S. Government Printing Office, Superintendent of Documents (Washington, DC; 202-377-2112).
- Trinet Directory of Leading U.S. Companies: the Top 1,500, the second 1,500, the Top Private; Trinet, Inc., Nine Campus Drive, Parsippany, NJ 07054; 800-367-3282.
- Ward's Directory of Leading Public and Private Companies: Baldwin H. Ward Publications, 929 Petaluma Boulevard, North Petaluma, CA 94952; 707-762-0737.
- Moody's Industrial Manual & Moody's Industry Review: Moody's Investor Service, Inc., 99 Church Street, New York, NY 10013; 212-553-0300.
- Macmillan Directory of Leading Private Companies: National Register Publishing Company, Macmillan, Inc., 3004 Glenview Road, Wilmette, IL 60091.
- Peterson's Guide to Business and Management Jobs: Peterson's Guides, P.O. Box 2123, Princeton, NJ 08543; 609-924-5338 or 800-338-3282.
- Thomas Register: Thomas Publishing Co., One Pennsylvania Plaza, New York, NY 10013; 212-695-0500.
- Dun & Bradstreet Reference Book of Corporate Managements: Dun & Bradstreet Million Dollar Directory: Dun's Marketing Services, Three Century Drive, Parsippany, NJ, 07054; 201-455-0900.

The Internet, AOL, or Nexis can be convenient and helpful online resources. Visit the company's website for new articles, news, press releases, internal newsletters, job listings, and other information. For public companies, try Hoovers at <http://www.hoovers.com> or the SEC's Edgar Database for 10K reports at <http://www.sec.gov>. There are also a list of company research guides located with the Riley Guide at <http://www.rileyguide.com/search.html> and <http://www.rileyguide.com/employer.html>.

Don't stop digging until you have a clear, specific understanding of what you're up against in the interview. Bear in mind that your research may indicate the inadvisability of going through with a scheduled interview. You should be concerned when you hear the same cautionary tale from several sources. At the same time, it is unwise to eliminate a company just because its track record isn't perfect. Virtually every company has made a bad hire at one point or another, or has launched a new product or entered a new business area without success. But if you find — and verify — unsettling things in your research (for which you cannot find satisfactory explanations), cancel your interview. No opportunity is worth risking your career and reputation. Throughout your career, finding the best jobs will take time and concerted effort. Keep your burden manageable by only interviewing with the best firms that you encounter — preferably one at a time.

3. Call The Employer's Recommended Recruitment Firm

Consider calling the company's independent recruiting agency. By calling their Human Resources Department, you may be able to get a referral to a good, outside recruiter (which is probably the one they use). The recruiter can give you the scoop on your potential employer-to-be. Ask what employee attributes, attitudes and styles are favored or frowned upon. Also find out what the interview process entails as well as any unique employee benefits (flex time, firm closes on Friday afternoons, etc.). Look at the scope of skills, major responsibilities, technical problems and job objectives that lay before you. This will help to formulate your personal background and incorporate it into the specific job.

4. Getting The Inside Story

Sometimes the only way to find out about a company is to call them directly. There is nothing wrong with calling a potential peer and asking some honest questions that define the department and manager. Find out his/her education level, background, style and "hot button" issues. In addition, try talking with a junior employee inside the department as well as someone in the mailroom or Marketing Department.

However, you can directly call the supervisor you will be working for. This is not something you want to do until you are confident you have researched the company and position so that you make a good first impression. If you call, ask him/her to describe the position to you.

Also ask them to describe the qualities they are seeking in a new hire. You might try to schedule a 15-minute meeting in order to learn more about the supervisor's department and how you might help them.

If you already have a meeting scheduled, it should be easy to call beforehand to ask specific questions that might have eluded you during your research. For example, you might say: "Charlie, I'm looking forward to our meeting this Wednesday. Are there any materials you'd like me to bring? I've selected only a few employers to meet with, and I must say that I'm very impressed by what I've learned about your firm. That Goldman job you completed last May was an exceptional achievement. I understand you had something to do with the project's success? Quick question Charlie, what is your background? What qualifications do you see as critical to the person's success?". It's not a good idea to push too hard with your questions. However, if you have the right person on the phone, you should try to get as much information as you can to aid your preparation.

5. Self Evaluation And Inventory

In order for you to best understand how to package yourself and present your qualifications, it is important to do skills, traits and accomplishments inventory. Be thorough and focus on your three best and most appropriate qualities as it relates to the job you are interviewing for. Get advice from your work peers, mentors, friends and family.

Make sure to highlight your 3 greatest accomplishments at work, school and within your personal life (relevant to the job) and include them in your resume. Most employers will only remember three to four things about you. Therefore, make sure you have stressed the three or four accomplishments that you want them to remember. Consider repeating these accomplishments in a closing summary at the end of your interview, and again in your "Thank You" letter.

6. Role Playing

Role-playing gets you ready for interviews by helping you view yourself — and the position you seek — from the employer's perspective. Your goal should be to learn to emphasize your best attributes while downplaying your shortcomings as they relate to the position available. Performing well in an interview does not mean changing who you are.

Begin by using the list of credentials, attributes, skills, and accomplishments you made by comparing yourself and the right candidate for the job. Prepare a list of questions that the interviewer will ask. Formulate your answers. Next, prepare a list of thoughtful, specific questions that you need to ask during the interview. Include questions showing your research,

questions concerning job opportunities and the management team. Lastly, include some questions as diversion tactics should you find yourself in troubled waters.

Master the one-minute commercial about yourself. It's very important that you rehearse how to describe yourself effectively in one minute. You want to learn the techniques of "selling" your comments rather than "telling" your comments so that you market yourself with every comment. If you find yourself not qualified in some way, turn the negative into a positive by stressing what you do offer. If you have no direct job experience, stress your related experience and your proven accomplishments as being a quick study.

When the interviewer has not provided you an opportunity to stress all of your relevant experience, then ask a leading question that will give you this opportunity. An example would be to ask if computer skills are useful in this job and then stress your relevant computer experience.

Using a video/tape recorder, mirror or friend, rehearse the interview as interviewer and candidate. Rehearse your roles from the initial greeting to the final good-bye. Play back the tape and honestly evaluate and improve your performance.

You might also consider approaching another person looking for a job and work together at employer and candidate interviewing thereby assisting each other with the role-play. You can also contact a professional career counselor who will assist you with your preparation and role-play.

ABOUT JOB INTERVIEWS

Frederick C. Hornberger, Jr.



<http://www.hmc.com>

<http://www.constructionexecutive.com>

ABOUT JOB INTERVIEWS — THE PURPOSE OF A JOB INTERVIEW

The job interview may be the most important career advancement step that you will ever take. You may think it's possible to sail up the ranks of corporate culture while being recognized for your ability and competence or never have to sell yourself or endure the rigors of a job interview. However, in today's competitive workplace, it is almost impossible to advance your career (even within your own firm) without learning how to interview effectively. With every step up the corporate ladder, there are job evaluations and interviews (formal or otherwise) which determines who moves up and whom stays put.

The purpose of the job interview is to win a job offer that you can accept. Job interviewing for any other reason isn't worth the risk of exposure if you are currently employed. It isn't worth the possibility of damaging your reputation if you are being perceived as using a good-faith, external offer in order to advance your career internally — or using it to gain information about external pay. If you are simply interested in learning about other firms and job opportunities, there are safer and better ways to do this. If you decide to interview, then you should decide to win at the interview and get an acceptable job offer.

As with most victories, winning at an interview means that you must be willing to work at preparation. You will need to develop skills and learn how to perform under a variety of circumstances — with a variety of personalities.

WHAT TYPES OF JOB INTERVIEWS ARE THERE?

There are basically two types of interviews: the screening interview and the hiring/selection interview.

Screening Interviews

Screening interviews are used to qualify you for selection before you meet with a hiring authority. Screeners will try to weed you out rather than get you hired. These interviews are normal for companies who receive hundreds or thousands of solicitations for a single job opportunity. Screening interviews are usually quick, efficient and low cost strategies that result in a short list of qualified candidates. They assist Operations Managers to save critical time by eliminating unqualified candidates.

If invited to a face-to-face screening interview, it will usually be with a third-party recruiter or someone from human resources. Human resource interviewers are typically experienced and often are professionals skilled at interviewing and screening candidates. They may not understand the details of the job that you interview for, but they are effective at judging character, intelligence, and good fits for the company culture. They are also good at identifying potential “red flags” or problem areas with your work background and general qualifications.

Your toughest task might be to get past the screeners to the Operation's Managers. Be prepared to explain any discrepancies in your background (i.e. gaps in employment or education, frequent job changes, layoffs, etc.).

Some examples of screening interviews include telephone interviews, computer interviews, video conference interviews and the structured interview.

Telephone Interviews

Telephone interviewing is the most common way to perform an initial screening interview. It helps both the interviewer and the candidate get a general sense of mutual interest in pursuing things beyond the first interview. It also saves time and money, and may be tape recorded for review by other interviewers.

During a phone interview, your goal as a candidate should be to arrange a face-to-face meeting. If this is not possible, try to arrange another time to talk, or get the name/address of a suitable contact in the employer's firm so that you can submit a resume.

If you are caught off guard or unprepared with an incoming interview call, ask to meet in person, or reschedule the appointment for a more convenient time. Remember that the person calling is the one who establishes control. Therefore, it's to your advantage to place the call at a more convenient time.

Tips for phone interviews:

- At the start of the conversation, make sure to write the person's name down correctly. Ask for the correct spelling. Ask their phone number so that you can call them back if cut off.
- Keep the following items handy: copy of your resume, list of employer questions, pen, paper, research material on the employer, and any other notes you might have. It may also be a good idea to have a glass of water nearby.
- Dress up as though you are going to a face-to-face meeting. This usually will help to enhance your energy level and professional presence.
- Always try to smile speaking on the phone. People can usually sense when you're smiling or frowning.
- Try to speak in a loud, clear voice considering that most phone reception reduces phone sound levels.
- Ask several clever questions as if you were in a face-to-face meeting.
- If you place the call, don't let the long-distance phone charge shorten the interview.
- If confronted with a question you do not have a simple and effective answer for, state that the question may be better answered in person.
- Thank the interviewer for his/her time, and follow up with a "thank you" letter.

Computer Interviews

These interviews are used to weed out top candidates from dozens or hundreds of candidates that may be applying for a specific job opening. Computer interviews involve answering a series of multiple-choice questions that will pre-qualify candidates for a potential job interview and/or request resume submission. Some interviews are handled through the telephone with push buttons, while others require accessing a web site to complete the interview with a computer keyboard and mouse. Computer interviews are often timed. Therefore, it may be worthwhile to go in as an alias in order to get a sense of questions and timing before applying under your real name.

Video-Phone and Video-Conferencing

Video conferencing systems provide the transfer of audio and video between remote sites. More than half of the largest U.S. companies utilize video-conferencing as a means of convenient communication and as an alternative to more costly face-to-face meetings. Basically anyone in the world can perform video-conferencing with the use of a microphone, camera and compatible software. Video conferencing is now available via the Internet. The continuous drop in cost makes it a popular resource for businesses as well as home use.

Tips for video conferences:

- Video conferencing has similar video and audio qualities to that of a home video camera. Be sure to choose an outfit that looks good on you. To avoid problematic imaging, wear solid colors (not stripes or plaids).
- In order to become comfortable during video conferencing, practice a mock job interview using your home video camera.
- For the best reception, choose full-face (straight) camera angles instead of angled views. Seek professional help for make-up matters.
- If given a choice, use full view or wide-angle shots rather than close up shots. Leave the close up shots to the professionals.
- Keep in mind that there usually is a lag between the spoken and heard word. Smile and maintain eye contact as if you are in a face-to-face interview.
- Avoid jerky motions because only fluid motions maintain video integrity.

Structured Interviews

This type of interview is used to identify the best candidates by asking them the exact same questions. Employers attempt to create a common evaluation tool by providing an “apples-to-apples” comparison of candidates. Unfortunately, no two interviews are ever alike. Personal biases will affect the evaluation. Third-party recruiters or the employer’s Human Resource department usually handles these interviews.

Hiring or Selection Interviews

In contrast to screening interviews, there are the more traditional hiring (or selection) interviews from Operation's Managers, department heads and executives who may be your ultimate bosses. These managers understand the technical qualifications needed to fill their vacant positions and the team chemistry needed to keep their departments running smoothly. As interviewers, they are usually less prepared or skilled at interviewing.

In fact, many spend only a few minutes looking over a resume before the interview and rarely prepare questions or strategies. Most do not like interviewing. They see it as an unfortunate, but necessary, task that takes away from job production. Employers feel that they must assume a position of control. If the situation is handled properly, they are usually more than willing to allow candidates to take the lead.

Hiring interviews are two-way streets where you also will be interviewing the employer for job suitability. Most of these interviews will take place in an office setting in one of several formats: one-on-one interviews, serial interviews, sequential interviews or panel interviews.

One-on-one interviews

This is the traditional interview where candidates meet with employers on a face-to-face, or one-on-one, basis. Each interview is somewhat unique and is loosely structured. Both parties typically walk away with a more natural sense of whether or not the fit is right.

Serial interviews

Candidates are passed from one interviewer to another throughout the course of a day. No decision is made on your suitability until the final interview has taken place and all interviewers have had a chance to discuss each other's interview. If facing serial interviews, try to find out something about the next interviewer (and the issues important to him/her) before the meeting. Also remember that you only have one chance to make the right first impression so make sure you are energized and ready for the next interview before taking it on. If you are not, excuse yourself to go to the restroom for a break or try to reschedule the balance of the interviews for another time.

Sequential interviews

Sequential interviews are the traditional means of interviewing whereby a candidate will meet with one or several interviewers on a one-on-one basis over the course of several days, weeks or months. Each interview moves the candidate progressively towards greater detail in respect to the position, the company and ultimately an offer. Testing may be one of the sequential interviews, as well as meeting with the top brass or even a third-party consultant.

Group or panel Interviews

In this situation, a candidate will go before a committee, sometimes as large as 10 people. This is usually done for efficient scheduling purposes in order to accommodate the management panel. Here candidates are evaluated on interpersonal skills, leadership, and their ability to think on their feet while dealing with issues in a stressful situation.

If confronted with this type of interview, candidates should try to identify the leader and the immediate supervisor of the position being considered. Think of the board as a single individual and try not to be intimidated by the numbers. It may be difficult to exercise any degree of real control over the panel, but try to focus on one or two key members and control their reaction to you. However, it is important to make eye contact and communicate individually to each panelist.

HOW TO OBTAIN A JOB INTERVIEW

Frederick C. Hornberger, Jr.



<http://www.hmc.com>

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HOW TO OBTAIN A JOB INTERVIEW

There are many ways to obtain a job interview, but some are more effective than others.

1. Private Or Unadvertised Openings

About three out of four management hires, including those handled by search firms, take place through private or unadvertised openings (openings unknown to the public). These openings are the most confidential and difficult to find, but have the greatest potential for job flexibility and exceptional compensation.

Even when there are no current opportunities available, an employer can often create a job opening when the right candidate comes along. You need “to come along” before the job opening becomes public. That’s where networking comes in. A recommendation from an influential referral fosters immediate trust and respect from a potential employer, and can provide you treatment as a choice candidate.

Private Networking

In your Rolodex or contact manager, research your list of key contacts. Also look through your industry’s association membership directory. In many cases, your close friends and business associates will be the best sources for job leads and referrals. They are also most likely to respect your confidentiality and offer their genuine help. In addition, they may even be able to refer you to a recruiter or other employment resources.

Direct Solicitation

Another good way to obtain a job interview is to directly solicit employers of choice. Research the industry and identify six to ten primary targets for your search.

Within these target firms, identify the direct hiring authority (immediate supervisor of the position you seek) and contact him/her directly. Try to obtain a personal meeting by stating your employment interest. Another approach is to find out where the supervisor frequents such as an industry trade association, or other facility, that would foster a chance meeting. Of course, the least effective and most risky means to contact the supervisor is through the mail. However, if you intend to send something through the mail, use express mail in order to get the proper attention. A direct solicitation risks exposure and may not be the best approach if you are concerned with confidentiality. Even if you ask the employer to respect your privacy, you are still vulnerable.

Executive Recruiters

For private or public openings, executive recruiters are experts in penetrating their specialized industry and locating reputable companies with attractive opportunities. Recruiters can introduce you to well-tailored job opportunities with little or no effort on your part. They will keep it confidential. To locate a recruiter in your specialty, try to get a referral from a colleague, a local trade association, or your competitor's Human Resources department. A couple of other good sources are Kennedy Publication's Directory of Executive Recruiters, or the Recruiter's Online Network at <http://www.recruitersonline.com>.

Be sure to find an executive recruiter who highly recommended for his or her professionalism, performance, and ethics. From the start, emphasize to your recruiter that your name and credentials must remain anonymous to potential employers unless you authorize release. Ask recruiters to contact you only at home, or in your private office, and only with opportunities that fit your career plan. Good executive recruiters can work within these requirements and may even arrange interviews without submitting your resume.

Like any brokers, recruiters work hardest for candidates who can help them close a sale. Such candidates have a marketable background, are clear on what they want, and are likely to accept a fair offer (usually a 10 to 15% salary increase). Unwillingness to job move immediately, or an unwillingness to accept a fair offer, will discourage recruiters from working with you.

Remember that recruiters work for client companies, so you may need to wait for the right opportunity. Make sure you get to know two or three pros, and stick with them.

2. Public Openings

Classified or Help Wanted Ads

Advertised openings are generally the least effective way to obtain a job interview. For employers, using ads is inefficient, expensive and time-consuming usually a last resort. So when you come to an employer's attention by this route, you are associated with an unpleasant process and with a horde of candidates that the company must wade through.

Sending a resume is simply not effective. An early 1990's survey from The Department of Labor reported that only 5 out of 100 American jobholders obtained their positions through newspaper want ads. Other surveys indicate that the figure is closer to 2 out of 100. Most resume readers take less than 5 seconds per resume to decide if the resume gets looked over or pushed to the rejection pile.

Responding to ads also risks your reputation and confidentiality. Your resume may fall into the hands of junior-level administrators, or it gets entered into corporate data banks (perused

by anyone who has access to the Human Resources files). This scenario is unlikely to lead to an appropriate offer.

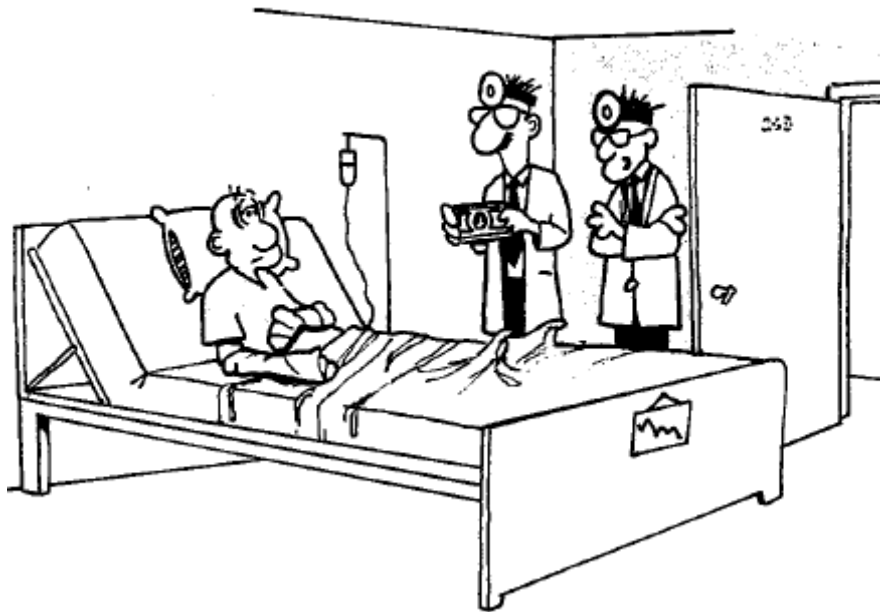
If you do elect to market yourself through advertised openings, check out each opportunity via your network before contacting the company. Try to find out why the opening was not filled privately, how long the search has gone on, and what problems have affected the firm and the incumbent who held the position.

In pursuing an advertised opening, you can improve your chances by writing an effective cover letter and by responding to the ad within the first four days. Try to send a resume only after speaking to the hiring authority and concluding that both parties believe you are the “right” candidate. Interview only with an authority able to offer you a job. Bypassing those who have been assigned the rudimentary task of advertising and screening for the position (usually the Human Resources Department, office managers, assistants, or secretaries) greatly improves your odds of getting an interview. Good sources for advertised positions are trade journals and magazines, local newspapers, and the National Business Employment Weekly.

Internet Classified Ads

Internet ads are generally no more effective than printed ads when it comes to getting an interview. However, they usually are more abundant and easier to find. In order to increase the odds of success, focus your search by locating job databases that specialize in your specific industry.

MASTERING THE JOB INTERVIEW



"We found this clenched in your fist, Mr. Ross."

Frederick C. Hornberger, Jr.



<http://www.hmc.com>

<http://www.constructionexecutive.com>

MASTERING THE JOB INTERVIEW

Successful job interviewing skills are absolutely essential to maximum career advancement. Every step up the ladder involves job evaluations and interviews, formal or otherwise, which determine who moves up and who stays put.

The purpose of the job interview is to win a job offer! Job interviewing for any other reason isn't worth the risk. If you're simply interested in learning about other firms and job opportunities, there are safer ways to research — ways that won't subject you to an interview that can jeopardize your career if word gets out. So "go for it" any time you interview. Make an impression that will win an offer even if you choose to turn it down.

What can you expect from a job interview?

You should assume your interviewer is trained at the skill of interviewing and knows what to look for in a new hire. He or she will normally adhere to a strict schedule, asking questions designed to elicit specific responses. Discussions will involve your technical background, attitudes, career goals, and ability to fit into the organization's culture.

