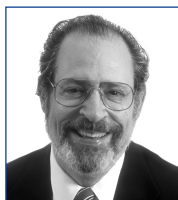


CareerSmart Advisor™

Strategies & Solutions for Your Career Success

A Note From Dave

One challenge business leaders face in their day-to-day work lives is that, at their level, there aren't typically any peers within their organizations in which they can confide. It really can be lonely at the top. Yet, the best advice and guidance comes from your peers. They share the same experiences you do; and sometimes they can provide an answer to your question because they just solved it for themselves.



At ExecuNet, we offer many services that help you connect with your peers to share concerns and challenges, from the Member-to-Member Directory, where you can reach out to fellow members who share your background, to our Forum, where members can post their thoughts and invite feedback from their peers.

I'm pleased to announce another resource that will help connect you with your peers — and a lot of valuable information that will help guide your career journey. It's called Growing Business Link (GrowingBusinessLink.com), and it's an online community that is a collaboration between *The Economist* and ExecuNet.

I encourage you to visit the site, which is a free offering, to share your insights with the group as well as interact with business leaders and entrepreneurs worldwide. There is information available on a wide range of topics facing business leaders today in areas such as finance and operations; sales and marketing; technology; global security and mobility; and human capital management.

You will also find market insight and intelligence that you have come to expect from ExecuNet and *The Economist*. Your participation will certainly help make this endeavor a success.

Sincerely,

Dave

Dave Opton
ExecuNet Founder & CEO
www.execunet.com/davesblog

Managing Your Knowledge Base Through the Talent Pipeline

By Marji McClure

Most executives recognize the importance of company succession plans as well as ensuring their place firmly within those plans. Experts agree that having an outline for your future success as a leader within your organization is one of the smartest career moves an executive can make.

What many executives don't yet recognize is that they need to take an even broader, enterprise-wide view of the future; one that goes beyond their own personal expectations, to create a future leadership plan for the entire company going forward. As the war for talent continues to rage, having a corporate-wide knowledge management strategy in place, along with structured processes for building and sustaining a strong talent pipeline are essential for long-term success — for the individual leader and his company.

Mismatched Perspectives

"My company has an effective succession plan for top leadership positions."

	Executives	Corporate HR
Strongly Agree/Agree	21.7%	41.0%
Not Sure	14.6%	10.5%
Strongly Disagree/Disagree	63.7%	48.5%

"My company has a plan for knowledge management and transfer as older workers retire."

Strongly Agree/Agree	17.8%	31.7%
Not Sure	17.1%	18.3%
Strongly Disagree/Disagree	65.1%	50.0%

Source: ExecuNet, 2007

Unfortunately, many companies are not positioned for the future, when their current top performers leave the organization. There is a great risk that when these workers exit the company — either for

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FastTrack Programs
February 2008
Hosted by Dave Opton,
founder and CEO, ExecuNet

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- 2/19 — **Finding the Job You Want When You are Over 50** — Jean Walker
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- 2/29 — **Converting Interviews to Offers Using DISC** — Linda Dominguez

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- 2/6 — **New York City Sr. Executive Roundtable** — Judy Rosemarin
- 2/6 — **New York City** — Judy Rosemarin
- 2/6 — **Philadelphia Sr. Executive Roundtable** — Ed Kelleher
- 2/6 — **Philadelphia** — Ed Kelleher
- 2/7 — **Seattle Sr. Executive Roundtable** — Susan Stringer
- 2/7 — **Southern Wisconsin** — Clara Hurd Nydam & Tom Senge
- 2/8 — **Greensboro** — John O'Connor
- 2/8 — **Parsippany** — Linsey Levine
- 2/8 — **Tampa Bay** — Gina Potito
- 2/11 — **Miami/Hollywood** — Jeannette Kraar
- 2/11 — **Detroit** — Marge Larsen
- 2/12 — **Sacramento** — Wilcox Miller & Nelson
- 2/12 — **Seattle** — Susan Stringer
- 2/12 — **Phoenix** — Fred Coon
- 2/12 — **Orlando** — Jim Douglas & Mike Murray
- 2/13 — **Portland** — Jean Walker
- 2/13 — **Toronto Sr. Executive Roundtable** — Martin Buckland
- 2/13 — **Stamford** — Howard Bader
- 2/13 — **Cleveland Sr. Executive Roundtable** — Rick Taylor
- 2/14 — **Atlanta** — J. Patrick Haly

Registration information can be found at members.execunet.com/e_network_results.cfm

Insider Insight

Virtual Velocity: Effective Project Management Gives Virtual Teams an Edge

By Michelle LaBrosse

Remember when the virtual team and the virtual office were futuristic concepts? Today, many of us find ourselves working virtually from a home office, on the road, or from a satellite office far from company headquarters.