Usually personnel will be the first ones to interview you, and will often be skilled at screening candidates. Getting past the screeners to the hiring authorities may be your toughest task. Be prepared to explain any discrepancies in your background — gaps in employment or education, frequent job changes, or layoffs — should this be needed.

In contrast with your personnel screeners, hiring authorities are typically the bosses who have performed the job you are seeking. They understand the technical qualifications needed to fill their vacant positions and the team chemistry required to keep their departments running smoothly, but are usually unprepared and poorly organized as interviewers.

Sometimes you'll run into bosses and operations managers with little, if any, training in effective interviewing techniques. Because they hire only a few candidates each year, they may lack the skills and resolve to control a candidate trained to say and do all what's necessary to appear appropriate for the job. Given the brief duration of most interviews — from 15 to 90 minutes — it's difficult for hiring authorities to make good evaluations on the scant information they can elicit.

Your challenge, then, is to make the best use of whatever time you are given. Be prepared to subtly guide the conversation so that you expose all of your pertinent qualifications and attributes, and build the rapport that will make you the right candidate. Consider taking a list of thoughtful questions with you.

What's the best method for winning a qualified job interview?

About three out of four executive hires, including those handled by search firms, take place through unadvertised openings — openings unknown to the public at large. These openings are the most confidential, with the greatest potential for job flexibility and maximum compensation.

Use your network of contacts to identify and recommend you for appropriate, unadvertised openings. Typically, only a handful of executives who exercise exclusive control over hiring know about these openings. Talk to all your contacts before trying other methods to gain an interview.

A good manager can create a job opening when the right talent comes along. You need “to come along” before the job opening becomes public. That’s where the network you have been cultivating comes in. A recommendation from an influential reference fosters immediate trust and respect from your potential employer. You will be treated as “a choice” candidate, with more flexibility to negotiate job requirements and compensation.

Are there other good methods for obtaining a job interview?

A second recommended method for winning interviews is using an executive recruiter who specializes in your industry. Executive recruiters are expert in penetrating their industry of specialization and locating reputable companies with attractive opportunities. Recruiters can introduce you to myriad, well-tailored job opportunities with little or no effort on your part. And they’ll keep it confidential.

Be sure to find an executive recruiter highly recommended for his or her professionalism, performance, and ethics. From the start, emphasize that your name and credentials must remain anonymous to potential employers unless you okay their release. Ask recruiters to contact you only at home, or in your private office and only with opportunities that fit your career plan. Good executive recruiters can work within these requirements and may even arrange interviews without submitting your resume. If you lack a track record, you’ll need to give your recruiter flexibility in working you into his priority schedule.

Like any brokers, recruiters work hardest for candidates who can best help them close a sale. Such candidates have a marketable background, are clear on what they want, and are likely to accept a good offer at a mutually fair price.

Remember, recruiters work for client companies, so you may need to wait for the right opportunity. Get to know two or three pros, and stick with them.

Are advertised openings worth pursuing?

Advertised openings are generally the least effective way to win a job interview. For employers, using ads is inefficient, expensive, time-consuming — and a last resort. So when you come to an employer's attention by this route, you are associated with an unpleasant process, and with a horde of poor candidates the company must weed out. Sometimes, your qualifications and charm will win the day, but just as often employers will wonder: "If this guy's so great, why didn't I hear about him sooner?"

Responding to ads also risks your reputation and confidentiality. Your resume often falls into the hands of junior-level administrators, gets entered into corporate data banks and perused by anyone who has access to the personnel department's files. This scenario is unlikely to lead to an appropriate offer.

If you do elect to market yourself through advertised openings, check out each opportunity through your network before contacting the company in need. Try to find out why the opening was not filled privately, how long the search has gone on, and what problems have affected the firm and the persons who held the position.

In pursuing an advertised opening, send a resume only after speaking to the hiring authority and concluding that both parties believe you are the "right" candidate. Interview only with an authority able to offer you a job. Bypassing those who have been assigned the rudimentary task of advertising and screening for the position — usually the personnel department, office managers, assistants, or secretaries — greatly improves your odds of getting an interview. Good sources for advertised positions are trade journals and magazines, local newspapers, and the National Business Employment Weekly. Most personnel departments can refer you to a good source for your industry, or you can call the Association of Outplacement Consulting Firms, (201) 887-6667. A good directory of outplacement firms can be found through Kennedy Publications, (603) 585-6544.

How to become the "right candidate" for the job

Being the right candidate for the job means knowing what the interviewer is seeking in a candidate and displaying those characteristics in an appealing way. The elements which constitute the right candidate will differ with each interviewer you meet. Therefore, prepare individual presentations for each interview and interviewer.

Thorough, painstaking research is the key to knowing what your interviewer and his or her company seek. Start by calling the company's independent recruiting agency. Call their personnel department and ask for their referral to a good, outside recruiter. This recruiter can give you the scoop on your potential employer-to-be. Inquire as to what employee attributes,

attitudes and styles are favored or frowned upon, as well as what the interview process entails at the firm.

Investigate the interviewer, the job, the company, the department, and the new boss. Begin by using your network of contacts for “inside information.” Contact local trade associations, the Better Business Bureau, the Chamber of Commerce, competitors, industry service agencies, and anyone else who will give you accurate, pertinent information. Locate past and current employees by contacting the department secretary, someone in payroll, or in the company’s sales and public relations group. Even suppliers are good sources of information on a company’s financial condition and management team. Also, speak to someone in the mailroom, or to a junior employee who won’t feel threatened by your call, as someone at your level might be. Find out what boards, committees, or associations the management team belongs to, and find someone you know who could refer you confidentially to that association. It may also be useful to go to your local newspaper and library, and ask the librarian for company-related articles. Ask your family and friends who they know in the company, and what they know about it themselves. A call to your local college alumni department may turn up former students who work at the firm.

Contact the firm’s public relations department to get brochures and annual reports. Go to a library to examine the Dun & Bradstreet Directory and Register, the D & B Credit Reports, the Thomas Register, the “Who’s Who” series of books, Standard and Poor’s Corporate Record and Register of Corporations, Executives and Directors, Moody’s News Reports and Manuals, and library periodical listings such as The Wall Street Journal, Barron’s, New York Times, Value Line Investment Surveys, and other business and trade publications. If the firm is publicly owned, contact the Securities and Exchange Commission to obtain a copy of the firm’s prospectus and 10K form which should indicate recent financial and hiring activities, and the salaries and benefits of the firm’s top executives. For a fee, a quick, private source of 10K forms on any public company is the National Investment Counsel Inc., 80 Wall Street, NY, NY, 10005, Call (212) 988-8860.

Contact the interviewer personally to learn more about the job and the “gatekeeper” with whom you will be dealing. Ask if there is anything you should bring to the interview. Also ask what steps must transpire before the firm reaches a hiring decision. Learn who else you will need to meet, how long meetings may last, and how many other candidates will be interviewed. Ascertain whether your interviewer has the authority to offer you the job. Try scheduling interviews in the mid-week to avoid Monday blues or Friday impatience. Avoid the potential etiquette problems and distractions of lunch.

Before calling, make sure you are prepared and rehearsed to make a positive, friendly, upbeat presentation. This will be your first personal contact and therefore create that all-important first impression.

For example, you might say:

“Charlie, I’m looking forward to our meeting this Wednesday. Are there any materials you’d like me to bring to this meeting? I’ve selected only a few employers to meet with, and I must say that I’m very impressed by what I’ve learned about your firm. That Moonby job you completed last May was an exceptional achievement. I understand you had something to do with the project’s success?

“Quick question, Charlie: what is the status of the position you’re looking to fill? Do you anticipate making a decision soon? I’ll be needing to decide soon, also. We might be able to save each other this meeting, and perhaps even expedite matters, if we could talk a few moments by telephone.

“You may have had a chance to look at my background, but if you would, Charlie, tell me a bit about what type of projects and markets will this person be pursuing? How many estimators will be managed by this new hire? Is there anything unique about this opportunity?”

End with a request for a recent company brochure and annual report, and any other non-confidential information he can send. The more you can learn, the better.

Don’t stop digging until you have a clear, specific understanding of what you’re up against in the interview. Bear in mind that your research may indicate the inadvisability of going through with a scheduled interview. You should be concerned when you hear the same cautionary tale from several sources. At the same time, it is unwise to eliminate a company categorically just because its track record isn’t perfect. Virtually every company has made a bad hire at one point or another, or has launched a new product or entered a new business area without success. But if you find — and verify — unsettling things in your research for which you can not find satisfactory explanations, cancel your interview. No opportunity is worth risking your career and reputation.

Pay extra close attention to comments about the company’s corporate culture, future growth plans, management quality, and training programs. These are the factors that bear on both your day-to-day happiness and your career advancement.

Throughout your career, finding the best jobs will take time and concerted effort. Keep your burden manageable by only interviewing with the best firms you encounter, preferably one at a time.

Getting your act together before the curtain rises

Role-playing gets you ready for interviews by helping you view yourself and the position you seek from the employer's perspective. Your goal should be learning to emphasize your best attributes and downplay your shortcomings as they relate to the position available.

Begin by using the list of credentials, attributes, skills, and accomplishments you made comparing yourself and the right candidate for the job. Choose three or four key points about yourself you'd like to emphasize in the interview. Prepare a list of questions which you think the interviewer will ask, and formulate your answers. Next, prepare a list of thoughtful, specific questions you should ask in the interview. Include questions to indicate you have researched the firm, questions about the job opportunity and the management team, and questions to use as diversion should you find yourself cornered or losing control.

Using a video or tape recorder, a mirror or a friend, practice the interview as both interviewer and as yourself. Rehearse your roles from the initial greeting to the final goodbye. If you recorded yourself, play back the tape and honestly evaluate your performance. Practice until you are comfortable, and take written notes to the interview.

Here are typical interview questions you might use in practicing:

Questions you may be asked

1. Please describe your present job responsibilities. Which do you find most enjoyable? Which are most difficult, and why?
2. What was the best idea and the greatest accomplishment you contributed to your present employer? To previous employers?
3. What would you like to have accomplished in your present job that you have not? What interfered with this accomplishment?
4. What do you know about our company and the position we offer?
5. What particular strengths and weaknesses do you feel you would bring to the job? What would others say?
6. What do you think it takes to be successful in this job?
7. What elements are important to you and to your subordinates in attaining job satisfaction?
8. Describe the characteristics that you feel would make for an ideal boss over our open position? Over you in particular?
9. What are your short- and long-term objectives for your career?
10. What have been your biggest frustrations in your career?
11. What are some things your present company and department might do to become more successful?

12. What are your hobbies and interests? How do they contribute to, or balance, the work you do professionally?
13. Tell me something about yourself.
14. How would you describe your personality to me? How do most of your friends and associates describe you?
15. How would your spouse and children feel about your accepting this opportunity with us?
16. How would your current employer feel, and what could you expect from him or her?
17. What distinguishes you from other applicants; why should we hire you?
18. What is it that you would like to do here at our company?
19. What is your current annual compensation?
20. What did you dislike at your last job?
21. Why are you considering leaving your present job?
22. Are you in a position to accept this job immediately? What would be involved in your accepting this position?

Questions you may wish to ask the interviewer

1. What would you like to see in your ideal candidate? What do you think it takes to be successful in this position?
2. What are the responsibilities of this position, and which do you regard as most important?
3. Describe a typical day for someone holding this position.
4. What are the results expected of this position? What accomplishments will be expected?
5. What are the limits of my responsibility and authority?
6. What problems/opportunities exist with this position?
7. What makes me right (or wrong) for this position?
8. What support will I receive to help me fulfill my responsibilities?
9. What are the strengths and weaknesses of my subordinates? What guidance and support do they expect of me?
10. Who will be my superior and what are his or her strengths and weaknesses? How does he/she manage people? What type of individual works best under this manager? Who else within the company may I speak to about this manager?
11. Are there any current projects in progress for which I will be responsible? If so, what is their status?
12. What criteria will be used to evaluate my performance? When are performance reviews scheduled?
13. What are the goals of the corporation? What are the goals of my department? What are the goals of this job?
14. Tell me about the department. Who are my peers? What are their strengths and weaknesses? What is the company culture or atmosphere?
15. What are the best and worst aspects of this job and this company?
16. How do you rate your competition?
17. Why did my predecessor leave this position?
18. Why did you come to work here and why have you stayed?
19. Where is a person likely to advance after performing this job well?

For additional interview questions and answers, good books are The Complete Q&A Job Interview Book by Jeffrey Allen; John Wiley & Sons, NY, and Knock ‘Em Dead With Great Answers to Tough Interview Questions by Martin John Yates; Bob Adams, Inc., MA.

The performance: what to do on the job interview

“That which doesn’t kill us makes us stronger.”

— *Nietzsche*

The big day has arrived! You’ve confirmed your appointment, you’ve done all your homework and you’re fully prepared... but you’re still nervous. A little nervousness will keep you on your toes. Remind yourself you’ve done your homework and you’re the best candidate for the job!

Appearance is a major part of creating good “chemistry.” The image you project may be more important than the technical skill you possess. So get a good night’s sleep. Be meticulously groomed and conservatively dressed. Men can’t go wrong wearing a top-quality dark suit, an expensive-looking white shirt, and a pure silk tie. For women, the same rules apply: dress professionally. Moderation is the watchword, in make-up, jewelry, and apparel. Consider the condition of your shoes in the overall picture. Keep it simple and clean! A good book on business clothing and style is The New Dress for Success by John Molloy, Warner Books. Remember: your first impression is critical.

Show organization by bringing along a notebook, pen, extra resumes, reference list, articles about you, and any other items you feel should be available for the interview, neatly packed in a briefcase. It’s acceptable to bring pre-written notes, and to take notes during the interview. Make sure your pen is in your jacket pocket, not your shirt pocket. When you have really prepared — when you lack nothing — you convey an air of self-assurance that inspires confidence!

Arrive alone and at least ten minutes early, and rehearse in your head the three or four key points that make you right for the job, and any other items you think will be discussed in the interview. Stop by the restroom to check your appearance. Take a few deep breaths and focus on the interview, removing all other thoughts and letting yourself relax. Smile until you begin to feel positive and upbeat about your opportunity. Enter the receptionist’s office on time. Do not smoke even if invited to do so.

Be especially courteous and pleasant to the receptionist, secretaries, and anyone else you meet. Never underestimate anyone’s importance. Address each person as Mr. or Ms. unless you are requested otherwise.

Greet the interviewer with a firm (but not bone-crushing) handshake, and a smile. Open the conversation by repeating the interviewer's name, making a sincere compliment, and asking a question that establishes a friendly tone. Remarks like the following work when coupled with a smile, a vibrant tone, and friendly body language:

“Hello, Bob. It's a pleasure meeting you, especially after hearing such good reports of you at our local A.G.C.. Winning that Henderson Shopping Mall project really gave you and your firm a reputation as leaders, What I'd like to know is: where do you go from here after being awarded the largest shopping mall project in the Tri-States?”

“Good morning, Carole. It's a pleasure to meet you. I enjoyed our conversation last Tuesday, and I appreciate the help you gave me in preparing for today.”

“I'm excited to learn how fast your company has grown in the last three quarters. That's bound to be keeping you busy, what with all the hiring and development your firm has done to expand into national markets. All of this leaves me with just one question. How does someone like you keep your desk so clean? If I join your firm, as I hope to, I'm going to have to learn your secret!”

Keep the conversation light at first and learn to like the interviewer. Find something in common with him or her. Observe and comment on the interviewer's personal surroundings. Your goal is to build early rapport.

Bring extra copies of your resume but do not present one unless asked.

You want the interviewer's full attention. Let the host direct your seating before you move toward a chair. Once directed, move to sit down, but let the host settle in before you take a seat.

You will gain respect by being well mannered, self-assured, relaxed and articulate. Allow the interviewer to do much of the talking. Nod your head and verbally agree with the interviewer; remain attentive. Do not interrupt while being asked a question or given an answer — take notes if you have an escaping thought. Let the interviewer finish and even pause a second or two before you answer. Answer all questions briefly, clearly, and confidently while looking the interviewer in the eyes. Never overexplain or ramble. Do not lie, and do not contradict the interviewer. Don't make negative comments about current or past employers, even if invited to. Keep the interview positive. Answer frankly and sincerely as though speaking with a friend.

If you feel a strength of yours — say, contract-writing or developing new business — has not been explored during your interview, there are several ways to make your point concisely and gracefully.

Perhaps the most subtle way is to mention an achievement or benefit to your employer which derives from the strength in question. When asked to explain, work in the facts — you were a purchaser on a certain project, you coached the negotiating team that beat out your biggest rival on a major new contract — whatever.

You may prefer to be direct. In that case, ask the interviewer how, in his view, this skill or that experience might apply to the job in question. Only you know all the information you want to convey during your interview. Look ahead, and plan comfortable ways to introduce topics that may be overlooked.

Ask the interviewer what he or she perceives as your shortcomings and be prepared to address them. Once you feel your “right” qualities are clear to the interviewer, don’t oversell! Steer the interviewer away from your background and experience. Spend the remaining time asking questions to build rapport. Good chemistry is often more important than your qualifications.

However, before leaving the subject of the job opportunity, summarize why you like the position and why you’re right for the position. Stress three or four key points that suit you to the opportunity. For example, you might comment:

“John, what we’ve discussed today only confirms what I believed before our meeting. If I understand the position, you’re looking for someone with a background in computer estimating commercial and residential projects, someone who can put the full bid package together and manage a staff of five estimators.

My lectures on MC² computer estimating, and the fact that I’ve installed this program with our company, gives me ample experience in computer estimating on commercial and residential projects. I’ve also led the bid team on three successful bids just this last quarter, which should indicate my ability to handle full responsibility as your chief estimator. I’m more than enthusiastic about your opportunity, John, and after having met you, I believe that this is the position for me. What’s our next step?”

End the interview on a positive note, letting the interviewer know you appreciate being invited to the firm and having spent time with the interviewer. Remark that you’re impressed with the company. Say the job sounds like what you expected, and you are interested in pursuing matters further. Don’t play hard-to-get, as that may be interpreted as indifference. Try to leave

with a firm commitment for an additional meeting at a specified time and date, and try to find out about the person you will meet next time.

Try to meet the employees, at all levels, and spend time with the would-be boss in a social environment. When you are satisfied that the interviewer has the authority to hire, and wants you, ask him or her for a decision: Controlling the interviewer's timing strengthens your position.

After the curtain falls

Always send a courtesy thank you letter to each person with whom you interview. It's an invaluable reflection of your good character, and gives you a perfect opportunity to reiterate what you like about the position and why you feel qualified to assume it. End the letter confirming your next appointment. This letter should be similar to your cover letter in style, but now you know more clearly how you answer their requirements.

Your follow-up letter is almost always read from beginning to end, so it need not be brief. Have someone edit the final version. Also, enclose any news clippings, samples of work, or other pertinent information that substantiates your claims.

It is also excellent to explore an attractive alternative before interviewing for your preferred job opportunity; this gives you negotiating leverage. The alternative might be another firm, or a potential promotion with your current employer. Having a good alternative allows you to take risks that you might not otherwise.

The following is an example of a good follow-up letter to your host.

Fred Ward, President
Tampa Builders
Tampa, Florida 28804

Dear Fred:

Thank you for your time last Tuesday. It was a pleasure meeting you and hearing about your one-year goals. It came as a surprise to me that you were the builders on the Tampa Public Building. We understood Mangino Construction Co. did all the work for Roo Enterprises. You should be proud of securing that contract

After meeting with you and your staff, I am even more convinced that our philosophies on the marketplace and the way to approach bidding are exceptionally compatible. My training in the use of MC² computer estimating will be well-suited to meeting your estimating needs.

I found it particularly interesting that most of your staff competes in the AAA softball league. Did you know they need a center fielder like me? I was also

pleased to hear of your A.G.C. involvement; your chapter supports the “Young Leader of the Year” program. As you know, I was elected in 1988.

My wife Mary and I have given this opportunity a great deal of thought, and we both feel ready to move back to Tampa. I would like to meet with you again next Thursday to ask you a few more questions. I would also like to show you a few sample bids of mine that I feel will be of interest to you. Please call me to let me know if you have an extra few minutes on that day.

As an addendum, I’m including a copy of the article the A.G.C. wrote about me after awarding me the “Young Leader” plaque. Once again, Fred, it was a pleasure meeting with you, and I look forward to seeing you Thursday.

Sincerely,

Arthur T. Advancer
Senior Estimator

ATA/ct

WHAT TO DO DURING A JOB INTERVIEW

Frederick C. Hornberger, Jr.



<http://www.hmc.com>

<http://www.constructionexecutive.com>

WHAT TO DO DURING A JOB INTERVIEW

The Big Day Has Arrived.

You've confirmed your appointment, you've done all your homework, and you're fully prepared...but you're still nervous. A little nervousness will keep you on your toes. Remind yourself you've done your homework and you're a qualified candidate for the job.

Organize the night before. Make sure you bring an expensive pen, notepad, several original copies of your resume, notes on what makes you the right candidate, good questions to ask and answers to some of the tough questions they may ask of you. Include copies of any correspondence with the employer in the past, relevant employer articles, your references, letters of recommendation, outstanding performance reviews, honors and awards, press clippings on yourself or your work, articles you have authored & work samples. Keep everything neatly in a leather folder inside a rich looking brief case.

Many people say the first five minutes is when the interviewer makes his or her impression of you. Some feel it is during the first 60 seconds. Therefore make it a point to put your best foot forward when interviewing. Smile often, be friendly, positive and enthusiastic.

Punctuality is imperative. If you are late then you can expect to be out of the running. So, look to be 15 minutes early to visit the rest room and make any last minute check ups. Sip some water, check yourself for hair, makeup, clean teeth and fresh breath. Wash your hands to remove any oils or sweat. Don't smoke or chew gum immediately prior to or during the interview-employers can often tell. If you have been perspiring during the day it might be best to take a quick shower or wash before your interview. Bring an extra cleanly pressed shirt to work just in case the one you have on gets soiled.

Upon entering the office of the employer, make an ally of the receptionist. Ask for a copy of the company newsletter or any info she may have on the firm or the interviewer while you wait. If you are able to develop rapport with her, she may tell you the inside story on the firm, the hiring status, and the interviewer. He or she can also help get you through to your contact in the future when you call in. Get his or her name and write it down. If you are provided with an application, fill it out neatly and completely. Applications are often used to screen candidates and are usually scrutinized.

When the employer is 15 minutes late check with the receptionist on the schedule. At 30 minutes late you should consider leaving a positive note with the receptionist stating, "I've assumed you've been unexpectedly and unavoidably detained. Perhaps we'd better reschedule our interview. I can be reached at (your phone number). I'll check in with you this afternoon or tomorrow."

When You First Meet

When the interviewer does arrive, make eye contact and smile. Stand and wait for him or her to offer you a handshake. Return the offer with a hearty handshake that should last a few fractions of a second longer than you feel comfortable doing, and start talking before you let go. Open the conversation by repeating the interviewer's name, making a sincere compliment, and asking a question that establishes a friendly tone. Remarks like the following are effective when coupled with a smile, a vibrant tone, and friendly body language.

Example 1:

"Hello Bob. It's a pleasure meeting you, especially after hearing such good reports of you at our local association. Winning that Henderson Shopping Mall project really gave you and the firm a reputation as market leaders. What I'd like to know is, where do you go from here after being awarded the largest shopping mall project in the Tri-States?"

Example 2:

"Good morning, Carole. It's a pleasure to meet you. I enjoyed our conversation last Tuesday, and I appreciate the help that you gave me in preparing for today."

Upon entering the interview room, do not touch anything on the interviewer's desk, and do not sit until asked. Begin establishing rapport by making comments on pictures or other items you see in the room of mutual interest. Once seated, allow him or her lead, even with the opening conversation. A few moments of silence can be to your advantage. It shows you are pensive and not verbose. Be careful with all you do. You will be under the microscope in the way you dress, your body language, facial expressions, posture, and what you say.

It's perfectly acceptable to ask the employer during the initial conversations of the interview if it's OK for you to take notes. Note taking communicates organization and by taking notes from your folder you also have convenient access to your prewritten notes, questions, and other materials. In taking notes, outline the interview's key points to help you when giving your answers to questions, and in summarizing your closing interview comments. You want the employer to believe you have heard and understood his or her interests and comments.

Managing the Interview

Try not to focus on whether you look good, sound good, or act good. Try to focus on the employer's needs, concerns and wants. Your answers as well should reflect the employer's needs and solving the employer's problems. Keep your eyes focused on the interviewer — not glaring but with friendly anticipation. Use the interviewer's name (never use the first name unless you are old friends). Throughout the interview make lots of eye contact to communicate honesty and

confidence. You will gain respect by being well mannered, self-assured, relaxed and articulate. Nod your head and verbally agree with the interviewer to communicate rapport.

Be flexible with your communication style and try to suit your style to the interviewer. Do not interrupt while being asked a question or given an answer- take notes if you have an escaping thought. Let the interviewer finish and even pause a second or two before you answer. Answer all questions briefly, clearly, and confidently. Never over explain or ramble. Do not lie, and do not contradict the interviewer. Answer sincerely as though you were speaking with a friend. Avoid controversial topics or comments. Stay positive with everything you say. Remember also it's fine to have a moment of silence to think about your answers. Taking time to think can make you look intelligent and measured in your response.

Avoid the body language signs of nervousness such as leg swinging, foot and finger tapping, hair twisting, lip biting, excessive hand movements, or the other habits you may have (ask your family and friends to tell you what signs to be aware of). Study the interviewer's body language since you need to see if he or she is comfortable with you. Adjust yourself accordingly.

If the employer gives you objections, see them as opportunities to help the employer better understand why he or she should hire you. If your background is criticized, do not become defensive and make excuses. Take it gracefully and admit where you may be lacking.

If the subject of money comes up, try to avoid giving an answer. You might want to ask them if they are offering you the job? Or state that you are flexible for the right opportunity and that you feel now is not the right time for you to be discussing money since you are still evaluating the opportunity.

Remember to try and enjoy the interviewer and build rapport. Concentrate on getting the interviewer to feel you are like he or she in philosophy and agreeable in nature. People want to hire other people who understand them, support them and are sensitive to their needs.

Additional Interviewing Tips

- There is nothing wrong with rescheduling your interview if are not prepared. Avoid late afternoon interviews when your energy level is at its lowest.
- If you are sick or cannot perform your best for any reason, it is always better to reschedule the interview.
- Confirm the interview with the employer the day before the interview to make sure everyone is still on schedule.
- Don't swear or use slang, sarcasm or pretentious vocabulary.
- Don't joke around or tell jokes.
- Scope out the turf if you can by driving to the interview location the day before.
- Don't show up too early since it makes the employer uncomfortable leaving you waiting and indicates you may be bad with scheduling. Visualize yourself getting the job.

- Use the pronoun we, us or our instead of I, me or my.
- Listen. Don't just sell yourself. You want to listen and ask questions if you don't understand.
- Learn the route for your interview before the interview.
- Don't answer with a simple yes or no. Explain answers whenever possible but be brief.
- If you have a meal interview, make sure to eat items that are neat to eat, easily cut and placed in your mouth so there are no spills or awkward chewing. Ask the interviewer what she or he recommends, or order what they get.
- Learn a few news items on current events, industry trends or events, and something on the employer.
- Be honest 100% of the time. Exaggeration and inaccurate information can cause immediate dismissal from consideration.
- Try to schedule your interview in the mid-week to avoid Monday blues or Friday impatience. Avoid the potential etiquette problems and distractions of lunch.
- Bring several copies of your resume.
- Bring only quality items. No throw away pens or cheap folders/briefcases.
- Do not accept any job offers on the spot. Give yourself at least 24 hours to think things through.

Closing the Interview

In the closing, ask the interviewer what he or she perceives your shortcomings to be, and be prepared to address them. Once you feel your best qualities are clear to the interviewer, don't oversell.

Make sure to summarize what the interviewer is looking for by giving them a rundown of your understanding. Let them know that the position sounds right for you, and ask about what the next step will be for you.

The goal of an interview is to get a fair offer, but if this is not possible the next best goal in closing the interview is to obtain an invitation to a second interview.

Example 1:

"John, what we've discussed today only confirms what I believed before our meeting. If I understand the position, you're looking for someone with a background in computer estimating on commercial and residential projects, someone who can put the full bid package together and manage a staff of five estimators is that correct? With my lectures at Tampa Tech Institute on computer estimating, and that fact that I've implemented the estimating program with my present firm, provides me expertise in computer estimating on commercial and residential projects. I've also led the bid team on three successful bids just this quarter, which should indicate my ability to handle full responsibility as your chief estimator. I'm more than enthusiastic about your

opportunity, John, and after having met you. I believe that this position is for me. What's our next step?"

Example 2:

"John, it's been a pleasure meeting you and I think you have an excellent opportunity here. Do you see any gaps between my qualifications and the requirements for the job? Based on our discussions, do you have any concerns about my ability to do well in this job?"

Example 3:

"I appreciate you spending this time with me. You have a good opportunity, and I can see how this position fits well with my goals. What is the next step in the hiring process, and when do you expect to make a decision? Should we try to schedule something for next week? When should I expect to hear from you? May I call you if I have any further questions?"

JOB INTERVIEW QUESTIONS EVERY CANDIDATE SHOULD KNOW

Frederick C. Hornberger, Jr.



<http://www.hmc.com>

<http://www.constructionexecutive.com>

JOB INTERVIEW QUESTIONS EVERY CANDIDATE SHOULD KNOW

One of the most powerful resources available is knowing the right questions to ask and how to effectively answer questions posed to you.

Ask questions you have already researched the answers to (e.g. what was your annual sales volume last year?).

When answering questions, do so in a way that emphasizes your key strengths (which you have rehearsed) and remember to keep your answers brief.

There are many resources available on the Internet, in bookstores or in local libraries that can provide you with examples of interviewing questions and answers. You might consider The Complete Q&A Job Interview Book published by John Wiley & Sons, and written by Jeffrey G. Allen, J.D.

Here are typical interview questions you should use in practice:

Questions You May Be Asked By An Employer:

1. Please describe your present job responsibilities. Which do you find most enjoyable? Which are most difficult, and why?

2. What was the best idea and the greatest accomplishment you contributed to your present employer? To previous employers?

3. What would you like to have accomplished in your present job that you have not? What interfered with this accomplishment?

4. What do you know about our company and the position we offer?

5. What particular strengths and weaknesses do you feel you would bring to the job? What would others say?

6. What do you think it takes to be successful in this job?

7. What elements are important to you and to your subordinates in attaining job satisfaction?

8. How does your previous experience relate to the job you are applying for?

9. What are your short- and long-term objectives for your career?

10. What have been your biggest frustrations in your career?

11. What are some things your present company and department might do to become more successful?

12. What are your hobbies and interests? How do they contribute to, or balance, the work you do professionally?

13. Tell me something about yourself.

14. How would you describe your personality to me? How do most of your friends and associates describe you?

15. Where do you see yourself with your career in 5 years?

16. How would your current employer feel, and what could you expect from him or her?

17. What distinguishes you from other applicants; why should we hire you?

18. What is it that you would like to do here at our company?

19. What is your current annual compensation?

20. What did you dislike at your last job?

21. Why are you considering leaving your present job?

22. Are you in a position to accept this job immediately? What would be involved in your accepting this position?

23. What sort of pay do you expect?

24. Why should I hire you?

25. What are your plans for the future?

26. Describe the characteristics that you feel would make for an ideal boss over our open position? Over you in particular?

Questions You May Wish To Ask The Employer:

1. What would you like to see in your ideal candidate? What do you think it takes to be successful in this position?

2. What are the responsibilities of this position, and which do you regard as most important?

3. Describe a typical day for someone holding this position.

4. What are the results expected of this position? What accomplishments will be expected?

5. What are the limits of my responsibility and authority?

6. What problems/opportunities exist with this position?

7. What make me right (or wrong) for this position?
8. What support will I receive to help me fulfill my responsibilities?
9. What are the strengths and weaknesses of my subordinates? What guidance and support do they expect of me?
10. Who will be my superior and what are his or her strengths and weaknesses? How does he/she manage people? What type of individual works best under this manager? Who else within the company may I speak to about this manager?
11. Are there any current projects in progress for which I will be responsible? If so, what is their status?
12. What criteria will be used to evaluate my performance? When are performance reviews scheduled?
13. What are the goals of the corporation? What are the goals of my department? What are the goals of this job?
14. Tell me about the department. Who are my peers? What are their strengths and weaknesses? What is the company culture or atmosphere?
15. What are the best and worst aspects of this job and this company?
16. How do you rate your competition?
17. Why did my predecessor leave this position?
18. Why did you come to work here and why have you stayed?
19. Where is a person likely to advance after performing this job well?

Illegal Hiring Questions

There are many questions employers cannot ask an employee. If confronted with any of these, or if you simply do not want to answer a personal or awkward question simply say, "Please explain to me how this question applies to the position." Usually the interviewer will change the question. However you do not have to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable.

Strong federal legislation bars employers from discriminating against any person on the basis of sex, race, age, national origin, or religion, or disability, or against workers age 40 or older. (Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VII, and the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, and Americans with Disabilities Act of 1991 Title I.)

Typical illegal questions include:

- How old are you?
- Where were you born?
- Do you hold a citizenship in other countries?
- What is your medical history?
- What is your religious affiliation?
- Do you have children?
- Have you ever changed your name?
- Have you ever been arrested?
- What holidays do you celebrate?
- Do you have a disability?
- Do you have a history of substance or alcohol abuse?
- Does your spouse work and where?
- Have you ever declared bankruptcy?

WHAT TO DO AFTER A JOB INTERVIEW

Frederick C. Hornberger, Jr.



<http://www.hmc.com>

<http://www.constructionexecutive.com>

WHAT TO DO AFTER A JOB INTERVIEW

After the interview, you should immediately write down what happened. This includes the interviewer's name, title, areas of interest, key questions and concerns. Update your portfolio of research information with the newly acquired information. This will help to better prepare you for the next line of interviews as well as aid you in preparing a good "Thank You" letter. If they do not get back with you as expected, feel free to call the interviewer in order to inquire about the next step of the interviewing process. There is nothing wrong with communicating a proactive, positive approach for securing the job you want.

The "Thank You" letter should be written to each person you meet during an interview. Write a "Thank You" letter that communicates appreciation for their time and interest in you. This is an invaluable reflection of your good character, and provides you an opportunity to express the things you wish you had said during your meeting. Offer new information such as copies of articles/references, news clippings, or work samples that substantiates your claims.

Here is your opportunity to send articles and documents of interest to employers. It also gives you an opportunity to mention those things that you forgot during the interview. However, make sure to keep it simple. Stress three or four reasons why you are the right person for the position.

End the letter by confirming your next appointment. This letter should be similar to your cover letter in style, but you should now clearly state how your top qualifications match their specific requirements. Your follow up letter is almost always read from the beginning to the end. Therefore, it needs not to be brief. Have someone else edit the final version for you.

Example:

"Thank you for your time last Tuesday. It was a pleasure meeting you and learning about your department's goal to bid \$100 million in building projects over the next twelve months. It came as a surprise that you were the builders on the Tampa Commerce Building. I understood that Jones Construction Co. did all the work for Powell Enterprises. You should be proud of securing that contract.

After meeting with you and your staff, I am even more convinced that our philosophies on the marketplace — and the way to approach bidding — are exceptionally compatible. My training in the use of Timberline computer estimating will be well suited to the new software you've implemented. I also think my three years of management experience as Chief Estimator, and graduate business degree, fits well into your position profile.

I found it particularly interesting that most of your staff competes in the AAA softball league. Did you know that they could use a Center Fielder like me? I was pleased with your

A.G.C. involvement; your chapter supports the Young Leader of the Year program. As you know, I was given that award in 1988.

My wife Mary and I have given this opportunity a great deal of thought, and we both feel ready to move back to Tampa. I would like to meet with you again next Thursday to ask a few more questions. At that time, I would like to show you a sample bid of mine that I feel will be of interest to you. Please call to let me know if you have an extra few minutes on that day. As an addendum, I am attaching a copy of the article that the A.G.C. wrote about me receiving Young Leader of the Year plaque. I'm also enclosing a sample of my work on the Talbert School project that we discussed. Once again, Fred, it was a pleasure meeting with you. I look forward to seeing you on Thursday."

SPECIAL JOB INTERVIEW CONSIDERATIONS

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SPECIAL JOB INTERVIEW CONSIDERATIONS

Overcoming Nervousness on A Job Interview

Nervousness is a normal reaction to an interview. You should be nervous so don't be alarmed by it. Professional speakers and entertainers use nervousness by harnessing the energy from these overactive nerves and focusing them on increased performance and alertness. Nervousness can actually be the catalyst for one of your best performances ever.

If you find yourself overly nervous, go to the restroom and push hard on the wall to transfer the stress to the wall and refocus your body. Many public speakers swear by this. To create the same effect during the interview, you can grab the sides of your seat or push your hands together. If you find yourself becoming anxious, try breathing deeply and slowly.

Remember that the interviewer is probably as nervous as you are. Interviewers are ordinary people who face the same personal issues that you do. Try to imagine the interviewer as being your neighbor cutting the grass on Saturday morning — or getting groceries at the store.

Try to relax. Remind yourself that you are one of the finalists and have already been perceived as qualified for the position. Envision the interview as a cooperative effort (not a solo performance) where both try to complete the assignment of maintaining an interview.

Another key to reducing nervousness is to stop focusing on you and to focus on the interviewer instead. Remind yourself that the interviewer is benefiting from your knowledge and experiences, and that you are simply trying to help them understand how you can assist them.

Your Appearance Matters On A Job Interview

Appearance is a major part of creating good “chemistry.” Many recruiters claim the image you project may be more important than the technical skill you possess. Remember you only have one chance at making the right first impression.

Your goal is to choose an outfit that matches the place where you are interviewing. Dress conservatively, but with quality and style. Everyone has his/her own personal preferences when it comes to style. Choosing the wrong style can sometimes be disastrous.

Men can't go wrong wearing a top-quality dark suit, an expensive-looking white or pale shirt (no stripes or monograms), and a pure silk tie. Avoid wearing any jewelry except a wedding band. Shoes should be black and well polished.

Be meticulously groomed. Get a hair cut or trim beforehand in order to look neat and clean. Always be clean-shaven. If you have a dark shadow in the afternoons, bring a shaver. Groom your fingernails so they are clean and filed.

While women have a broader range of appropriate clothing choices for an interview, they should also try to steer away from anything non-conservative. Fashionable, but conservative, is usually the most appropriate style. Women should wear dark suits (solids, pinstripes or muted plaids) with white or colored long-sleeve blouses. The material should be a wrinkle free mixture of natural and synthetic fibers. If you must wear a skirt, make sure the length is to the knee (or slightly above). Women should always wear hose in neutral or skin tones shades. No high heels should be worn.

Accessories should be kept to a minimum. Earrings should be studs (not dangling). Hair should be off the face and pulled back. Choose to bring either a brief case or a purse — not both.

In regards to perfume, it is better to use none than to risk offending someone (perfume scent is very personal).

What About Paying Your Own Way On A Job Interview?

If you are unsuccessful in scheduling an interview, you might offer to pay your way since you are confident of being the right fit for the job. Some candidates will even offer to work at no charge for 30 days to prove they are the right choice. However, if an employer is unwilling to schedule an interview, or to pay a candidate's interviewing expenses, then the employer is probably not going to hire the candidate.

Most employers would rather find a local or regional candidate because they are concerned about the rising costs of relocation, and the risk that he/she (or the family) may not like the area. Consequently, some employers are reluctant to consider candidates outside of the region.

Unless it's the job of the century, you should not offer to pay your way. If the employer is not comfortable enough to pay for your airfare, they will probably not be comfortable paying for your relocation. In the end, you might suggest a phone interview in order to make sure you think the investment is worth it.

Job Interviewing When You've Been Fired Or Laid Off

It is best not to volunteer this information until after you have had a chance to successfully sell yourself at the interview. If confronted, you should not try to hide it. Do not deny taking responsibility for where you may have gone wrong.

Most employers try to get employees to resign when confronted with a termination. This benefits the employee in seeking new employment and eliminates any potential lawsuits for wrongful termination. Always get your employer to agree to your resignation and to put it in writing.

Once resigned, you can freely communicate that you left the company for a number of reasons (e.g. you were seeking greater opportunities for growth and greater challenges).

If you are concerned that the employer may not support your resignation story once you are gone, it may be wise to tell the new employer that you did have a difference of opinion on how the Comco project should be run. Maybe there was a management or procedural change that resulted in your leaving. There could be any number of reasons used as valid explanations.

If laid off, you should communicate that many other employees were laid off for similar reasons. Perhaps you can say that sales dropped and, therefore, layoffs commenced. State that this was beyond your control, and that other senior personnel absorbed your position.

If it was your fault, admit to the error stating that you believe you have learned from your mistake. Never try and blame other people for what happened to you. Demonstrate that you understand where you failed and how you will avoid repeating this again.

You might want to state something similar to the following: “My termination was, in fact, my fault. I had personal problems that have now straightened up. At the time, I was frequently late and my supervisor had to cut back. With my poor attendance record, he was given a good reason to terminate me.”

Job Interviewing if You Have No Degree or The Wrong Degree

Most companies will agree that a good education does not mean a good employee. In fact, there is little proof that those with college education achieve more than those without it.

Those having a college education should have greater communication skills and a wider knowledge base than those without a degree, but this is not always the case. There are many intelligent and successful people who have not pursued a college degree for a variety of reasons (e.g. entered the work force due to personal reasons or due to lack of financial resources after high school).

You can always say that you are willing to pursue a degree if the employer considers it necessary and was willing to finance it. However, you might simply ask what the degree would do for you and the company?

Job Interviewing When You Don't Have Enough Experience Or The Wrong Experience

Often the best way to handle the issue of not having enough experience is to stress the fact that it is often easier to teach someone to do things the right way the first time rather than to try and reprogram someone who has already developed the wrong habits.

Experience and work skills are often transferable. Even though someone may not have retail management experience, the fact that they have restaurant or customer management

experience indicates that they are capable of managing the same type of customers — and have developed the same type of skills. Try to present your experience and skills to show how they apply to the new position. Taking a successful salesperson from one industry and training him/her to sell in a different industry is often easier than taking someone with a limited success record with the right product or industry experience, and teaching them to be successful.

Overcome the employer's concern by selling the skills and qualifications that make you a good hire. Stress the importance of having the right attitude, a good education, good people skills, a history of successful performance, and the motivation to learn the new product line.

Maintaining Confidentiality When Job Interviewing

It's common practice for all employer/candidate relationships to be understood as a relationship based on confidentiality. However, there are many incidents where candidates or employers become vulnerable. Always stress the strict confidential nature of your meeting with the recruiter or employer before and during the meeting. State that no references are to be checked without your prior approval.

To avoid raising unusual eyebrows at work, it might be best to make the interview after work hours, before work, on the weekend, and at a safe place (airport or hotel lobby) that would suggest a chance encounter. If you must take a day off during the week, you might want to consider taking a vacation or sick day. The worst mistake you could make is to come to work in a suit and tie when you normally would wear a sports jacket with no tie. Don't look or act suspicious.

Developing Good “Chemistry” and “Like-ability” On A Job Interview

Developing chemistry is perhaps one of the most important aspects of getting hired and getting others to like you. Many professional recruitment firms will state that “chemistry” is perhaps the strongest reason why one candidate gets hired over another. The basic principal is that people like people who are like themselves.

Learning to develop good “chemistry” with interviewers is simply learning to develop good people skills. Hiring and promotion decisions are often made on the basis of a candidate's “people skills.” Personality can override credentials. Being seen as a person who will fit into the team can gain you entry into a firm and speed your promotion through the ranks. So your career — and the people you work with every day — deserve your best interpersonal skills.