The right tools are easy enough to find. Most of us already have them or have access to them: email, instant messaging, conferencing (both video and telephone), cell phones, iPhones and BlackBerry devices. However, once the tools that are right for your organization are in place, the biggest barriers are often around communications and work culture. Virtual velocity can be hampered without the right tools and ground rules that can increase your team's productivity and let you reap the rewards of the virtual workforce.

Here are 10 ground rules for virtual velocity success:

Build Trust In-person and Grow That Trust With Clear Expectations

In order for people to work effectively virtually, there has to be trust. Trust doesn't happen magically. It is built when you bring your team together for training or team-building, and then continues to grow with clear expectations consistently set by leaders and met by the team.

Hire People Who Work Well Virtually

Self-starters who don't need to be micro-managed are the best employees in a virtual environment. I don't monitor employees. We run the projects based on processes; and the people who work here are responsible for their processes and responsible for completing the

deliverables of their projects.

People who love what they're doing work well virtually. It's difficult to keep people engaged when they don't have passion for what they're doing. So, when I hire, I look for passion.

If they don't like to carry a BlackBerry and a cell phone, work across multiple time zones, and aren't very technically literate to start with, such individuals won't likely thrive in a virtual environment. You have to hire the right people to work virtually and have the right type of business to do this. We have a capability assessment process we complete on candidates as part of the hiring process to ensure that they will fit in this environment. Being highly technically literate is a primary criteria for every single person we hire.

Make Flexibility Work For You

A significant aspect of compensation can be the ability to work wherever you want and whenever you want. This means that employees work during their own most productive hours. We also have learned when it is important to get together in person. For example, bringing a team together to plan for a major systems integration project or for a product launch.

Manage Results, Not Activity

In the physical office environment, "busy work" often gets mistaken for real work. In the virtual environment, when you can't see what people are doing, the key is to manage results. Set expectations and monitor the results, not the daily activities.

Schedule Regular Communication

It's important that there is a regular

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Insider Insight Continued from page 2

time for reporting both progress and potential pitfalls to the team. This keeps people on track and gives everyone the discipline of a team check-in.

Create Communication that Saves Time, Not Kills It

Have you created an email culture that wastes time with endless “daisy-chain” conversations that take several hours to read? Does your team spend hours trying to solve an issue with an email conversation that could have been solved with a 30-minute conference call? Since email is a critical tool in our work environments, it’s important to create a new culture of effectiveness around it. Ask yourself: how can you make your team’s email communication even more productive?

Create Standards that Build a Cohesive Culture

What are your standards of quality? How do you define excellence? What does your brand mean to each employee? Making sure everyone knows the answers to those three questions is even more important when people are scattered geographically. Virtually, you need to create cohesion with excellence and a sense of pride in what your company stands for.

Rules of Responsiveness

When people work remotely, it’s important that you define what your rules of responsiveness are for your culture. How quickly are people expected to return an email, an instant message or a phone call? What is your protocol when people are out of the office or on vacation? If you’re in a customer service environment, it’s important to have clear expectations regarding how to respond to all customer inquiries.

Make Sure a Real System is Under the Virtual Hood

Working virtually is about systems; creating the systems that enable people to do their work from anywhere and everywhere. There has to be a very strong commitment to giving people the tools they need to help run the business and serve the customers. If they have to go somewhere to answer the phone to serve the customers, they cannot work virtually.

The Wiki is a central hub for our work; where we coordinate our projects and processes. We started this for the marketing group to reduce the email and to better capture the various marketing initiatives and decisions. Within one week, it was adopted by all the other people in the company: IT projects, facilities to coordinate facility work, accounting to coordinate budgeting with the different parts of the business, course development to keep track of course upgrades.

Embrace the New Water Cooler

The virtual world has become the new water cooler — even in physical locations. When you go into companies these days, they are often very quiet — because everyone is communicating via email and in instant messaging chat. Email, instant message, conference calls, webinars and the Wiki are key parts of how we all stay connected. It’s okay when a YouTube video gets passed around, if employees can still get their work done and meet their goals.