Career advancement requires one to be likable. Develop a considerate personality. Be diplomatic and equally polite to your colleagues at all levels. Maintain a relaxed and open bearing. When approaching others, be sensitive to their point of view, their needs, and personal preferences. Find areas of common interest rather than stressing your differences. Accommodate

their level of education and experience, and stretch yourself to put them at ease. Be a good listener. Draw people out. A good book regarding developing relationships is Dale Carnegie's "How to Win Friends and Influence People"; Pocketbooks, NY. The concept of mirroring is very effective in building rapport and "like-ability." Find similarities and focus on them (i.e. methods of doing work, philosophy on projects, personal hobbies, childhood neighborhoods, etc.). Listen to the questions, statements and feelings. People like to be listened to more than they like to listen. You can show "like-ability" by summarizing, rephrasing, and playing back what the interviewer says. Everyone enjoys working with an agreeable person. Smiling communicates that you are an agreeable person.

One helpful technique is to ask open-ended questions rather than yes-or-no questions. "What are your feelings about..." "What's your analysis of..." and "Tell me about..." are more inviting than "Don't you agree that..."

Make a strong effort to remember names. Remembering names of your colleagues and associates (especially if your contact is brief and occasional), reflects your respect. The sweetest sound, it's been said, is the sound of one's name on the lips of another person. When trying to recall names, repeat the name of a person when you first meet, and use it at least twice in your initial conversation. Thinking and saying the name (while looking at the person) helps imprint the name/face relationship. Word association can also help you remember names. If Maple Cox is a new acquaintance, try associating her with a fox resting under a maple tree — that is, if Maple has a relaxed personality. Otherwise, you might associate the fox jumping into the maple tree. The sillier or more unusual your image, the more likely you will retain it.

Treat your support staff and peers with respect. If you give them encouragement and rewards for a job well done, they will try even harder the next time. Seek your staff's advice and admit your own limitations. Be specific about your needs, and follow up with a compliment, a thank you note, or a phone call. Those who help you will be pleased that you recognized and valued their skills.

A word of caution: be sincere in your interactions. Don't use people or flatter them just to grease the wheels of your career. Most people can spot a phony. Self-centered managers often feel stymied in their careers. Why? Because their coworkers throw stumbling blocks in their path. When you're being considered for promotion, your coworkers will be asked their opinion of your work and character. That's when any selfishness or insensitivity will come back to haunt you.

Dealing With Employment Contracts on A Job Interview

There are many pros and cons to having an employment contract. Generally it is thought that candidates should not ask for an employment contract unless they have special

circumstances regarding their compensation package. Most written agreements can be in the form of an offer letter that covers a candidate's concerns such as severance pay.

The problem with an employment contract is that it delays the hiring process and often complicates the hire to the point of jeopardizing it. Contracts will involve lawyers, and lawyers will dig up worst-case scenarios that cause both parties to give concessions only if they get an equivalent return (such as one year's severance pay for three year's non-compete and trade secret confidentiality). Some contracts will guarantee certain bonus pay from an employer in exchange for candidate reimbursement of relocation costs should the candidate leave before the first 12 months of employment. The battle over details often causes both parties to become adversarial. This is no way to begin an employer/employee relationship. They are always double-edged swords and need to be dealt with very carefully.

Try to add into your offer package any issues you would like to address in an employment contract. If your goal from an employment contract standpoint is to get severance pay should you be terminated for anything other than illegal acts or blatant negligence, then request severance pay to be added to your letter of employment. Severance pay is sometimes offered to managers and executives, and usually ranges between three and twelve months, with four months being the average). If you want a "golden parachute" then expect "golden handcuffs" in return.

Drug Testing on A Job Interview

All large or national employers require applicants to take a drug test. It is legal. In fact, many of the smaller employers require it as well. If you want to work for a company that does not require a drug test, ask before the interview if they require a drug test. Some tests can determine drug use up to a year prior to being tested.

If you have taken any drugs prior to being tested, it is a good idea to tell the employer that you did use the substance, but do not use it any longer. You might also suggest that you would be willing to be re-tested periodically if required.

Job Interviewing With Psychological and Pre-Employment Testing

When making an employment decision, employers often have little to go on except for a first impression and a few references. There is also the rising cost of hiring and turnover. Consequently, many of today's employers are turning to psychological and pre-employment testing in order to help them better evaluate candidates. There are many types of testing such as skill, integrity, personality, aptitude and interests tests. Tests can also take the form of job applications, job interviews, credit and reference checks, and drug tests. Some tests require interviews with licensed psychologists, but someone in Human Resources administers most at the employer's office.

Most tests attempt to compare candidate personality and interests to predetermined profiles submitted by the employer for specific job roles. However, some tests go to greater lengths to identify candidate intelligence and to see whether a candidate has personal problems in his/her life, are nonconformists, have authority or hostility problems, and to identify a host of other qualities that could pose a problem to the employer.

Few candidates like taking tests. Refusing to take the test means refusing to be considered for the position. Is there a way to beat the test? Some tests are possible to beat. The key is to have performed sufficient research on the company and the job position so that you have a good idea of how the “right” or ideal candidate will answer the questions. Always try to answer positively, and show confidence by rating yourself higher than you honestly feel. You should also make yourself appear happy and stable. Most people do not like the idea of being tested. However, the good news about testing is that candidates should want to work with a firm that is willing to invest money and time to find the best and brightest talent. Testing also ensures standardization creating a level playing field where all candidates are treated equally. Before interviewing, you might try to learn what type of testing is required. Ask how the test is relevant to the job.

Preparing for A Job Interview

Always be prepared to support claims made in your resume (or in the interview) with quality references. Whenever you perform well on a task, it’s important to collect letters of accommodation so that your success gets documented. Make copies of your achievements, awards and written references. References should come from previous managers, suppliers and customers. Employers look at business references, but will sometimes consider a personal reference if it is from a recognized leader.

Before submitting references to a potential employer, make sure to contact your references and prepare them. In order to prepare the references, stress the skills that the employer will be looking for.

SHOULD AN EXECUTIVE PLACE A FOLLOW-UP CALL AFTER AN INTERVIEW?

Frederick C. Hornberger, Jr.



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SHOULD AN EXECUTIVE PLACE A FOLLOW-UP CALL AFTER AN INTERVIEW?

What can an executive do when the interview seemed to go well, a quality thank you letter was submitted, yet they don't hear back from the employer? There are some appropriate actions one might take in order to re-engage the employer without appearing needy.

Executive hires are very complex. Even in the best circumstances, decisions are rarely made quickly or predictably. It's not uncommon for candidates (who are considered excellent choices) to be put on hold for weeks or months waiting for feedback. Even though it's impolite and reflects poorly on the employer, in today's marketplace it's a common occurrence. Executive level positions are rarely decided upon with one, two or even three meetings.

With employers, what goes on in the background is usually a host of issues that have nothing to do with their interest (or lack of interest) in a candidate. Executive positions often require timing and commitment from multiple leaders, directors, and owners. The position may take on several major changes (from the job specification throughout the interview process) before a final decision is made as to what type of executive is needed. Typically, employers learn a great deal by interviewing executives from competitive firms. This instigates new ideas on corporate policy, market pursuits, organizational structure and pay.

Theoretically employers have a schedule in mind when they begin interviewing for an executive position. Given the significance and potential consequence of most executive hires, inevitably schedules and decisions are delayed. Unfortunately, it is common for employers not to follow up with executive candidates simply because they don't have an answer or can't offer an adequate explanation regarding the next step.

If the executive has not had response from the employer within a week from the last meeting, it is considered good practice for the candidate to place a follow-up call to the employer. The call should be rehearsed and scripted so that the executive knows what to say in a positive, confident and courteous manner. Executives should explain that they are enquiring about the status of the position. Since they have not heard back from the employer, they would like to know whether or not they are still being considered. They should communicate that they enjoyed their previous meeting, see a potentially good fit, and would like to continue pursuing the opportunity. Executives should always try to establish a specific time and date for a follow-up meeting.

If several weeks or months go by and there is still no further contact by the employer, it is appropriate to follow up with direct contact (via phone or mail) in order to push for closure. The candidate should let the employer know that they believe the employer is a good match. At the same time, they would like to know where they stand before pursuing other offers.

With today's voice mail, it is common for executive candidates to be forced to leave a voice message rather than to directly reach the employer. Candidates who leave a message should be upbeat and friendly — and encourage the employer to return their phone call. Candidates should never leave more than two voice messages (taking into consideration that the lack of response might mean they did not get the position).

NEGOTIATING YOUR INCOME



“Well done. I like our young employees to be aggressive, Wiloby.”

Frederick C. Hornberger, Jr.



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NEGOTIATING YOUR INCOME

*“The darkest hour of any man’s life is when he sits down to plan
how to get money without earning it.”
— Horace Greeley*

Do you dread negotiation? It’s not irrational; few people enjoy butting heads with inflexible, hard-nosed, all-or-nothing adversaries. Whether it happens in a car dealer’s showroom, realtor’s office, personnel office — or even at a flea market stall — it’s no fun when you can’t reach a meeting of minds.

The good news is, negotiation doesn’t have to be a win/lose game in which the best player wins. In fact, when it comes to negotiating your income, that’s exactly the outcome you want to avoid. If you win and your employer loses, you lose in the long run. Inevitably, your employer will start looking for someone who can perform your function at less extortionary rates. If you lose and your employer wins, well, you lose.

So your goal going into negotiation must be to secure the best possible compensation package you deserve and can justify based on skills, past performance, and market conditions.

Assuming that your work itself is satisfactory, good negotiating skills are the key to getting the maximum possible increase in pay. Over a lifetime, these skills can sometimes double your income for the same quality and quantity of work. Yet few people spend time learning to be good income negotiators. Most people would rather let their raises “happen” instead of taking charge of their income growth.

The sooner you learn to negotiate, the sooner you’ll start reaping the rewards. Unfair as it may seem, employers tend to prefer those candidates who already earn a greater income. While these candidates cost more to employ, their higher incoming salaries are assumed to reflect greater competence, initiative, and achievement. So, it’s triply in your interest to pursue income increases at every legitimate opportunity. One, you immediately increase your income each time you succeed. Two, you make yourself more desirable as a candidate for your next position. ‘Three, you increase your future income; the higher your salary/benefit package going into a new job, the better the offer a prospective employee must make to attract you.

Whether you’re looking for a raise and promotion within your current company, or looking for greener pastures, the following strategies apply.

1. Prepare before you proceed.

“I’m so broke I can’t even pay attention.”

Negotiating a significant jump in income requires research on the negotiator, firm, and industry. You must be familiar with the company’s wage limits and fringe benefit options for the job in question, and with the style, thinking, and perspective of the person with whom you will be negotiating. Explore the types of compensation programs available in the industry and the industry-wide income levels typical for persons with your background and experience. Try to determine how much authority the interviewer will have to discuss salary and fringe benefits.

Contact industry associations, executive recruiters, and competitive companies for salary ranges, bonus programs, and fringe benefit packages. Research library references including the Occupational Outlook Handbook and the American Almanac of Jobs and Salaries. Also, independent research companies like the Hay Consulting Group (212-974-3800) offer industry data on average salary levels for specific positions.

Before your negotiation, set specific income and benefit goals, develop acceptable trade-offs among these elements, and identify areas in which you will be willing to make concessions. Keep in mind that it’s not how much you’re worth, but how much they think you’re worth, that counts. Also, examine alternate routes to the compensation you desire. These may include changing employers, changing positions within your present company, or becoming self-employed. The less desperate you feel about attaining your desired income through one course of action, the more vigorously you can negotiate to get it.

Remember that you are negotiating a total compensation package. Weigh pure dollars against all benefits — perks, automobile allowances, guaranteed incentive and bonus, commissions, insurance, country club privileges, financial and legal assistance, first class air passage, four-week paid vacation, job title, reporting relationships, relocation package, compensation reviews, training and educational programs, promotional opportunities, expense allowances, travel requirements, severance terms, secretary or support assistance, car phone — whatever.

One industrial troubleshooter I know earned \$6,500 per year in 30 minutes just by researching his industry and having a ready tradeoff. In negotiating with a potential new employer, this man had reached agreement on every point except salary. The employer wasn’t budging from a figure \$7,500 beneath what the applicant felt he was worth.

“In my then-current job,” this man recalls, “I had calculated the monthly revenue I generated for my employer through billable hours and warranty claims avoidance. It turned out to be about \$12,000 per month more than my salary.”

“I also knew that the position for which I was applying had been open for two months; experts in my field are rare. So I pointed out that it would cost the company less to hire me on the spot at my desired salary than to wait a month and hire another applicant at the lower salary — if they could find one. They wavered. So I offered to use my new personal car for regional site visits at a fair reimbursement rate. (I prefer my car over their fleet cars anyhow.) That clinched it. They offered me \$6,500 more and I happily took it.”

Identify your prospective employer’s goals by trying to anticipate what offers you will be made. Run through all possible scenarios you may encounter in the negotiating phase. Set limits you will accept, and be prepared to walk away if your terms can’t be met — assuming they are reasonable and realistic. In the early stages of the negotiation, let the negotiator know you are interested only in an exceptional opportunity. You thereby set the stage so that the interviewer is unlikely to make you a low offer.

2. Choose a conducive setting.

Choose an environment for the negotiation in which both you and the interviewer feel comfortable. If possible, avoid distracting events such as dinner, and distracting settings such as lounges or lobbies.

Make sure the person you’re meeting has the authority to make the final decision. Otherwise, delay until someone with authority can meet with you.

3. Always negotiate in person.

Negotiating in person gives you the greatest control. Face-to-face meetings provide the chance to read and exchange body language, use silence constructively, make eye contact, and in general enjoy a much richer and more subtle communication. Less personal means of negotiation — phone calls and/or the mails — will almost always result in a less satisfactory outcome.

One sales engineer told me the difference it made to negotiate in the office of her future boss. “The minute I walked in, I noticed pictures of racing sailboats on his wall. Well, I’m a nationally-ranked Hobie Cat racer, so we wound up swapping great racing stories for 20 minutes before we began talking business. I got the job — not only because we built a personal rapport, but because our good feelings convinced my boss that I’d warm up his firm’s prospects, too.

“By phone,” she concedes, “I never would have had the visual cues that got things moving in the right direction.”

4. Never negotiate with strangers.

Build rapport early in the meeting. Creating an open, relaxed, friendly environment develops trust and mutual respect. Start negotiation proper only after you and your counterpart(s) are comfortable with one another.

5. Establish mutual goals.

Concentrate on establishing and reinforcing points of agreement. Continually reiterate your feeling of mutual compatibility and cite the positive attributes of both parties. This creates a bond of harmony to help overcome the differences which are likely to arise in negotiation. If you hit a sticking point, reviewing your points of agreement and shared goals will rebuild your accord with your negotiators.

6. Let the negotiator raise the subject of money

“To negotiate, you’ve got to care, but not that much.”
— ***Herb Cohen***

The first person to mention money usually pays for his impatience. Let the employer bring it up as many times as necessary — without talking numbers yourself — until you feel ready. Getting the employer to want you is crucial to maintaining the upper hand in your negotiating.

If the question of money arises too soon, tell the interviewer you need to learn more about the company and the job opportunity before discussing your financial needs. If the employer still persists, ask if you are being offered the job. If pressed to give a salary figure, speak in terms of the job’s worth and your ability to do it well. Let your interviewer know that, while money is not your main objective, you believe in excellent compensation for excellent performance.

A good answer to the salary question is to quote another offer you’ve been made, provided it’s attractive. You may announce the salary you would expect or answer that it depends on the total compensation package.

You might also respond by saying that salary is the third item on your priority list. Number one is making sure you can work well with the employer, and number two is being the right candidate for the job. You can also invite the company to offer you what it feels you are worth based on your skills and accomplishments. Your weakest response is to divulge your present earnings. Or worse, to say, “I’m willing to accept a comparable offer with good earning potential.” This will typically net you a zero-to-ten percent increase, with an accompanying song and dance about the many intangible benefits of your new position. If you must quote your current salary, tell the employer that you will be getting a salary review, and you expect at least a

10% increase. If this isn't true, make it true by having such a discussion with your current employer.

If you are ready to discuss money and your negotiator still hasn't brought it up, you can move her in that direction if the mood is highly positive and you feel that she really wants you for the job. You might say, for example: "I feel very comfortable with you, the position available, and the quality of this corporation. Now, where do we go from here?"

Remember, don't be impatient! Your ultimate goal is to get the interviewer to make the best possible offer first. This offer is simply the opening gambit as you begin further negotiations in earnest.

7. Seek the employer's position before stating your own.

Just as you should allow the employer to mention money first, you should also encourage the employer to mention his or her other terms — relocation, starting date, car allowance, salary limits, job title, and the like — before revealing yours. Probe carefully to see what he or she really wants. Size up the importance of any points of disagreement. You need to gain an understanding of the employer's position to plan your proper strategy. Don't let the negotiator pressure you into accepting an offer until you feel satisfied you are fully informed.

8. Keep good records of your achievements.

Throughout your career you should develop the habit of documenting everything that reflects positive performance. Save (and when appropriate, solicit) written letters of recognition. Note the overtime you work, the goals you achieve, the money you save your employer, the bonuses you earn, etc. Be specific. Having all the pertinent facts at your disposal will help you build a credible case for your worth to the company.

A colleague of mine helped place a substance abuse counselor who began in this field as a volunteer. Years before, this man's hometown paper had devoted a Sunday feature story to his volunteer work and the crisis intervention center he had helped found. "I made this article an attachment to the resume," says the counselor. "It said things about me that might have sounded egotistical had I said them — and carried more credibility as an outside source, too. That article, as much as any one thing, helped me win my current position."

9. Never make an easy concession.

When you make a concession, let the employer know it's difficult. Make small concessions first. Say to the employer: "If I give this up for you, what will you do for me?" or "will you give me this in return?" You can afford to trade a few chips from your pile for an immediate concession from your negotiator in return. But remember, the value of your

concession diminishes rapidly so the time to work your trade is before you concede a point for keeps.

Sometimes the best way to reduce your ultimate concession is to flinch in surprise and then be silent for a few moments when a figure is given. You may even slowly repeat the figure and fall silent again. If employer becomes anxious about your apparent resistance, he or she may sweeten the offer.

10. Always counteroffer.

When you do respond to an offer, make a counteroffer with a figure a little higher than you expect to get. The result? You may gain something without having to give up something later in the negotiation. However, keep your ultimate goal in mind: a win/win resolution. You'll have to work every day with your negotiator, so it's important to be reasonable as well as self-respecting.

11. Accept when the time is right.

If your instincts tell you the time is right for getting the best offer, push for a decision immediately. Sometimes an employer will be more receptive to making an offer right after a long, impressive interview, than after a thoughtful delay and a cooling-off period. Emotions play a major role in every negotiation, so settle when the employer's emotions are most strongly in your favor.

12. Get your agreement in writing. Better yet — write it yourself!

As you accept an offer, establish your expectation of receiving a written employment agreement by a specified time. A written agreement reflects a firm commitment, and clarifies what is expected of both you and your employer.

As part of your agreement, insist on a three- to six-month severance contract. This protects you if things don't work out. It protects you from a company merger, takeover, new boss, and similar surprises. It also insures fairer treatment from the employer. The employer will not grant a severance contract unless he or she feels you are right for the job. He or she will also work harder in meeting the agreement to avoid having to settle a severance contract.

Offer to write the agreement yourself, as this allows you to ensure the inclusion of all details to which you and your employer agree. Following is a sample agreement letter. If you are switching employers, do not turn in your resignation until after you have the signed letter of agreement in your hands.

Here is a good example of an agreement letter:

Mr. Fred Ward
Tampa Builders
1131 Vista Drive, Tampa, Florida 28804

March 19, 1991

RE: Offer & Acceptance of Employment

Dear Fred:

This letter will serve to confirm your offer, and my acceptance, of employment with Tampa Builders. The offer consists of the following elements:

- A. Position - Chief Estimator
- B. Reporting Relationship - Directly to the President and C.E.O.
- C. Responsibilities - Preparing total bid packages for submission, setting budgets and profit margins for bids; managing entire estimation staff; overseeing pricing, value engineering, quantity takeoff, sub-contract negotiations, etc.
- D. Compensation
 - 1. Salary - \$52,000 per year (\$1,000 per week)
 - 2. Car Allowance - \$400 monthly. Additionally, with the car allowance is included major credits for use on fuel, lubricants, tires, and repairs.
- E. Fringe Benefits - As described in your Salaried Employees Handbook.
- F. Moving Expenses - You will reimburse me for relocation to the Tampa area. The maximum amount of reimbursement shall not exceed \$3,000.
- G. Starting Date - April 15, 1991
- H. Performance Reviews - Annually at the calendar year, however I will be given a review six months from the date of employment.
- I. Drug Testing - I will be required to have a drug test performed within one week prior to the commencement of my employment. My test may be taken at Michael Laboratories, 3856 Elk Avenue, Fort Myers, Florida. The 704 form needs to be given to Michael Laboratories at the time of my test.

It is my understanding that you agree to the above summarized offer. I will return the drug testing application, consent for drug analysis, and inserts from the two handbooks within the next week or so. Please initial or sign here _____ and return this letter to me.

Fred, on a personal note, I am looking forward to joining the team. I am confident, with the management experience that I possess, that I can contribute to us being the strongest hard-bid contractor in Southwestern Florida. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call.

Very Truly Yours,

Arthur T. Advancer
Senior Estimator

ATA/ct

13. Guarantee your performance, and honor your guarantee.

You can generally negotiate better terms for yourself if you are willing to commit to specific performance goals. Doing so also works in your favor when it's time to review your performance; these goals provide a ready-made, tailor-made yardstick.

Once you commit to performance goals, follow through. Negotiations with employers are a continuous cycle, beginning the day your arrive and extending until your next salary review when the cycle begins anew.

Further thoughts on negotiation

Despite the above guidelines, each negotiating situation is different. Any two employees are rarely compensated identically for the same position. Each employee and each hiring process is unique. There are no firm precedents in negotiating.

For additional insights into proven negotiating techniques, you may want to consult How to Make \$1,000 a Minute Negotiating Your Salaries and Raises, by Jack Chapman and Steven Sanders, Ten Speed Press. Two other excellent treatments of the subject are: Getting to Yes by Roger Fisher, Penguin Books, and You Can Negotiate Anything by Herb Cohen, Citadel Press.

Employment contracts (versus simple agreements) are unnecessary unless the job or compensation package is unusually complex. Moreover, employment contracts are beyond the scope of this brief text. If you anticipate negotiating an employment contract, an excellent guide to this subject is Perks and Parachutes, by John Tarrant, Linden Press.

WHEN BEGINNING A NEW JOB

Frederick C. Hornberger, Jr.



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WHEN BEGINNING A NEW JOB

A new job always presents an exciting opportunity. It often means a better salary, working conditions and lifestyle. Sometimes, though, it's best to start a new job cautiously. It can be filled with anxiety and confusion and become one of the most stressful events in a person's life. It need not be.

If you simply take time to understand your environment, your job, and the people you will be working with, you should enjoy a smooth transition. The following guidelines will help you move successfully into your new position, make you look good on the job, and ensure that your first few weeks are a pleasant "honeymoon" for you and your new employer.

The honeymoon

Each organization plays a different version of the same game, so don't panic when even simple things seem difficult. Set out to know your work environment and the position that has now become yours. You should become familiar with the facilities, tools and means available as well as understand what your supervisor, co-workers and subordinates expect of you.

Begin orienting yourself to your new surroundings. Use your first few weeks to get used to the feel of your new job, and the people you will be working with.

It's important to move carefully and slowly during this honeymoon period. Ask questions and listen more. Review your predecessor's records. Observe, study and learn how things are done and by whom. Find out what specific support is available to you.

As appropriate as it may seem, resist the temptation to reject your predecessor's plans and forge ahead with your own ideas. Instead, make your agenda appear like their unfinished business. The purpose is to clearly and completely understand what you're dealing with so that any change brought about by you will be most effective and perceived as fair. During this initial time, make certain to observe all company rules and follow proper business etiquette.

For example, don't drink alcohol during the day, no matter what colleagues do. Be conservative and moderate in everything except your enthusiasm for your work and support of others. If you have to vent some of your energy and enthusiasm in getting started, allow yourself to be aggressive with your production, work ethics, and goals.

Honeymooning with your boss

When you have your first meeting with the new boss, ask her to clearly define her expectations, your specific responsibilities and the limits of your authority. Early on, seek to develop rapport, and ask for continued feedback and constructive criticism so that you can learn

to be effective. Make a special effort to understand her needs. Work doubly hard to make sure you meet them.

Many people have trouble saying “no” to special projects or requests that they may not be able to complete. Make sure that you do not accept them. Do whatever you said you would do — regardless of how insignificant it may seem. You do not want to be viewed as someone who does not keep his word. If you say you will be somewhere at 7:30 AM, be there ten minutes early. If you agree to look over a proposal, or return someone’s phone call, or turn off the lights when you’re done, you should make a written note to yourself and keep it viable until you’ve fulfilled your commitment.

It is a good idea to make certain that your boss knows whether you welcome specific advancement opportunities. Let her know if you are open to learning specific skills. Tell her whether you are willing to tackle additional responsibility in the areas that will help you advance. You should also work with your new boss to establish standards of performance, which will prepare you for your next advancement. After all, this new job could be a stepping-stone to another promotion.

Honeymooning with your co-workers and subordinates

For the first week or two, it will be to your advantage to focus on the “people side” of the business. Set out to meet people on a warm, personal level.

As the “new kid on the block,” employees around the office will be watching you closely. Be particularly mindful of your attitude and behavior. Smile whenever you greet someone. You are the one exploring new territory.

Peers will want to adjust to your style of management, so you should try to be consistent in everything you do. Because you have the potential to create problems and reduce their control of the environment, they may note your mistakes more readily than your successes. Be patient. If you work diligently, professionally and courteously, your co-workers will come forward with respect, warmth and acceptance.

Start as a team player by working to develop rapport and supportive relationships with co-workers and subordinates. Let them know that you are there to support their success. Make an effort to praise them at every opportunity. You can show positive interest by learning about their history, hobbies and outlook. If you have relocated, seek your new colleagues' advice in finding resources and amenities. This shows people that you value their input. Once again, try to remember to be consistent in your behavior and style in order to allow others to grow accustomed to your personality.

After the honeymoon

The key principal to a successful job honeymoon is having conservative behavior and attitudes. Focus on understanding who and what you are dealing with before the honeymoon is over. When you begin your job, your goal should be to take full advantage of this initial orientation period so that you can move ahead with maximum effectiveness.

CAREER ADVANCEMENT FOR CONSTRUCTION EXECUTIVES

PART II — FOR THE EMPLOYER

Frederick C. Hornberger, Jr.



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CONDUCTING A TWENTY-MINUTE PHONE INTERVIEW

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CONDUCTING A TWENTY-MINUTE PHONE INTERVIEW

With its increased mobility, constant competition for top players and instant dissemination of openings throughout the world, the current job market breeds an increasingly savvy crop of applicants. What's more, motivated job seekers can draw from innumerable seminars, courses and books to hone their interviewing skills. The interviewer, on the other hand, probably holds as few interviews as possible to keep his or her staff up to strength.

When a candidate's interviewing skills collide with the interviewer's urgent need to hire, he or she may be talked into making a regrettable decision. In the name of caution, the interviewer holds endless rounds of one-to-three hour interviews, and his or her work suffers.

Both pitfalls are avoidable. By taking a few common-sense measures, you'll spend less time interviewing than you do today. At the same time, you'll maintain control of your interviews, learn more and increase your ability to make the best hiring decisions. The interview-for-hire process involves eight basic steps. Master them and you'll improve your decisions and free up your calendar.

1. Define the job before filling it

Obviously, clarify the job to be filled before filling it. Too often that process is done in reverse. Don't make this mistake or you might hire a perfect candidate for a job that doesn't exist. When creating a job description, solicit the input of current employees in similar positions. They know what the real job entails. Using these employees as guides set realistic standards and qualifications. An exceptional candidate won't be attracted unless exceptional compensation and opportunity is offered. Be sure your hiring standards relate to job performance. Legally, you must be prepared to demonstrate that all standards relate to reasonable performance of the job and that they don't discriminate against any group based on age, race, gender, religion, national origin, marital status or physical handicap. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission enforces this stipulation and provides guidelines. Include all pertinent details in the description, such as benefits (and short-comings) of the job, career potential, working environment and special responsibility and demands. Before seeing candidates, those involved in the hiring process should sign off on the final job description. Refine and revise the description until their clearance is given. The resulting document keeps everyone on the same wavelength. It's also a helpful tool to use during the interview.

2. Qualify (and cull) your candidates

When first starting in this career, you probably were advised to interview for new jobs occasionally, regardless of your interest or qualifications in the job. Keep in mind that some of your candidates may be following the same advice. To save time, screen all candidates before

meeting them. Study their resumes. Ask them to fill out an application form. Check their references. Then disqualify anyone who's unfit for the job. If the facts check out, telephone the candidate before the actual in-person interview. Before meeting the candidate, make sure he or she is serious about job change.

3. Organize and prepare

Like any meeting, a clear agenda for the interview increases your efficiency and effectiveness. Because only twenty minutes are being allocated to the process, every minute counts. The heart of each interview is your question period. Write out specific questions based on the research acquired in Step 2. Type them for easy reference. Assume the candidate will be prepared for the interview. The interviewer should have a job description, questions and a notepad within easy reach. In addition have a company information kit available for the candidate. If the candidate must relocate, the information kit should profile the company's area and region. Include information of interest to every member of the family. Typically, applicants want to know about schools, hospitals, medical care, places of worship and social, cultural and recreational opportunities. The local chamber of commerce usually can provide such literature and information.

4. Set a friendly tone — two minutes

Despite a need to be brief, don't be curt or the interviewee will be uncomfortable and uncommunicative. Set the subject at ease. Choose a comfortable, quiet setting for the interview and make sure he or she won't be facing bright lights or the direct sun. Keep the applicant out of an air conditioning draft. And make sure the chair isn't too low or too high. To minimize distractions, ask your secretary to hold all calls and interruptions. When the applicant first arrives, greet him or her with a smile, warmth and enthusiasm. Small talk helps break the ice. Offer a sincere compliment about a strong point on the resumes or a favorable remark made by a reference. Because only the strongest candidates are being met, this should be accomplished easily. (This is one benefit of performing Step 2.)

5. Establish control of the meeting — two minutes

Because you initiated the meeting, you're expected to chair it. The first step is to lead smoothly from Small talk into the interview. Give a summary of what's to be accomplished today. Briefly describe your role in the company as well as the position (by title only) for which the candidate is being interviewed. One possible conversation is: "We have a unique and attractive opportunity for the right individual. I'd like to spend the first part of our meeting discussing your background and I'll share some information about the position with you and then give you a chance to ask questions. This is just an initial meeting for us to get acquainted, and it

should take about twenty minutes or so.” You’ve kept your options open. Now, either the interview can be extended as necessary or your schedule can be adhered to without making the candidate feel cut short. The reason the candidate is questioned before being offered a description of the position is elementary. Most candidates win slant their responses to make themselves appear ideally suited. You need unbiased information, however, and you want the applicant to understand that you’re in control.

6. Ask questions — ten minutes

Before the appointment for the interview was made, the candidate’s qualifications were determined. Now, explore whether he or she is right for the job. Evaluate style, chemistry and attitude. Express any concerns that arose when reading the candidate’s resume and talking with references. Although this is the longest segment of the interview, ten minutes will be adequate only if the questions are concise and you encourage equally concise answers. The interviewer’s questions should cover two areas in particular: the candidate’s experience and his or her personal qualities. Seek whatever additional information that’s necessary about the candidate’s background, skills, education, credentials and accomplishments as well as job performance strengths and weaknesses. Ask about the candidate’s interests, ambitions, attitudes and personal style. The following sample questions will prepare you for the interview process:

- Please describe your present job responsibilities. Which are most difficult and why? Which are the most enjoyable?
- What accomplishment in your present job are you most proud of? What was your best idea (regardless of implementation)?
- What would you like to have accomplished, but haven’t, in your present job? What prevented you from doing so?
- What particular strengths and weaknesses would you bring to this position?
- What do you know about our company and this position?
- What would it take to succeed in this position?
- What elements are important to your job satisfaction and that of your subordinates?
- Describe what qualities would make an ideal boss for this position?
- What are your short and long term career objectives?
- What are the biggest frustrations in your career?
- What might your present company and department do to become more successful?
- What are your hobbies and interests? Are they useful to your career or in balancing the rest of your life?
- How would you describe your personality? How would your associates describe you?
- How do your spouse and children feel about this possible change’?
- Why should we hire you?

Avoid questions that may be discriminatory. For example, acquaint yourself with the candidate as a person, but don’t ask about religious beliefs or sexual preferences.

7. Sell the opportunity — three minutes

In this step, entice the superior candidate to want the job. Begin by telling the candidate how you feel about the job. “We feel we have an outstanding opportunity and I’m excited about it. Whoever assumes this responsibility will be important to our overall success. That’s why we’re determined to hire the right candidate.” Describe the job opportunity in general terms. Again, avoid biasing the candidate’s answers in subsequent interviews. Therefore share general information regarding responsibilities, reporting relationships, job benefits and shortcomings. Don’t, however, tell the candidate what you like or dislike about his or her background relative to the job in question. Don’t reveal that his or her boss-to-be is looking for a golf partner or distrusts people who wear bow ties. It’s wise to ‘work from the written job description during this phase of the interview. Although you’ll choose what to reveal in each case, you’ll also want all the facts at your disposal. This is a good time to summarize the history and growth of the company. State the firm’s reputation, market position and organizational structure as it relates to the candidate’s prospective job. Don’t oversell or exaggerate the opportunity. False expectations are a major cause of employee turnover. As any salesperson will tell you, overselling often kills a deal that otherwise would have worked. It’s better to underplay the opportunity during this first meeting. That statement doesn’t contradict the advice about showing enthusiasm about the position. Be enthusiastic, but reserve some details of the job to elicit the candidate’s further interest and excitement in subsequent interviews.

8. Answers questions and close — three minutes

In this final step, the candidate has the opportunity to ask questions about the prospective job. An aggressive candidate will try to assume control throughout the interview, so don’t allow that to happen. Reduce the candidate’s questions to a minimum by saving them for the end. Furthermore, many questions will have been answered during the flow of the interview. Once the question period begins, however, let the candidate know that this is his or her opportunity. By now, you have a good sense as to whether the candidate should be invited back for subsequent interviews. Accordingly, you can expand the interview or keep it brief at this time. If the candidate asks sensitive questions or makes inquiries about matters you don’t want to discuss yet, such as compensation or hiring dates, explain that these subjects will be covered during subsequent interviews. Expect candidates to ask some of the following questions before accepting a position with your firm:

- What are the responsibilities of this position, and which are the most important?
- What results are expected of this position?
- What are the limits of my responsibility and authority?
- What problems and opportunities are associated with this position?

- In your opinion, what specific aspects of my background make me right or wrong for this position?
- What support is available to help me fulfill my charge here?
- Will I have subordinates? What are their strengths and weaknesses?
- Who will be my superior and what are his or her strengths and weaknesses?
- Are there any projects in motion for which I will inherit responsibility? What is their history and status?
- What are the goals of this company and my department?
- What criteria will be used to evaluate my performance? When are evaluations scheduled?
- What can you tell me about my peers in this company?
- Why did my predecessor leave this position?
- Why did you come to work here, and why do you stay?
- What advancement can a person expect — in this company and in the industry at large — after doing this job well?

Indicate the conclusion of the interview with body language (e.g., glance at your watch or calendar) and by summarizing your remarks. Close all interviews on a positive note. Thank the candidate for his or her time and interest, and let him or her know what to expect next. Say, for example, will be interviewing in this first round for the next two weeks. “We’ll let you know by the end of next week as to whether and when we might meet again.” If he or she is a prime candidate for hire, say a few words of encouragement. Let him or her know you feel good about the meeting and you look forward to the next meeting. The benefits of a well-prepared twenty-minute interview are clear. Following this approach, you’ll accomplish your purpose quickly. In less than half an hour you’ll gain insight into each pre qualified candidate while selling the opportunity so it encourages the prime candidates. There are also other benefits of the short interview. The candidates who are invited back will be flattered that it took only twenty minutes for the interviewers to see this possible value to the organization. At the same time, applicants who aren’t asked back find the bad news easier to swallow. After all, they weren’t required to sit through marathon interviews just to be rejected.

Of course, the short initial interview necessitates one or more additional interviews before hiring. This, too, is an advantage. Most candidates prefer to be courted and given consideration by several parties before a decision is made. In addition, interviewers also need some time to reflect on the candidate and his or her suitability for the job. Summarize your notes immediately after the meeting while the details and nuances are fresh in your mind. Then file them in a safe place. In the future, these observations may be critical reminders of the candidate's visit. In analyzing and grading the candidate be aware of your personal biases. Don't allow a candidate's isolated response or question to outweigh an otherwise attractive set of qualifications and qualities.

Always send interviewees a letter of thanks, even if it's to announce that they are no longer under consideration for the position. Finally, involve others in the hiring decision. Make sure they meet the outstanding candidates. Because their futures will be affected along with your own, ask for their opinions. Seek consensus, but don't let one cynic, bigot or misanthrope hold the job hostage. A final word of caution: Check references thoroughly before the final offer is made. You want to hire the candidate who is as he or she truly is, not how he or she appears.

ART OF CHECKING REFERENCES

Frederick C. Hornberger, Jr.



<http://www.hmc.com>

<http://www.constructionexecutive.com>

ART OF CHECKING REFERENCES

To check references effectively, you will have to do much more than casually call the people on a list that the candidate supplies. But the effort is worth it. No other step in the hiring process is more important. If you don't check references well, you will inevitably make some bad hires — and let some of your best candidates slip by. Both mistakes are costly.

1. Don't be fooled

References are keys to hiring decisions because the other two main factors — resumes and interviews — are unreliable by themselves. Resumes may be intentionally misleading; studies find that a quarter to a third of them are doctored to exaggerate credentials and accomplishments. Interviews, too, can be deceptive. More and more candidates are being trained and coached to come across well in conversation. In fact, some become more skilled than their interviewers at managing the interview. Occasionally, an interview will bias the hiring decision in the other direction. A candidate who is uncomfortable — for any reason from shyness to indigestion — might nonetheless do superb work in his or her area of expertise. But if the interview goes badly, and is given too much weight, this candidate will never get the chance.

2. Haste makes waste

In any case, by the time finalists are being interviewed for a job, there is usually tremendous pressure to fill it. Consequently, job offers are too often extended on the basis of a first impression. To avoid this haste, check references early in the candidate assessment process. Better than resumes or interviews by themselves, they will tell you how a candidate has performed in the past. And this, better than anything else, predicts how he or she will perform in the future. To improve your reference checking results, let's examine the three basic steps involved. First, of course, you must decide who to contact. Then, you must conduct your exchange with each reference source so that you get the needed information. Finally, you must evaluate each reference promptly, so that you can reach the right conclusion.

3. Who you gonna call

You may not be afraid of ghosts, but your candidates are. They don't want you to hear a balanced assessment of their past. And they would rather you didn't learn about any past mistakes or conflicts that haunt them. With this in mind, take your candidate's references list with several grains of salt. Make sure that the relationships between the candidate and his references are spelled out. The most informative references will come from people who are, or have been professionally involved with the candidates' day-to-day work. Past supervisors, peers and subordinates are all good bets. To evaluate specialized knowledge, you'll want to speak with other specialists familiar with the candidate's work. Some references should be discounted or

ignored. Character references from friends and relatives, for example, tend to be more glowing than informative. And beware if references from personnel professionals. They're probably not familiar with the candidate's day-to-day performance, and are hesitant to reveal anything, no matter how true, which might lead to legal action. Ideally, you should begin with a choice of four to six useful reference sources. If you work from the candidate's list, check the last references first (it's likely to be the most objective) and work backwards up the list.

4. Look beyond the list

You are not limited to the names a candidate gives you. You can often find excellent reference sources through your industry contacts, through professional associations, and through any other network which applies. By doing your own research, you may reach sources that are more objective, and have less coaching from the candidate. People with no vested interest in your candidate's future feel most free to talk. Before talking to any reference source, however, inform the candidate of your intentions. If at all possible, have him or her sign a form which allows you to verify information, and absolves you of any legal actions resulting from your research. Once you begin talking with your reference sources, be sure to ask each one whether they know of other people with whom you should discuss your candidate. ***TALK is the magic word.*** You should converse with reference sources whenever possible. Conversations help clarify and confirm the claims that are in written recommendations. The very best approach to reference checking is to personally meet with as many of your sources as you can at their offices. In a face-to-face meeting, body language and facial expressions will guide you to areas requiring further exploration. You will also tend to get more sincere, complete answers this way.

5. Easy things first

The telephone is useful in checking credentials. Often a call or two is all it will take to verify degrees, honors, professional memberships and the like. If the candidate's claims don't jibe with the facts, you may want to save yourself any further research time.

- **Start with the facts**

When you're ready to begin talking with reference sources, establish a rapport before asking difficult questions. Describe your own position and your potential interest in the candidate. Then, verify dates of employment, job title, responsibilities, accomplishments, income earned, and any other pertinent facts. If the candidate has been accurate in representing his or her career, you'll get many "yes" answers. They will establish a positive tone. Now, you're ready to lead into more complex, subjective questions. What were the candidate's strengths on the job? Were there areas in which he or she should improve? Was he or she dependable, a team player? How would you compare his or her work with others who held the same job? Don't be afraid to

ask pointed questions regarding your areas of concern. You want to know about your candidate's reliability, self-motivation, need for supervision, ability to make sound decisions, and capacity for teamwork. You'll also want to know about his or her adaptability to the corporate structure, general pleasantness to be around, potential for leadership, and fitness for periodic promotion. If applicable, ask about the candidate's relationship with vendors, customers and professional colleagues. Some of the most awkward questions may prove themselves the most useful. Why did the candidate leave your company? Is he/she eligible for reemployment if he/she re-applies? It's not fun to ask such questions, but you need to know — so ask.

- **Evaluate ASAP**

Don't wait to evaluate your findings. By evaluating and grading each reference immediately after checking it, you will remember not only what was said, but what was implied, and what your gut feelings were. Evaluate each reference independently of the others. Assign each a grade from excellent to poor. Once you've checked as many references as you deem necessary, compile your evaluations. Assign them a composite grade, and use them to summarize what your candidate has to offer. View with caution references that are less than excellent.

- **Confront any discrepancies**

Many firms have a policy of not hiring candidates who have less than excellent references. If your reference checks cause you strong concerns, but you'd still like to pursue placing the candidate, confront him or her with the problem. Be sure not to divulge the source of your information; stick to the information itself. Give the candidate a chance to explain and ask for the names of people who might verify the candidate's version of the event. Confronting a candidate with a negative reference may involve you in a lawsuit if you are not careful to protect your sources.

- **Handle with care**

In deciding whether or not to hire, place or market a candidate, you are affecting the future of an organization. The candidate will bring all that he or she is, to the new situation. If you have checked your references effectively, you'll know enough to make a wise decision.

WHY USE AN EXECUTIVE RECRUITER

Frederick C. Hornberger, Jr.



<http://www.hmc.com>

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WHY USE AN EXECUTIVE RECRUITER

Executive recruiters project a certain mystique. Part of it arises from their own professional stature, at the very top of the personnel industry. A greater cause, however, is the strict confidentiality which their work requires. Executive recruiters deal with powerful individuals, major corporations, and the sensitive transitions they go through. The least indiscretion could ruin a placement — or a career. So, recruiters tend not to offer anecdotes at cocktail parties.