Working virtually is not rocket-science, but it does require new rules for our workforce. These tips are a good starting point for your team as you build your own best practices for effective project management in the virtual world. Enjoy the journey and invite your team to help you create a powerful work culture. ■

Michelle LaBrosse is the founder and Chief Cheetah of Cheetah Learning. In 2006, The Project Management Institute, selected LaBrosse as one of the 25 Most Influential Women in Project Management in the World, and only one of two women selected from the training and education industry. LaBrosse is a graduate of the Harvard Business School’s Owner & President Management program for entrepreneurs, and is the author of Cheetah Project Management and Cheetah Negotiations. She can be reached at CheetahLearning.com

Knowledge Base Continued from page 1

retirement or a new position elsewhere — their knowledge will walk out the door with them. In fact, more than half of executives and corporate HR professionals surveyed by ExecuNet say that their company does not have a plan for knowledge management and transfer in place as older workers retire.

It’s certainly a problem that isn’t going to go away. If anything, it will only worsen as Baby Boomers continue their steady exodus from the workforce.

Proactive Measures Necessary

Fortunately, some leaders of top organiza-

“

What many executives don’t yet recognize is that they need to take an even broader, enterprise-wide view of the future.

”

tions have begun to recognize the urgency of this issue and are taking action. These leaders realize that the only solution to this problem is to become more proactive in knowledge management and transfer

efforts to ensure key information is not lost. At the same time, they are putting plans in place to guarantee that new knowledge is also gained in the process.

Some best practices can perhaps be culled from a study of insights contributed by leaders of top organizations that have ongoing processes around knowledge management, according to data compiled in Top Companies for Leaders 2007, a study conducted by Hewitt Associates in partnership with *Fortune* and The RBL Group. The report notes that these companies encourage talent to accept new challenges and responsibilities to prepare them for future roles within the companies. The report also

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Knowledge Base

Continued from page 3

emphasizes the importance of leaders in making such knowledge management strategies happen.

According to the study, the leaders of global top companies “take an active role and personal interest in developing and preparing the next generation of leaders at the global top companies. From informal mentoring to a formal apprenticeship model, these personal connections are another critical ingredient for success.”

Passing It On

A natural place to begin is with a knowledge management plan. It’s vital to a company’s continued success for the organization’s top executives to know where the company’s knowledge lies today, and how to best utilize the brain power of the company’s entire workforce now and in the future.

Such a plan needs to be a priority among leaders. They have to be the champions of such a cause and take a large role in ensuring that knowledge management and transfer occurs throughout all facets of their organization. “Top tier companies have a well-defined succession planning process to identify, train and develop future potential leaders,” says Steve Watson, international chairman of executive search firm Stanton Chase in Dallas. “Every manager should have as part of his job requirement to identify and mentor potential successors.”

It’s just as important to establish organized processes to capture valuable knowledge possessed by members of a company’s workforce. “Keeping information within the company is a very valuable asset that needs to be enforced through information systems, such as CRM (customer relationship management) systems for customer data; similarly, for intellectual property and product data, and through managed knowledge transfer sessions upon retirement or departures,” adds Watson. He suggests having a retiree and his replacement work together for several weeks to allow time for that knowledge transfer to take place.

“Retirement planning with early-identified replacements is critical to a company’s success,” says Watson.

While the process has to start with executives, the benefits are certainly felt company-wide. “Executives make up only a small percentage of the employee population; and while effective knowledge management strategies at the C-level ensure a smooth transition between exiting and new leaders, it is with the majority of the employee population where effective knowledge management methods can deliver measurable results,” say business consultant Milo Sindell and Dr. Thuy Sindell, a leadership consultant and coach.

“

One way in which to ensure that a company maintains its knowledge base is to build a talent pipeline that continuously replaces the knowledge lost by workers who resign and retire.

”

But how can executives most effectively achieve those results? Watson says that knowledge transfer has to be a core part of a company’s culture as well as a component of its human resources practices. “A recent client [a CEO] created a culture of getting everyone with knowledge on an issue in a room to openly provide information so that a solution could be jointly developed at that meeting,” says Watson. “He did not care what the level of the attendees were; and did not encourage attendance by executives or bosses if they did not contribute knowledge. This became an important aspect of their culture.”

The Sindells, also founders of San Francisco-based Hit the Ground Running, an employee engagement and productivity software and consulting firm, agree that a key is to make knowledge-sharing part of a company culture:

“How employees integrate, how they are rewarded, and how employees transition or leave the workplace.”