While recruiters will not discuss individual placements (especially those still in progress) they would be pleased for you to know, in general terms, who they are and what they do for their clients. With this information, you'll be better prepared to recognize when you should seek the services of an executive recruiter in staffing your own operation.

Rare Birds

Within the wide-ranging field that encompasses tens of thousands of employment recruiting and placement agencies, there are just 2,893 retained and contingency search firms: 1,153 retainer firms and 1,740 contingency firms, according to Kennedy Publications. Total revenues for these firms are a bit over \$3 billion. Executive recruiters are skilled specialists and paid accordingly.

Both retainer and contingency search firms perform the same essential service: to locate and place qualified candidates for specific job openings within their client companies. However, their working relationship with their clients is different, and so is the way these firms charge for their service. Retained fee and contingency fee firms, therefore, each bring certain advantages to particular kinds of executive searches.

Retained Firms: Great Service, and You'll Pay For It...

Retained executive search firms are generally employed to fill senior management positions. They are paid a retainer fee at the beginning of an assignment — typically, one-third of the total fee.

Compared with contingency firms (which we will discuss momentarily), retained fee firms play a more intimate and involved role in a series of events which ultimately lead to a hire. Access to top management is usually considered essential.

Retained firms often assert that the service which they render is a “process,” not mere provision of referrals. This process is thorough, detailed, and specific. The firm initially evaluates the client's employment need and the job description. It usually participates in an

internal search of the client company for individuals who might be promoted to the job, or might be appropriate with judicious restructuring of the job.

Then the search is expanded — not merely outside the firm, but nationally or internationally depending on the importance of the job and the rarity of appropriate candidates. The search firm engages in extensive industry research, networking, personal interviews, thorough reference checking, and initial selection of the most promising candidates. More interviews are held, the client is prepared to meet with candidates, and the retained search firm remains involved until a qualified candidate is hired.

The executive recruiter may participate in all client interviews with candidates, all related discussions within the client company, all negotiations, offers, and settlements. While the process may take three or four months, the hire is typically guaranteed for a year or longer. Because a retained executive recruiter spends so much time on behalf of each client company, he or she can only work with a few clients at a time.

Contingency Firms: Less Attention, But You Only Pay For Results...

Contingency executive search firms derive their name from the fact that they work “on contingency.” You only pay for their services if you hire a candidate referred by their firm. Their fees are also between 30 and 35 percent of the candidate’s first-year compensation.

Contingency recruiters most often fill lower to middle management positions. Recruiters are therefore not called upon to do such intensive research. The relationship between contingency firms and their clients is less intense, with less personal contact and a lower level of mutual commitment. It is not unusual for a client company to use several contingency firms on a single search, pay nothing just to read resumes and interview candidates — and continue to employ its own efforts in trying to fill the position in question.

Contingency search firms typically provide a referral service, hoping that interviews will ensue and one of their candidates will be hired. Contingency firms usually serve many clients at a time to maximize their odds of placing someone — and getting paid. These firms usually have less time to spend with each client in understanding their special needs and qualifying and researching specific candidates. However, many contingency firms provide complete research and recruitment capabilities, and carry on specialized and intimate working relationships with management.

Contingency firms generally guarantee their placements for 30 to 90 days. Their advantage over retained firms is that they can usually refer candidates immediately. They are accustomed to working under time constraints. Many contingency firms specialize in specific fields and industries, giving them an excellent working knowledge of client companies’ standards and needs. Moreover, their networks and research capabilities are focused, and they

often bring forward exceptional talent, ready for hire. Another advantage is that search fees are sometimes negotiable. In addition, contingency firms rarely charge for expenses which must be reimbursed, as is the case with retained firms. And contingency firms are paid strictly for their performance. If they do not help you, they do not charge you.

As the search industry evolves, contingency firms have grown in expertise and effectiveness. Many even offer retainer service, and a new generation of quality contingency service is emerging and competing for senior management searches.

Why Buying Help Yields Savings

The services of an executive recruiter appear costly. Typically, you will pay from 30 to 35 percent of a hiree's first-year compensation plus expenses, for each hire you make with professional assistance. The best way to view this expenditure is in contrast to the cost of a bad hire. When an incompetent new employee makes bad decisions, hundreds of thousands — even millions — of dollars may be lost. The employee will have to be replaced (and the cost may become damaging). Companies engage executive search firms to ensure that such trauma and expense are kept to a minimum.

In house personnel departments tend to be limited in their insider contacts. Their leads are often exhausted long before an appropriate hire can be made. The costs involved in preparing and executing an advertising campaign, screening and qualifying candidates — and in operating without the needed employee for an extended length of time — make the services of an executive search firm justifiable, even profitable. The alternative can be an expensive, time-consuming effort which leads to a hire from an inadequate pool of candidates.

It is common knowledge that the best executives are usually employed at the time of your search. They have little time to read or respond to nebulous, generic advertisements, and they know that responding to such ads can be risky. They would rather be approached discreetly by someone who knows of their reputation, knows the art of recruiting, and can handle the hiring process professionally and confidentially.

If you lack a needed executive, you cannot fully respond to business needs and opportunities. When you factor this cost into the cost of mounting a search with your in-house department, using the specialized and time-efficient services of an executive search firm makes good economic sense. And it frees you to do what you do best instead of what you must do under duress.

Their Expertise Has No Competition

Executive recruiters are specialized professionals. They work at the search process exclusively, on a full-time basis, and survive on their ability to get results in a competitive

marketplace. Most executive recruiters bring years of experience to their work, and are intimately familiar with every aspect of the job hiring process, from the initial job evaluation through negotiation and hire.

Executive recruiters cultivate a profound, far-flung network which enables them to research the local, regional, national, and worldwide marketplace, identify currently employed prospects, and screen them for suitability. Recruiters remove a tremendous burden from management by presenting a small number of highly-appropriate candidates who are prepared to accept a good offer.

Executive recruiters know what to look for in a candidate and how to quickly find out if it's there. They know how to attract and hire a candidate who is employed and successful. They know, too, how to advise and counsel management so that the best hire gets made — the choice with the longest range likelihood of mutual benefit and satisfaction.

The objectivity and feedback that an executive recruiter offers is invaluable. He or she can help balance the emotional reactions and biases of corporate management. Likewise, the recruiter can act as a skilled intermediary — a diplomat, if you will — to clear up misunderstandings, straighten out miscommunications, and tactfully convey each party's concerns to the other.

Executive recruiters have the advantage of meeting with candidates outside the interviewing arena. Recruiters often spend significant personal time with candidates to better understand and evaluate them, to respond to their concerns, and to ease the challenging transition from the present job to the new opportunity.

Recruiters Provide Strict Confidentiality

Another key reason to use executive recruiters is the need to keep important company decisions and initiatives confidential. Executive recruiters are committed to strict confidentiality — both by professional ethics and common sense. They understand the privileged relationship they have with their client companies. They know that all must be kept quiet until the hiring takes place.

To safeguard their confidentiality, management will often hire an executive recruiter to deal with only a single authority within the client company. Candidates, too, need the confidentiality which recruiters protect so carefully. Most ambitious individuals wish to hear of outstanding opportunities which could advance their careers, but few are willing to explore those opportunities on their own, and thereby jeopardize their current position. An executive recruiter knows how to provide information to the candidate with utter discretion, so that his colleagues and superiors are not alerted to his possible departure.

Many candidates will only consider third party representation by an executive recruiter in considering career opportunities. Most client companies understand this, and appreciate the fact that confidentiality and professional mediation benefit both them and their ultimate hirees.

When a company announces a key vacancy — particularly if the company is publicly held — it can create apprehension among stockholders, suppliers, employees, and the general business community. Likewise, a company which announces a critical new position can inadvertently tip off its rivals about an impending new product, direction, or market initiative.

The need for confidentiality will become even more important as worldwide information access combines with the post-Baby Boom decrease in job candidates. Already-employed, proven candidates will get an increasing number of job offers over the foreseeable future.

Altogether, executive recruiters perform a vital service to business and industry. They bring expertise, effectiveness, efficiency, and confidentiality to the process of finding and hiring executive talent. For these reasons, executive recruiters will play an ever-expanding role in shaping corporate futures.

SELECTING AN EXECUTIVE RECRUITER

Frederick C. Hornberger, Jr.



<http://www.hmc.com>

<http://www.constructionexecutive.com>

SELECTING AN EXECUTIVE RECRUITER

As the labor shortage continues to tighten its grip on industry, the competition for talent continues to rise. Many employers are searching for innovative recruitment solutions by hiring in-house, corporate recruiters or venturing into Internet recruiting, while others turn to third-party recruiters commonly called executive recruiters.

Executive recruiters are usually hired to assist in the identification and selection of hard-to-fill, or critical talent needs. However several employers are now looking favorably at outsourcing the majority of their key recruiting needs to executive recruiters.

1. What are the benefits of utilizing executive recruiters?

- **Experts in recruitment**

Executive recruiters are specialized professionals. They work at the recruitment process exclusively, and survive on their ability to get results in a highly competitive marketplace. Most executive recruiters bring years of experience to their work, and are intimately familiar with every aspect of candidate identification, sourcing and selection. Executive recruiters are hired to cast a wider net and approach accomplished candidates who are busy working and not looking. Many candidates are invisible from where employers sit, and will not approach a public job opportunity without the safety and confidentiality of third-part representation. Executive recruiters have the advantage of meeting with candidates outside the interviewing arena where they can build trust and rapport in a neutral and protected environment. They have mastered the delicate art of persuading well-paid, well-treated executives to give up good corporate homes for better ones. Executive recruiters remove a tremendous recruitment burden from management by presenting a limited number of qualified candidates who are usually prepared to accept an offer. They also are skilled at dealing with counter-offers, and managing candidates until they are safely on board with their new position.

- **Committed to confidentiality**

Executive recruiters understand the privileged relationships they have and are committed to strict confidentiality — both by professional ethics and common sense. Many employers want to keep hiring decisions and initiatives confidential from competitors, customers, employees, stockholders or suppliers to protect against unnecessary apprehension. Management resignations are often private matters and require immediate replacements before the resignation becomes public knowledge. Sometimes employees need to be replaced without their knowledge. For these assignments, an executive recruiter is usually the only confidential solution. Candidates also need the confidentiality which executive recruiters can provide. Many candidates are willing to hear of outstanding opportunities, which could advance their careers, but few are willing to

explore those opportunities on their own in fear of jeopardizing their current position. An executive recruiter is a third-party representative that knows how to gain the confidence of nervous candidates.

- **Objective professional counsel**

The objectivity and feedback from an executive recruiter is invaluable to an employers. Recruiters know how to advise and counsel management so that the best hire gets made — the choice with the longest-range likelihood of mutual benefit and satisfaction. They can help employers evaluate their expectations, and bring industry expertise to assist with the development of job descriptions, reporting relationships and compensation programs. They can also usually provide investigative reports on candidates, third party referencing, personality testing, foreign language proficiency assessment, relocation assistance and other specialized services. Executive recruiters help balance the emotional reactions and biases of corporate management. Likewise, the recruiter can act as a skilled intermediary — a diplomat, if you will — to clear up misunderstandings, straighten out miscommunications, and tactfully convey each party's concerns to the other during negotiations.

- **Cost effective investment**

The use of executive recruiters should be viewed as an investment in improving the quality of an organization's managerial might. The right choice can dramatically increase a employer's value; and that value rises exponentially moving up the management chain. The fees associated with any particular search become almost incidental considering the ultimate payback.

A good way to view cost is to measure the cost of a bad hire. When an incompetent new employee makes bad decisions, hundreds of thousands — even millions — of dollars may be lost. This employee will have to be replaced and the overall downtime for having the position unproductive can be staggering. Employers often engage executive recruiters to ensure that such trauma and expense are kept to a minimum.

2. Types of Executive Recruiters

There are basically two types of executive recruiters: retained fee and contingency fee. Both retained and contingency fee recruiters perform the same essential service. However, their working relationship with their clients is different, and so is the way these recruiters charge for their service. Retained and contingency fee recruiters each bring certain advantages and disadvantages to particular kinds of executive searches. Cost in fees is basically the same (twenty five percent to thirty five percent of a candidate's first years compensation), with the exception that out-of-pocket expenses are usually reimbursed for retained recruiters.

- **Retained recruiters**

Retained executive recruiters derive their name from the fact that they work “on retainer.” Employers pay for their services up front and throughout the recruitment process. Retained recruiters are typically paid for the search process regardless of the outcome of the search, however most retained recruiters allow employers to cancel the search at any time for prorated rates. Retained recruiters provide a thorough and complete recruitment effort, often involving multiple researchers and recruiters on a single assignment. They usually create detailed reports on the employer, the position, their research and recruitment efforts, candidate resumes, interviews, reference checks and other tangible services that add value to the search process. They tend to work in partnership with the employer, offering expert counsel throughout the search, and requiring exclusivity and control over the hiring process. The retained recruiter may participate in all client interviews with candidates, all related discussions within the client employer, all negotiations, offers, and settlements. While the process may take three or four months, the hire is typically guaranteed for a year or longer. Because a retained executive recruiter spends so much time on behalf of each client employer, she can only work with a few clients at a time (usually two to six). Retained recruiters will usually present candidates to only one employer at a time and will maintain a two year “candidate hands off” policy. It is usually best to hire a retained recruiter when an assignment is critical or senior in scope (seventy five thousand dollars or more), when difficult to fill or requires a thorough recruiting effort, when it requires strict confidentiality, or when locating the best candidate is more important than filling the position quickly.

- **Contingency recruiters**

Contingency executive recruiters derive their name from the fact that they work “on contingency.” Employers only pay for their services if an employer hires a candidate referred by their firm. If there is no hire, then there is no fee due.

Most contingency recruiters work quickly and uncover many resumes. They tend to provide more of a resume referral service, and spend less time with each client. Because there is no financial commitment from employers to support up front candidate research, contingency recruiters tend to move on to new assignments more quickly once a job opportunity becomes difficult to fill. Contingency recruiters find it is usually more cost effective to market exceptional candidates to locate job opportunities than to recruit for employers and locate difficult-to-find candidates. Most contingency recruiters fill lower to middle management positions where candidate marketing can result in greater chances for success due to the greater number of job opportunities. However some contingency recruiters will not market candidates and will only recruit for employers. The relationship between contingency recruiters and their clients is usually

less intense, with less personal contact and a lower level of mutual commitment. It is not uncommon for an employer to use several contingency recruiters on a single search, while continuing to try and fill the position on their own. Contingency recruiters usually manage eight to twenty assignments at a time, and maintain a one year “candidate hands off” policy. They will usually present candidates to multiple job assignments, and often face pressure working similar assignments with different fee levels. Contingency recruiters generally guarantee their placements for thirty to ninety days, but some offer no guarantee. Although the placement fees are usually twenty five percent to thirty five percent a candidate’s annual compensation, many contingency recruiters are willing to negotiate their fees and some charge as little as fifteen percent. It is best to utilize a contingency recruiter when the position is entry or mid-level management, when filling the position rapidly is more important than locating the “ideal” candidate, when filling multiple positions for an employer with the same skill set, and when it is important to fill the position at minimum cost.

3. Where to look for an executive recruiter

The best place to find a good recruiter is to begin with an in-house referral. Talk with the human resource department and employer managers to see what experience they have had with executive recruiters. Check with colleagues in other departments, peers at other employers or the local trade associations for additional recommendations. Another place to find comprehensive lists of executive recruiters is to purchase one of the major recruitment directories such as The Directory of Executive Recruiters, by Kennedy Publications, Hunt Scanlon’s Executive Recruiters of North America, or visit the many Internet directories of recruiters such as the Recruiter’s Online Network at <http://www.recruitersonline.com>.

4. What to look for in selecting an executive recruiter

- **A proven track record.** A good recruiter should have up to seventy five percent in repeat customer business, and completion rates that exceed eighty five percent.
- **Search results.** For each assignment, find out how many candidates will be sourced, contacted and interviewed, and how many finalists will be presented.
- **Availability.** If a recruiter is working on more than three current assignments, you can expect limited attention. Junior associates are no substitute to the quality recruitment offered by an experienced pro.
- **Performers.** Recruiters should be doers not overseers. They should conduct the entire search from initial client discussions to research, recruitment, interviewing and final selection. Many recruiters will send their most accomplished recruiter or “rainmaker” on presentations to secure the assignment, but quickly pass on the work to junior associates. Find out if others will be involved with the assignment and what their roles will be.
- **A recruiter not a recruitment firm.** The recruiter is the one performing the search, not the firm.

- **Industry specialists, not generalists.** Specialty recruiters are more capable of completing an assignment quickly. Knowing where to go to find the best talent, and having the ability to quickly gain their confidence of talent is essential for a timely result. Recruiters that specialize within the employer's unique segment of industry are often more effective.
- **Appropriate position specialists.** Recruiters often specialize in lower, middle or executive level assignments. Find a recruiter that specializes in the level position the employer is looking to fill.
- **Trade association involvement.** Association involvement helps establish a recruiter's reputation and network of contacts. Find out what personal involvement and contributions the recruiter has made through participation in trade committees, writing articles for trade magazines, giving talks at industry events, and other prominent networking avenues.
- **Twelve month guarantee.** Make sure if the new hire resigns or is terminated within twelve months, the recruiter provides a replacement at no professional fee.
- **Recruiters with good references.** Validate recruiter claims of successes and industry involvement. Speak to references that can discuss recent accomplishments, ethical recruiting practices, and prove long-term, repeat business.
- **Premium service.** Cost is usually the lowest factor on any hiring survey when employers are questioned on the most important factors looked for in selecting an executive search. The old adage, "you get what you pay for" is true in most cases when hiring an executive recruiter.
- **Reasonable blockage.** Check "off limit" policies. Find out what firms are "off limits" to the recruiter (protected firms that cannot be recruited from). If those firms are likely sources to fill the position, do not work with a recruiter who cannot touch those executives.
- **National capability.** A national recruiter can often recruit a localized market effectively, but a local recruiter rarely can recruit a national market effectively. It is even far more important to find a successful recruiter who will locate the best candidates than one who happens to be based nearby.

5. Questions used to Interview Recruiters

- What is your experience in recruiting, and in our industry?
- What is your area of specialty within our industry, and what locations do you specialize in?
- Have you filled any recent positions at the level we are seeking?
- What do you know about our firm?
- What is your percentage completion rate? What assignments have you not completed and why?
- What added value to you provide to the search process?
- How quickly can we expect results?
- Are you licensed and regulated by your state?
- What are your most significant search accomplishments?
- What are some of your recent assignments and can we check those references?

- Have you had to replace any executives that were hired through you? What were the circumstances?
- What is your guarantee period?
- What is your process for working on a search?
- How can you insure that you will find the best candidates for the position? What capabilities and resources do you have for researching and recruiting candidates?
- What is your involvement in the research, recruiting, interviewing and hiring of candidates? Who else will be assisting you and what will be their roles?
- What is your “off-limits” policy? What firms are currently “off limits” to you?
- Are you a retained or contingency fee based firm? What are your fees and what is your policy on expense reimbursement?
- Is your firm a member of any professional associations? What involvement do you have?
- Why are you the best choice for us?

WHAT IS AN INTERNET JOB POSTING?

Frederick C. Hornberger, Jr.



<http://www.hmc.com>

<http://www.constructionexecutive.com>

WHAT IS AN INTERNET JOB POSTING?

Internet (interactive) job postings take full advantage of the tools and resources available on the Internet to create an advanced form of marketing and communication between contractors and job seekers. It is one of the highest forms of marketing because it can present the full scope of a contractor's media capabilities and marketing presence. Online job postings can include unlimited text and composition, links to interactive projects and company brochures (with 3D graphics, video and audio), news, press releases, live stock valuations, management biographies with photographs, access to jobsite or product data through dynamic databases, advanced forms of communication in real time through HTML email, instant messaging, online chat, online telephone, and even video-conferencing with a live person. In reality, online job postings function more like a contractor's Public Relations Assistant than an advertisement.

How To Write A Successful Internet Job Posting?

The key to a successful Internet job posting is first recognizing that it is not a print classified advertisement. An Internet job posting is interactive, and requires a good understanding of interactive marketing. One of the greatest challenges contractors face when posting jobs online, is recognizing that they must change their traditional job posting habits. An online job posting will not do well if written like a print classified ad. It must be thought more like an interactive marketing campaign for the entire firm. The Marketing Department rather than the HR Department should write it.

Update the Company Web Site

The company web site is rapidly becoming the first point of contact for most job seekers or prospective clients. Contractors should update their corporate web site so that it provides a professional and interactive presentation of the firm, its goals, key personnel, corporate culture, top achievements, and business philosophy. In fact, every marketing resource available to the contractor should be utilized to make the corporate web site the best it can be. Although most job boards provide hot links to company web sites, some do not. Either way, job seekers are likely to independently surf the Internet in order to locate a contractor's web site, relevant press releases/news, before submitting their resume.

Keywords Rule

In the fast paced world of Internet surfing, most job seekers will only take the time to view the top 20 search results. Making it to the top usually is about keywords. They often make the difference between a successful job posting and a waste of time. Contractors should put the right keywords in the right place so that the right people can find their job postings. Online job postings are not viewed the way print classified ads are viewed. Online job postings are hidden

within databases containing thousands of records, and they must be called up for a job seeker to view them. This process up may take the form of keyword selection in a search engine or any number of methods with point and click directories. It's important for contractors to study the job posting and keyword guidelines of the hosting job board since they will differ from site to site. Many job boards will rank or prioritize job postings within their database by title, membership status, date, keywords or other less obvious means. Adding keywords properly assures that a job posting will find its way to the top of the job board's search results. Adding keywords improperly may result in having the job posting deleted by the hosting job board or simply lost in the volumes of database records that job seekers never find. While identifying the best keywords for a job posting, contractors should determine which words the job seeker will select in utilizing the job board's search engine — and include all relevant occupational-specific terms (i.e. Hard Bid Estimator or value engineering). To cover all the bases, It is a good idea to use multiple words or synonyms that may mean the same thing. For example, if the job location is in a lesser-known town such as Maitland, Florida but near a well-known city like Orlando, Florida, then Orlando should be added as a keyword. Most job boards require keywords to be added in a special field, in a particular fashion (using quotes, comas, etc.). Job postings that do not offer a special field for keywords usually require the contractor to add keywords to the Job Description, Job Requirements or other searchable fields. When adding keywords to a Job Description, contractors should write the keywords into complete sentences so that the content flows as a logical composition.

Make It Believable

Job Postings should be believable and complete if they want to attract the top talent. Most executive job seekers are interested in job postings that contain detailed job descriptions and job requirements. Many want to see salary and information about the company. Others want to know job location. Most job boards claim that a well-written job posting can achieve many more qualified applications than a poorly written job posting. Fortunately many job boards offer FAQ's and job posting guidelines to help contractors get the most from their job posting. Some provide statistical analysis of individual job postings. These statistics often show the number of job seeker views and applications submitted to each job posting. Contractors can use statistics to evaluate their results and modify the job posting accordingly. The more details provided in a job posting the more credible the job and the better the fit. Therefore, more job seekers will respond. Contractors should be specific about the scope and type of work, the hours, the job goals, the salary and the location. They should also make sure all fields are appropriately filled in completely. Some boards allow for job postings to be previewed prior to going live helping contractors see the completed job posting the way job seekers will see it. Many job boards allow for real time editing during the advertisements flight.

Manage Style

Unlike classified print ads, online job postings usually allow for pages of copy. Headhunter.net allows for three thousand characters in the Job Description and three thousand characters in the Job Requirements fields — or about two typewritten pages. Contractors should write clearly and present text in an organized, logical manner. Job postings should read like a composition and not a print classified ad. Sentences can be short but they should always be complete sentences containing correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar. The copy should include natural paragraphs, with line breaks, so that the job seeker can find relevant information quickly and easily. Writing in all Caps, using excessive exclamation points, or adding acronyms and abbreviations will reduce the credibility of the job posting and potentially result in job deletion by the hosting job board. Acronyms and abbreviations should also be spelled out since job seekers usually search by complete words.

Read Job Posting Guidelines

Most job boards have Terms of Use agreements that members/users must agree to — in order to utilize their service. It's important that contractors read and understand the terms that relate to job postings and keywords to get the best results. It is typical for job boards with high quality control standards to delete or edit up to 25% of all job postings as being inappropriate. Most job boards do not allow for listing of emails, URL's, use of copyrighted material, defamatory remarks, false, inaccurate or misleading information, illegal or unethical content. Job postings that encourage job seekers to email for more details, are usually prohibited.

Follow up

Contractors should immediately follow up on all qualified applications that have been submitted. Peter Weddles at <http://www.weedles.com> says, "Speed is everything in hiring top talent." Within ten days, the top 10% of job seekers are gone. Once someone desirable is identified, it's important to act on that person right away. Today's recruitment market is highly competitive and the hiring cycle should not allow for any dead time between in-house interviewing schedules and final selection. Contractors should not leave job seekers hanging more than five to seven days without a scheduled follow-up meeting. Otherwise, they risk losing the job seeker entirely. There needs to be top-level management involved with all key hires. Involving top management makes job seekers feel that the hire is an important position, and that they have personally been selected as the "candidate of choice" by the top brass. Contractors should begin closing the deal the moment they know that they want someone for hire. They should not let up until an offer is on the table and accepted.

COMMON INTERNET JOB POSTING FIELDS & THEIR PURPOSE

Job Titles

Titles should be industry-specific and familiar to job seekers since they will use keyword search for positions according to standard job titles. The Job Title field is not the field to market the job posting (like with a classified ad). The Job Title field should be used primarily to have the job posting found by job seekers. Adding appropriate keywords, in the appropriate place, is far more important than catchy job titles that never get seen. However, it is acceptable to add relevant, occupational-defining adjectives to the basic Job Title (such as On-site Architectural Project Manager, Conceptual Chief Estimator, Hospital Flooring Project Engineer, and Veteran Concrete Superintendent).

Job Descriptions

Job descriptions typically focus on job responsibilities, duties, scope, achievements and goals to be accomplished. The clearer the description, the more likely qualified job seekers will apply. Job descriptions should focus on the job seeker's needs and not just the position. Job descriptions should be written from the job seeker's perspective. They should also answer the question, "Why would a job seeker want to apply for this job?" Contractors should describe the best parts of the job, interesting challenges, future job opportunities, reporting relationships, and why the position is available. It's important to sell the overall career opportunity while not just describing it. If a job seeker takes the job, what will their lives be like? Use word pictures and try to communicate desirable images that the job seeker can visualize, compelling him/her to change jobs. For example: "work in a progressive environment where you can learn more in six months than you may have in the last six years", or "walk into your private office and join a team of enthusiastic professionals who are building the next great management firm". If there is not a job-posting field that lists specific benefits and perks, add them into the job description. Job benefits include things such as flex time, work at home, child care, above average medical benefits, company vehicle, education reimbursement, country club membership, and other special offerings. However, contractors should recognize that the Job Description field should not describe the company, the job requirements, the job location, salary, or anything else unless there is no other appropriate field in which to post this information. Inappropriate content (or placing content in the wrong fields) may result in the job posting being edited or deleted.

Company Profile

Most job boards allow for a hot link to the contractor's corporate web site. Many job boards, in addition to offering a hot link, will offer a special Company Profile field. Contractors should completely fill in this field. This will add valuable content and keywords to the job

board's database in order to improve their chances of being found by searching job seekers. A Company Profile field creates an additional promotional opportunity for the firm and the job position. Use this field to describe what the company does — addressing key elements like organization size, location, benefits, company goals, mission, management style, employee quality of life and what makes the firm special. Contractors should also include information about the qualities desired in all team members. This field often provides for limitless content and is the least edited by the hosting job board. Some job boards even allow for multiple company profiles that can be individually linked to a respective job posting (allowing recruiters to add information on each respective client, and contractors the opportunity to promote information about their various divisional offices).

Contact Information

It is essential to put contact information on all forms and in all appropriate fields. Contractors should make it easy for a job seeker to apply. Most job seekers prefer email. Some prefer using mail, fax or phone calls before sending their confidential resume. It is appropriate to specify a preferred contact method, and request that all applications include the respective Job ID. By having several contact methods and the contact name (not just a department) of a real person, a job seeker is more likely to believe the job is valid and apply.

Job Identification (ID)

For job postings, contractors should use a tracking system to provide a unique Job ID for each job posting and require that job seekers reference this ID on applications whether faxed, emailed, or mailed. This allows contractors to know which site — and specifically which ad — brought in the respective application. Information as to where the best applications come from will help contractors to know what job boards have been the most productive sources of talent.

Job Responsibilities

Job Responsibilities are simply the job requirements for the position. In order to get the best response, contractors should list why the requirements are there. Examples would be: “A Bachelor of Arts Degree is required to help lead Corporate Communications” or “We require seven years of project management experience for commercial building projects. This position will manage three Project Managers and seven Project Engineers”. Make clear the “required” qualifications and the “desired” skills. Avoid cliché's or trite phrases like “self-motivated”, “team player”, and “fast-paced” (making the job posting appear common). Contractors can also use the Job Responsibilities field as an eliminator of unwanted resumes by making qualifying statements (“Applicants must have a minimum of six consecutive years with the same general contractor. Otherwise, please do not apply.”). In order to eliminate many unwanted job seekers,

contractors can also add qualifying phrases such as “background checks are performed in the hiring process” or “personality testing is used in the hiring process”.

Salary

Many contractors refuse to post salary information in job postings. Salary figures make job postings credible, and substantially improve the job seeker response rate. It is also one of the most widely searched fields on a job posting. Job seekers are typically more interested in the salary than any other item in a job description. According to executive recruiter, Chuck Groom of CC Group, Inc., money is one of the top reasons why people leave their job. Job seekers do not want to waste time with a job that may not pay what they require. When a salary figure is lacking, they will assume that the contractor may be embarrassed by the level of salary level — or have something to hide. Phrases such as “Salary is commensurate with experience, N/A, Open, or Depends on experience” do not prove effective. They will actually significantly reduce response rate to a job posting.

Work Status

An important qualifier, that is often overlooked, is the work status field. With the international reach of the Internet, more and more foreigners (without valid work visas) are applying to United States job postings. Contractors can eliminate many foreign applications by simply stating “applicants must be United States citizens”, or “only United States citizens or those with valid work visas need apply”, or “you must have clearance to work in the United States to be considered for this position”.

Location

Most major job boards require the location field to be completed. Although many recruiters refuse to identify job locations (in fear of disclosing their clients need for confidentiality), listing the job location is one of the main fields that job seekers search. Job seekers from all over the country/world may see the job posting. Without a valid city noted, job seekers must guess the job location. They often will not apply because they think that the posting is in an undesirable location, or that it’s invalid to serve only as a ploy to collect resumes.

Best Places to Post an Internet Job Posting

There are several good choices for contractors who want to post their jobs online. However, the key is to find job boards that to provide the “right” viewers — as well as a large volume of “right” viewers. Contractors want their job posting to be seen by as many relevant viewers as possible. However, although most job boards charge similar fees for services, their volume of viewers can vary dramatically. Many contractors will choose to post jobs online with traditional, well-known, off-line businesses that have a job board presence online. However, the online job posting business (like any Internet business) is a unique business that requires an entirely different set of rules and business acumen. The off-line leaders are rarely the leaders in the online world. In selecting the right job board, contractors should compare results based on verifiable industry standards. One way to make an accurate comparison is through Amazon’s Alexa Research, which can be downloaded at Alexa.com and easily attached to a web browser. Once installed, this tool will indicate a web site’s visitor traffic (based on a common standard, and measured against the entire seventeen million plus web sites currently on the Internet).

HOW EMPLOYERS CAN RECRUIT CANDIDATES ON THE INTERNET

Frederick C. Hornberger, Jr.



<http://www.hmc.com>

<http://www.constructionexecutive.com>

HOW EMPLOYERS CAN RECRUIT CANDIDATES ON THE INTERNET

1. Who ya gonna call?

Industry is facing an alarming labor shortage and for many it is a labor crisis. Almost every employer across the country has felt the labor squeeze from colleges reporting fewer student enrollments, to the aging workforce that is retiring at unprecedented rates. Unlike any time in recent history, Human Resource (HR) departments are facing considerable pressure to meet recruitment and staffing demands.

2. One answer may be the Internet

The Internet (or Net) is quickly changing the way employers and job seekers find each other. Job seekers now have easier access to help wanted advertising and more information about employers than ever before. Recruiters can now reach more people faster and at a fraction of the cost of traditional recruitment methods. Net recruiting, cyber-recruiting or e-recruiting as it is sometimes called, is becoming a popular solution to the labor shortage and an invaluable addition to any HR recruitment strategy.

The Net's massive reach already extends into talent pools never before available, and offers favorable demographics. The federal government currently estimates that there are over 100 million people in 190 countries using the Net. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (M.I.T.) surveyed 4,566 Net users and found 72.5 percent were men, 27.5 were women, and the average age was 37.7. The average age of commercial online service subscribers is 39 according to Jupiter Communications. The Georgia Institute of Technology surveyed 4,777 WWW users and found that 56 percent were between 23 and 38 years old, and 74 percent were male. The increased candidate reach, faster hiring turnaround, minimal recruiting cost and favorable candidate demographics may make the Net a potential solution to the labor shortage.

3. Does Internet recruiting work

The Net is utilized by all types of job seekers who surf the Web as a tool to help find friends online, research and book flight reservations, check the time or weather, find current news or view the latest stock quotes, transfer text documents, photos or data files, place a classified ad, chat with other Net surfers, buy books, CDs, computers or to just have fun with entertainment resources.

Recent surveys indicate Net recruiting can produce results.

- The Employment Marketplace stated in its Winter 98 issue that experienced recruiters who have honed their direct email strategies and message scripts are experiencing a return rate ranging from 15% to 40%; far beyond the traditional direct mail rate. JWT Specialized Communications in Los Angeles surveyed 410 HR professionals and nearly

800 job seekers and concluded that the number of people tapping into the Net to post or find jobs is expected to double in the coming year.

- The 1997 Austin Knight Internet Recruitment Survey states “75% of the companies that advertised on the Net filled at least one position last year, and many averaged one per month.” The survey also stated “not only are companies hiring more people from the Web, but they also receive an average of 7 more responses per posting, and rate the quality of these responses considerably higher.”
- In the October 1998 Fordyce Letter Bill Vick, president of the Recruiters Online Network, stated “some member recruitment firms are claiming over 30% of their business from online recruiting.”
- In a recent article titled “Outside the Box” by Amy Naples with Bluestone Consulting, stated “Market research has shown that 80% of applicants from colleges and universities now use the Net as a job resource.”

4. Benefits to Internet recruiting

As a minimum, recruiters can utilize the Net for placement of online job ads, and for resume research. But for the experienced online recruiter, the Net can offer unlimited possibilities.

Some of the more common benefits to Net recruiting are listed below:

- **Flexible ad medium.** Net advertising of job postings are as testable as direct mail, as targeted as radio, as immediate as a telemarketing call, and as informative as a TV infomercial.
- **Greater recruitment reach.** Recruitment and resume sourcing on the Net can be localized or worldwide in its reach extending into over 174 countries, and can access more job seekers and a broader selection of job seekers than other medium.
- **Greater advertising reach.** Net advertising offers greater exposure to a larger audience than any other form of media. It is estimated that 20% of the job sites on the web have monthly traffic of 500,000 unique visitors and an astonishing 9% actually attracted 1 million or more unique visitors each month!
- **Unlimited supply of resumes.** The Net provides recruiters access to thousands of resume and job databases, and even more newspapers and industry magazines, which offer job classified advertising.
- **Inexpensive access.** Many libraries, schools and public service providers allow online access for free, and recruiters that want preferred service can usually find unlimited access from their home for under \$16 a month.
- **No courier costs.** There is no postage or added cost to forward mail, data files, graphics, photos, sound, video clips or other data transfer. In addition the Net can transfer information to hundreds or thousands of individuals simultaneously.
- **Low communication costs.** With prices for advanced communication solutions such as telephony and video conferencing continuing to drop, employers and job seekers are able to perform qualifying interviews on the Net at substantial cost savings to traditional methods.

- **Link to success.** Utilizing Web links from and to the company job opportunity page is a cost-efficient method of distributing information across a wide area.
- **Low printing costs.** The Net is a cost-effective way to save money on printed materials by publishing online brochures, annual reports, project portfolios, press releases, executive biographies, training and hiring materials.
- **Convenient accessibility.** Company and job information posted on the Net is easily accessible to job seekers 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Job seekers also can access their email or send email from any location worldwide with Net access.
- **Interactive advertising.** The most effective advertising is interactive advertising where the advertisement provides interactive participation with the audience. Classifieds and other online job advertisements allow job seekers to be involved with the communication and content of the advertisement by controlling what is seen. With conventional advertising, a message is delivered to jobseekers regardless of their desire to see it. With Net advertising job seekers must actively seek out the information, which means they come to the ad as a pre-qualified buyer. Interactive ads can include extensive descriptive text, color or animated graphics, photos, video or sound, and include links to corporate Web pages, email or message boards. They run longer than most media, usually from 30 days to 90 days. Advertising results can also be tracked and monitored unlike conventional advertising to provide immediate ad optimization and greater ad success.
- **Marketing dream.** Web pages can serve as the sales person and marketing department that never sleeps. Ads can include extended descriptive text, color or animated graphics, photos, video or sound, and include links to corporate Web pages, email or message boards. Advertising results can also be tracked and monitored unlike conventional advertising to provide immediate ad optimization and greater ad success.
- **No time restrictions.** Recruiting different time zones or working late at night is not a problem with the Net.
- **Immediate feedback.** Through email, chat, or online messaging, job seekers can send requests or receive information quickly without waiting for regular mail or playing phone tag. The end result is a faster hiring cycle at a significantly lower cost per hire.
- **User-friendly platform.** Posting job opportunities and doing resume research is easy to perform due to the graphical “point-and-click” features of the World Wide Web.
- **Expands company sales.** The Net allows companies to reach new sales audiences by providing online purchasing of services or products, and by selling ad space on their company site to third parties.
- **Competitive advantage.** Net technology allows recruiters to stay ahead of their competition.
- **Demographic advantage.** Net users are growing exponentially, and offer favorable demographics for recruiters.

5. Tips to Internet recruiting

- **Don't be afraid of technology.** As technology advances, the Net is becoming easier to use and more “idiot proof.” On a basic level the Net is used as a library of online documents that are keyword searchable and interactive. If one can work a word processing program one can surf the Net effectively.

- **Act quickly.** Like any candidate recruitment campaign, it's important to act quickly when a prize candidate is found. Attractive job seekers get many calls once they post their resume on the Net. Delaying a contact could easily result in finding the candidate in the final stages of interviews with other potential employers.
- **Get free help.** Visit the local library, college, computer store, community service center or Internet cafe to locate helpful administrators willing to offer free Net advice and assistance. Join a local computer or Internet club to find relevant training classes, education materials and technical support at no or low cost.
- **Post complete job information.** Because of the limitless nature of the Net, most job postings allow for extended text descriptions. The rule for posting jobs is to make job descriptions as detailed as possible. Like with any advertising medium, try to make the top selling points in the job title name and in the first few sentences of the description to capture the attention of job seekers. Use as many keywords as possible when posting a job to help job seekers find the job when they keyword search the database. This also helps market the job more effectively to the search engine robots that crawl the job database looking for keywords to index. Post each unique job opportunity with individual identification numbers, and require job seekers to submit resumes referencing the appropriate identification number to make resume management easier. Also include in the job information if relocation assistance is available, and if U.S. citizenship is required.
- **Utilize an email form.** Use an online form (application) for job seekers to complete that gets entered into a database, which complies with the company resume management program. An inexpensive alternative is to provide an email form for job seekers to submit resumes into, which will protect the company's private email address from robots that crawl that Net searching out email addresses for junk mailings.
- **Hire assistance.** Save valuable time by hiring a junior assistant to perform initial screenings of the company's employment email, and to source select resume databases and classified ad resources.
- **Schedule regular online hours.** Regular scheduling for online recruitment will form effective habits and result in consistent performance. It shouldn't take an experienced Net surfer more than 30 minutes a day to obtain results. Pick a favorite time of day or night that will allow for a regular schedule.
- **Computer processor size does not matter.** However modem speed and Internet access does. A 56K BPS modem is almost twice as fast as a 28.8K BPS and almost three times as fast as a 14.4K BPS. High-speed modems can be purchased under \$100, are easily installed and are a requirement for any serious Net surfer. Most Internet Service Providers utilizes that latest and fastest speeds available, but check to see that they provide Net access at 56K BPS.
- **Post all jobs on the company web site.** Make sure company job opportunities have their own unique Web page, and that this page is linked FROM the company home page. This will assure the maximum amount of traffic from visitors to the company Web site, and will assure indexing with the major search engines that usually only index information one link deep from the homepage.
- **Offer free gifts.** A good traffic builder to the job opportunity Web page is to offer job seekers that submit their resumes the opportunity to participate in a drawing for a free

book, article, tool or other gift. Offer monthly prizes to be announced in the company employment chat or message board to keep them coming back.

- **Select a favorite resume database, but be willing to change.** There are as many different types of resume databases, as there are personalities. Each individual should try many before selecting a favorite. Web sites are also constantly changing so make sure to re-evaluate alternative databases every six months.
- **Automate email responses.** Create an automated email response letter that will respond to each resume delivered to the company mailbox. This will provide job seekers immediate feedback to their submission, indicating their email has been received and will be reviewed. Consider also mentioning a few key selling points in the response letter as a reminder why the company is exceptional or unique.
- **Keep all job opportunities in electronic form.** By keeping job opportunities on a removable disk, recruiters can easily transport and cut-and-paste job openings easily into favorite, online job databases.
- **Pay for preferred service.** There are many free job-posting databases, but often the pay services achieve better results for employers since job seekers can easily find quality job opportunities that do not require sorting through hundreds of free, unqualified opportunities.
- **Don't put all the eggs in one basket.** Spread out the job postings among many select job databases and classified ad resources.
- **Get professional help.** There are many Net-recruitment training resources offline and online that are available at little to no cost. Visit the major search engines and keyword search the words "Internet Recruitment Training."
- **Provide added value.** Job postings on the company Web site should be enhanced by offering links to candidate job resources such as salary and relocation adjusters, local city information and other appropriate resources that will make the job seekers experience at the company Web site more enjoyable and informative.

6. Top employment resources on the Internet

- **The company web site**

The company Web site is a good marketing tool to promote the company and a great way to advertise job opportunities. By adding an additional web page of job openings to the company web site, HR recruiters can significantly increase incoming resume traffic, especially if the job opportunity page is linked from the company homepage. The company Webmaster can set up an easy-to-use administrative template for adding new jobs, or changing and deleting old ones so HR can manage this page without assistance from the webmaster. When posting job opportunities on the Net, remember to include as much detail as possible about the position, its benefits, and other key reasons why a candidate should apply. If there are many positions available, consider categorizing the job postings and adding a search engine. Create an online application form for job seekers to complete that is formatted to integrate into the company's internal resume management program. However it is important to provide a means of alternative contact both online (such as email, message board, etc.) and offline (fax and phone numbers) since many job seekers prefer to fax in their

resume or call in. Consider also offering special incentives to job seekers who submit their resume such as access to training materials, contest drawings and other inexpensive awards.

- **Top general search engines**

The major search engines are popular for locating resumes since they often contain the largest databases of online documents. Robots from the major search engines crawl the Net continually, seeking out new job and resume postings. Top general search engines include <http://www.hotbot.com>, <http://www.altavista.com>, <http://www.infoseek.com>, <http://www.northernlight.com> and <http://www.lycos.com>.

- **Top employment databases**

How do you determine which job databases on the Internet are the biggest? It's hard, because "biggest" can be measured in so many ways, including number of unique job listings, number of "hits," number of participating employers/recruiters, number of page views, and number of links to the site. One Internet measurement company called MediaMetrix at <http://www.mediametrix.com/>, has posted what it calls the most unique visitors among their list of the Top 7 job databases for December month 1998: <http://www.careermosaic.com>, <http://www.monster.com>, <http://www.careerpath.com>, <http://www.resumail.com>, <http://www.headhunter.net>, <http://www.occ.com>, <http://www.jobtrack.com>, Gonyea Guide to Online Career and Employment Sites, <http://www.onlinecareerguide.com>. Monster Board claims to have the largest online database of resumes and allows direct postings from corporate resume management programs such as NetStart Inc., Restrac, Resumix and Ezaccess systems. Other popular employment databases include <http://www.hotjobs.com>, <http://www.iccweb.com>, <http://www.joboptions.com>, <http://www.thejobresource.com> (college resumes) and Yahoo Classifieds at <http://classifieds.yahoo.com/employment.html>.

- **Top multiple job posting resources**

Recruit-Net at <http://www.recruit-net.com> is a job posting resource, which allows recruiters to post one job simultaneously to up to 300 sites at a click of a button. Net Recruiter, part of the Job Locator at <http://www.joblocator.com> automates postings to many Web sites. All in One Submit at <http://www.allinonesubmit.com>, Resume Zapper at <http://www.resumezapper.com>, CareerXpress at <http://www.careerxpress.com> and Go Jobs at <http://www.gojobs.com>.

There are also multiple job-posting resources such as Career Path, at <http://www.careerpath.com> and the Classified Advertising Network at <http://www.texoma.com/donrey/classified/newspaper/advertising> where one can place classified ads in 57 newspapers.

- **Top books on Internet recruiting**

The Internet Recruiting Edge, by Barbara Ling, presents vital information for those recruiters who desire to make their mark on the Net, buy a Web site from a qualified Web designer, and

locate skilled job seekers for their business before their competition does. It includes a comprehensive bookmark's file that contains over 600 links to recruiting sites.

Recruiter's Internet Survival Guide, by John Sumser with Internet Business Network at <http://www.interbiznet.com>. John manages Electronic Recruiting News, a complete online resource for recruiters.

CareerXroads, by Gerry Crispin and Mark Mehler. The book lists and compares the top 500 jobs, resumes and career management sites on the World Wide Web.

Internet Guide for Recruiters, promoted by Michael's & Associates of Coal Valley, IL, contains 946 Web sites of resumes, job postings, salary surveys, cost-of-living and relocation information, trade journals, newsgroup directories, employment law, professional associations, HR information, resource and sourcing leads, computer resources, and much, much more.

- **Top college placement centers**

Locate and connect with college placement centers through The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) at <http://www.jobWeb.org/NACE/> or JobTrak at <http://www.jobtrak.com> with over 600 new jobs posted each day for college students and recent graduates. Also <http://www.collegegrad.com>, and <http://www.careercampus.com>.

- **Top recruiting robots**

ITTA's Pro-active Recruiter Robot at <http://www.prorecruiter.com> is an automated agent that finds resumes as they hit the Web and can deliver pre-planned messages from recruiting professionals. There are also meta-tools such as Web Compass at <http://www.arachnid.qdeck.com/qdeck/products/wc20>, which link to primary search engines and drive queries out over the Web.

- **Top Net training and consulting for human resources**

Basic information to Web surfing can be found at Yahoo's Surf School <http://www3.zdnet.com/yil/filters/surfjump.html>, Microsoft's Internet Tutorial at <http://www.microsoft.com/magazine/guides/internet>, or Internet 101 at <http://www2.famvid.com/i101>. Monsterboard at <http://www.monster.com> provides free seminars around the country for recruiters to develop Net recruitment strategies. WebSearch Consulting, located at <http://www.gis.net/~Weblogic>, specializes in Net training for recruiters.

The Virtual Coach, located at <http://www.virtual-coach.com>, is available to help recruiters learn more about online recruiting and create a strategy suited to unique needs. Intel Search at <http://www.intell-search.com> provides training and a complete directory of online tools for recruiters. Internet 101 at <http://www.learntheinternet.com> is a fee-based course to lead people through the basic functions of the Net. Internet Business Network at

<http://www.interbiznet.com> is a company focused exclusively on Electronic Recruiting offering seminars and training.

- **Other top Net resources for human resources**

Recommended online publications include HR Magazine at <http://www.shrm.org/hrmagazine>, and Workforce Online at <http://www.workforceonline.com>. One of the leaders in online HR resources is the Society for Human Resource Management, located at <http://www.shrm.org>. SHRM is the leading voice of the human resource profession, representing the interests of more than 100,000 professional and student members from around the world. The Human Resource Professional's Gateway to the Net at <http://www.hrisolutions.com>, contains helpful links to hundreds of resources for the online HR professional.

HR Management Resources on the Internet, from the Business School at Nottingham Trent University at http://www.nbs.ntu.ac.uk/staff/lyerj/hrm_link.htm, provides comprehensive and international links to HR resources.

HR World, at <http://www.hrworld.com>, offers links, articles, and information for the HR professional. HR Online located at <http://www.hr2000.com> is a link to several HR-related sites and companies. Webhire, by Restrac, at <http://www.restrac.com>, is an online recruiting and resume management system for growing employers that helps post jobs, store, search, and track resumes (paper or electronic) through the hiring process.

The Salary and Moving Calculator at <http://www2.homefair.com/calc/salcalc.html>, is powered by statistics provided and updated quarterly by the Center for Mobility Resources. Users can compare cost-of-living expenses for hundreds of cities across the country.

Weddle's Online News, online newsletter for online recruitment tips
<http://www.weddles.com>.

HOW TO ATTRACT AND KEEP GOOD EMPLOYEES

Frederick C. Hornberger, Jr.



<http://www.hmc.com>

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HOW TO ATTRACT AND KEEP GOOD EMPLOYEES

More than a decade ago, many of the nations leading trade associations like the Associated General Contractors (AGC), began warning its members of an impending labor shortage. They encouraged contractors to begin providing contemporary labor training and development. Their warning was based on a prediction that baby boomers who fueled the industry's growth in the seventies would begin leaving in droves. Few heeded the warning. Today, most companies are having to come to terms with a shrinking work force.

The labor shortage has been effecting almost every industry, and will continue to be a problem unless employers begin to look outside their traditional sources.

1. Retiring baby boomers leave employers with huge gaps

Twenty years ago, baby boomers flooded the workplace. Two decades later, the baby boomers have begun to retire. As they do, they're leaving employers with huge gaps in the labor pool. Business Week in its September 16, 1996 issue "A Scramble for Good Help," stated the government expects the number of workers aged 25 to 34 to shrink by 13% each year over the next 10 years. "Eighteen months later, this prediction seems to be accurate. Latest figures from the U.S. Department of Labor show a 10% drop in the number of workers age 25 to 34 as compared to last year."

But the worst may still be ahead. According to recruiter Ken Shaw of Shaw & Associates in Norfolk, VA the trend is expected to continue accelerating beyond the year 2006. "The Generation-X labor pool for talent offers employers far less talent than anyone could have predicted, and this labor shortage is going to be felt across all segments of the American employment community well into the new millennium," said Shaw.

2. Generation-X'ers going high tech

It's not that the future labor pool is shallow on talent. Just the opposite, today's new recruits, aged eighteen to twenty four are equipped with more skills than perhaps any crop of potential employees in recent memory. And that is precisely the problem. The field is so talent-rich it is heavily courted by booming high-tech industries that offer outstanding job opportunities.

At the same time, potential employees are also being tempted by the prospect of working at home, another by-product of the techno-revolution. Plummeting technology costs and the Internet have reduced business start-up costs so that almost anyone can afford a home-based business. Beneath the surface, the fundamental employee/employer relationship is also undergoing change. Loyalty is waning. Recruiter Ken Shaw commented, "The onslaught of firms merging, downsizing, and changing directions has caused employees to view company loyalty

with skepticism. Employee loyalty is very short-lived, and most employees do not expect to be with the same employer after a few years.” As employers and employees adjust to new market changes, the issue of loyalty is being redefined. Even employee’s basic needs are changing. Finding and keeping good talent is not just about money anymore. Recruiter Jim Vockley with Moffitt International in Asheville, NC comments that “Typically we find that candidates don’t usually leave for just more money, or to avoid difficult job circumstances. We find they usually leave for more human factor reasons such as greater job appreciation, better working relationship with management, better geographic location to their family, better work environment, more flex-time, etc.” There’s no doubt that the employment landscape has changed dramatically. The reality of these changes is that employers who do not find a way to attract and retain good talent will die out. And that implies fundamental changes in the how many employers view the employee/employer relationship.

3. Keeping your employees

There are three key ingredients to effective employee recruiting and retention. Identifying why employees leave. Appreciating employees financially. And creating a better working environment.

Determine why employees leave

“Why didn’t it work?” When a problem arises on the job site everything comes to a halt until the problem is identified and corrected. Rarely do employers follow the same process when an employee leaves. If they did, they just might find reduced turnover. Of course, employers don’t have to wait until an employee leaves to begin taking preventative measures. They can begin by asking themselves, “If I were looking for a job, why would I want to work for my company.” Employees who have left can also help identify ways to reduce future turnover, as can a brainstorming session with top management.

Many of the underlying reasons employees leave are similar, and surprisingly, have little to do with money. Often they leave because of a human factor such as conflict with management personnel, broken promises, perceived lack of appreciation, support or direction. Still others have nothing to do with the employer at all, such as a need to be geographically closer to their families. Whatever the reasons, employers need to understand them and work to minimize their effects in the future. Appreciate employees financially.

PAY MARKET WAGES

Accessing market information on compensation averages has never been easier. Associations, recruitment firms, even the Internet make compensation surveys readily available.

Any employee worth keeping is smart enough to monitor these figures to make sure he is getting paid fair market value.

OFFER STOCK PLANS

The most loyal employee is the one with ownership in the firm. Lawyers and architects have been offering their key people partnerships and shares in the company for decades. Corey M. Rosen, the executive director for the National Center for Employee Ownership states a strong stock plan can cut employee turnover up to half.

SUPPLEMENT WITH BONUSES AND PERFORMANCE-BASED PAY

Many firms offer their employees bonus plans that take into account personal performance, team performance (or project performance) and firm profitability that is distributed over 3 to 5 years. Payment on commission has been common on the sales end for years. But the industry is now seeing more operations employees earning the bulk of their compensation through bonuses and or commissions.

IMPROVED BENEFITS

Perks to a compensation program don't have to cost a great deal of money. And the message they send to the employee can mean increased loyalty and reduced turnover. Many perks now focus on helping the worker succeed as both an employee and as an individual. Common incentives include reimbursement for tuition on qualified programs, retirement plans, child-care subsidies, and flexible schedules to attract working parents. Additional benefits may include:

- Trips and weekend excursions
- Leased cars
- Awards, certificates, plaques, honors
- Memberships in professional organizations
- Subscriptions
- Computers/laptops
- Cellular phones
- Tickets to sporting events, movies, theater, restaurants
- Software
- Additional paid days off
- Birthdays as a floating individual holiday
- Gifts of all sorts
- Health club memberships
- Improving the work environment

Most people spend more time with their co-workers than they do with their families. In fact, for many workers, the workplace functions as a surrogate family, with the worker looking

for support, encouragement and appreciation. The extent to which employers can provide this type of atmosphere can be a good determinate of how successful they are in reducing turnover.

The Center for Creative Leadership in San Diego commented in a recent survey that firms which offered employee development, good communication, ethics And other positive human factors enjoyed better retention rates and 20% higher profits. Here are some non-financial tools some employers are using to help boost retention rates.

A CAREER PLAN

Employees like to have clearly defined goals, as well as defined plans and schedules to achieve those goals. Help employees develop a career plan within the firm so that they understand where they are going, and why it makes sense to achieve those goals.

OPEN DIALOG

Sharing of operating and financial information helps build Trust between employer and employee. It also helps workers understand how their performance affects results, and encourages their input. This ultimately invests them with a feeling of ownership in the company and a long-term stake in its future.

LISTEN

Reinhard Ziegler, a managing partner for the Dallas office of Andersen Consulting, says, "To retain people you have to be a good listener." One of the most valuable tools a manager has is the ability to provide regular feedback. Keep suggestion boxes for company improvement available to all employees, and offer rewards for the suggestion of the week, or month.

TEAM BUILDING

Provide reward and recognition programs that recognize performance and achievement. Hold regular company social outings to build rapport and enthusiasm.

ON-GOING TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

FMI comments in their 1997 Training Survey that "50% of the largest firms indicated that supervisory training would reduce turnover by 10-19%." They suggest employers partner with local community college or technical schools and offer internships, apprenticeships, or pay for education in return for a certain number years of work.

4. Tips to attract quality employees

- Develop advertising and marketing programs targeted to potential employees.
- Using computer-based recruitment tools not only make your recruiting more efficient, they ensure your technology is at the same level as that of the labor pool.

- Network with associations, suppliers, owners and peers.
- Establish an internal referral program that pay employees for referrals that result in a hire.
- Maintain a visible presence wherever the labor pool frequents, such as industry associations and related events.
- Use in-house recruitment personnel to visit job fairs, colleges, follow up on networking leads, do direct sourcing, surf the Internet, etc.
- Use a specialty recruitment firm to supplement your internal hiring efforts.
- Recruit retirees and minority workers, two of the fastest growing labor markets in the US.
- Use the Government Unemployment Office as a resource.
- Help industry enhance its image as a career for today's youth.

5. Putting yourself first

The wide availability of similar technologies and the growing consolidation of vendors are quickly leveling the playing field for most employers. As competition within industry continues to grow, success will be judged less on price and quality of work and more on the employer's ability to provide responsive and informed service. All this points to the critical importance of attracting and maintaining a well-trained and loyal work force.

Those companies who are first to realize their success hinges on serving their customers will also be the first to realize that to maintain that level of service among their customers, they must first provide it internally to their own people. In that respect, the employer's first and most important customers may wind up being themselves.

EMPLOYER INSIGHTS: 16 EXECUTIVE RETENTION STRATEGIES FOR CONTRACTORS

Frederick C. Hornberger, Jr.



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EMPLOYER INSIGHTS: 16 EXECUTIVE RETENTION STRATEGIES FOR CONTRACTORS

Executive retention is one of the most important topics that face construction employers. Below are 16 practical strategies to retaining construction executive talent:

1. Hire the right person.

Good executive retention planning begins with the hiring process. Contractors should hire the best executives that they can afford. These hires should be based on skill, attitude and general “fit” within the firm’s needs and values. Hiring based on common values and attitudes supports long-term retention and stronger commitment from new hires.

2. Provide a formal orientation program and establish realistic expectations.

The first few weeks of employment for a newly hired executive is the most critical time to lay the groundwork for long-term employee commitment, and for helping the new hire to become successful. Demonstrating employer commitment to a new hire’s success early on fosters trust and commitment from the new hire.

3. Provide training, education, and development.

The benefits of executive training and education usually far outweigh the costs. The more an executive feels that he or she can develop and grow within their firm, the more likely they are to stay.

4. Make rewards and recognition count.

Every executive wants to feel valued, necessary and important to their employer, while playing a vital role in their employer’s success. Employers should reward and recognize their executives at every opportunity. Rewards should be immediate and personal, and should parallel the significance of the accomplishment. Even the smallest tokens of appreciation (such as gift certificates, thank you notes and acknowledgments in the employer newsletter) often carry tremendous impact with executive retention.

5. Build trustworthy and loyal relationships with staff.

Construction employers should not only teach their executives how to be good leaders and managers, but also how to build loyal and trustworthy relationships with their direct reports. Most relationships can be dramatically improved by simply improving communication, being a better listener, and becoming more available.

6. Promote a company culture of participation.

Construction firms should establish a corporate culture that promotes employee participation and empowerment. Whenever possible, executives should be invited to help solve employer problems. This shared approach creates deep ownership in the firm’s success, and communicates that the employer trusts and values the executive’s opinion.

7. Offer equity and ownership.

The most loyal employee is one with ownership in the firm. A strong employee stock plan often cuts employee turnover up to one half. Stock ownership is a good way to encourage executives to focus on the firm’s success — not just their own. It offers an alternative for compensating high achievers when cash is not available, and provides an effective “golden handcuff.”

8. Create career challenges and promote from within.

Executives often leave their employers in order to pursue greater and more meaningful career challenges. Employers should customize each executive's career path based on the executive's ability, desires, and input. Employers should also have a policy of promoting from within to reward loyalty and long-term commitment to the firm.

9. Pay market wages or better.

Once executives reach an acceptable income level, money moves down the list of priorities. However, compensation consistently weighs heavily when it comes to keeping executives. Compensation programs should be continually reviewed and redeveloped in order to remain competitive with the marketplace.

10. Deferred bonus payment, restricted stock.

Bonus pay can sometimes be the largest part of an executive's compensation. Many employers will stretch bonus payments out over several years as a retention method or golden handcuff. Discretionary bonus pay and restricted stock offerings can sometimes be structured so that if an executive prematurely leaves, the remaining bonus or vesting is subject to forfeiture.

11. Improve perks and benefits.

Perks and benefits are often highly regarded and valued by executives. Perks don't have to cost a great deal of money. The message they send to an executive can mean increased loyalty and reduced turnover. Perks (such as tuition reimbursement) can help executives grow as professionals, and supplement their need for career challenge.

12. Improve communication.

The number one reason for workplace conflict is typically a result of faulty communication, such as an unclear definition of what's required. Executives want to understand what's expected of them, and to receive honest and direct feedback. They also want to be heard and to know where they stand at all times.

13. Create a flexible work environment.

Executives look for a work place that allows for individual expression, and meets their unique needs as individuals. By allowing executives to design and define their work area, and the opportunity to telecommute and work from home rather than the office at times, employers will usually have a more productive and satisfied executive.

14. Consider employment contracts.

Employment contracts are often used to cement verbal agreements concerning an executive's pay and responsibilities, but they are also effective tools at forging executive partnerships and alliances with the employer to reduce turnover. Although an employment contract is unlikely to keep an executive who wants to leave, it can significantly inhibit the departure process, deflect recruiters, and diminish the pondering of outside career opportunities during the contract term. Employment contracts can also cause recruiters and prospective employers to hesitate or withdraw their pursuit of an executive if they believe that there might be litigation associated with a hire.

15. Conduct retention surveys with direct reports.

Fortunately it is relatively easy to get the facts behind most turnovers. The best and simplest solution to developing a retention strategy is to have managers regularly ask their direct reports why they stay and what would cause them to leave. Even conducting an anonymous employee survey can predict when and why certain employees may be thinking about leaving the firm.

16. Make executive retention a strategic priority, and follow through.

To make executive retention effective, it must begin with a commitment from the highest levels of leadership, and include all management personnel. It must also become a strategic priority for the firm, and include specific practices and accountability. Executive retention programs typically involve conducting a turnover cost analysis, researching why key people are leaving and have left, monitoring why new hires have joined and remain, evaluating results, preparing a report with specific recommendations for change, and turning recommendations into actions and policy.

CEO INSIGHTS: WHAT CONSTRUCTION CEO'S CAN DO TO IMPROVE EXECUTIVE RETENTION

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CEO INSIGHTS: WHAT CONSTRUCTION CEO'S CAN DO TO IMPROVE EXECUTIVE RETENTION

Construction CEO's have more control over executive retention than they may realize. Top talent can be kept as evidenced by the low executive turnover rates of many contractors, and by research studies like the annual "[Construction Executive Retention Survey](http://www.hmc.com/executiveretentionsurvey2.shtml)" (<http://www.hmc.com/executiveretentionsurvey2.shtml>) conducted by Hornberger Management Company.

These studies indicate that construction executive turnover is primarily due to "push factors" inside their current employer (such as poor supervisor relationships, lack of meaningful career challenge and need for job flexibility), rather than "pull factors" from of an alluring outside job opportunity. Many push factors are within the CEO's control, placing the CEO in the best position to fix the problem.

According to a recent interview with Frederick Hornberger of Hornberger Management Company, "Executive retention is primarily about relationships. Our executive retention surveys consistently indicate that the number one reason executives choose to leave or stay with their current employer is the relationship they have with their direct supervisor.

Consequently the best investment of time and money for an employer is to have their CEO and managers focus on building quality, loyal relationships with their direct reports. Quality work relationships that inspire loyalty can usually be achieved by simply establishing trust through consistent actions of fairness and integrity, permitting participation in decision making, empowering subordinates to reach greater heights of success and challenge, offering genuine recognition and appreciation, demonstrating flexibility, following through on promises, and improving overall communication."

Hornberger offers the following advice to CEO's:

1. Continually survey direct reports.

CEO's should regularly meet with their executives to ask them why they stay and what would cause them to leave. Most executives are remarkably willing to talk about their career concerns and needs, and what the issues are which might be driving them away. CEO's should also require the same informal survey to be done by all management and their direct reports.

2. Establish a formal employee retention program.

CEO's should establish an executive retention committee to develop and implement a formal retention strategy based upon specific reasons why key personnel leave, and why others stay.

3. Become great managers of people.

CEO's should invest in company training and education that prepares managers to be highly effective with people. CEO's need to allow executives to have the job autonomy and flexibility each requires, and evaluate them for performance and not time on the job. CEO's should also break away from a company culture of compliance to a culture of trust.

4. Become an employer of choice.

If they are to win in the talent wars, CEO's must become employers of choice. They must build employee retention and recruitment as a core competency with management. They must also remove the problem supervisors and hire the best managers that they can afford. CEO's should also build their organizations around their best people, and treat employees like valued customers — only better.