Creating a Knowledge Management Culture and Processes

Formal knowledge transfer strategies should include entering important company data into informational databases, notes Watson. “Sales VPs, as an example, need to track individual performance based on CRM data, as well as performance, to ensure long-term company success,” says Watson. “A centralized management information system needs to be a high requirement, including business processes that fed the databases. The HR executive should enforce these practices at all levels of the organization.”

Having such strategies in place can help an executive ensure that he has the right knowledge — and right performers on his team. Development programs and coaching are also effective tools for executives to utilize as they build their team for the future, notes John A.K. Lowe, president and principal of Florida-based management consulting firm Hilltop Global Associates.

Executives need to understand the level of talent they currently possess within their team members to gauge what knowledge they have (and want to keep) and what knowledge they perhaps need to acquire.

“You must examine knowledge, skills, experiences and behaviors, and establish what’s most important in the next job,” says Alan Weiss, Ph.D., president of Summit Consulting Group Inc. in Rhode Island. “Behaviors can be modified, but not ‘trained’ or experienced. They are the toughest dynamic to change.”

Building the Talent Pipeline

One way in which to ensure that a company maintains its knowledge base is to build a talent pipeline that continuously replaces the knowledge lost by workers who resign and retire. It’s crucial for executives (on their own and with the help of their HR departments) to adjust their hiring practices to ensure those

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Knowledge Base

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departing workers are replaced by those who share that knowledge or can easily gain it and make immediate contributions to the company.

Executives should seek individuals who share their vision and have the desire for success, notes Watson. “Hire people without egos, who are constant learners, who are team players, and enjoy success through collaboration and teamwork,” advises Watson. “Eliminate the ‘I’ people. Find people with different track records who created and did something unique and different. Listen to how a candidate responds to questions to determine if he is a ‘we’ person or an ‘I’ person.”

Executives must truly do their homework before they begin the process to build a successful team. They need to identify the skills and capabilities that are most important to the organization for future success and only seek candidates who meet the criteria.

“Determine the qualities and characteristics of the right team players, and do not stray from those qualities when interviewing and hiring,” says Watson. Hiring for future needs is perhaps more important than hiring someone who can help your organization accomplish your more immediate tasks. “Find people who can do tomorrow’s job, not today’s and [individuals] who bring communication processes and enthusiasm with him or her,” concurs Weiss. “You can teach all the rest, including content, but you can’t teach those behaviors.”

Don’t settle for less. Make sure candidates possess the desired behaviors and capabilities before you extend an offer to bring them on board. “Be very particular in the hiring process and do extensive reference checks on appropriate characteristics and qualities,” adds Watson. “Use outside search firms to help identify the right personal attributes in the candidates. Reinforce to the candidates the company’s knowledge retention programs, practices and culture.”

It’s important to continue to reinforce knowledge management processes and keep cultivating that talent pipeline after

Four Steps to Effective Team-Building

Assembling the best talent to create a powerful team is one of the most complex challenges leaders face. The rewards are obvious; after all, a leader is only as strong as his team. Milo Sindell and Dr. Thuy Sindell, founders of Hit the Ground Running, an employee engagement consulting firm, suggest executives take these steps when building a team designed for success:

1. Determine what the ideal team should look like given its charter today and outlook for tomorrow. This is where the executive’s strategic thinking skills become important in anticipating the future state of the team, given the environment and needs.
2. Look at the talent on the team, as an executive will most likely inherit his team, and map them to the company needs.
3. Create development plans and be prepared to manage employees out of the company.
4. In the hiring process, look for individuals who help fill the gap and are motivated.

employees are hired. Encourage knowledge-sharing across the organization. “Focus on a new employee integration process that gives employees the tools to define their knowledge and the insight and behavioral skills to share given the dynamics of that culture,” say the Sindells. “Also, communicate role models and reward the behaviors that your company expects from new employees.”

One factor that can make this an even greater challenge is the continued convergence of the generations in the workforce, as the Baby Boomers who remain in the workforce are sharing workspace with Generation Y workers who bring different values and skill sets. Because the generations often don’t have the same capabilities or work ethic, organizations need to focus their attention on bridging the communication gap between those generations and provide an environment that promotes knowledge-sharing.

Both mentoring programs and internship programs can be beneficial ways in which to bring the generations together to effectively share knowledge and expertise.

Mentoring as a Knowledge-Sharing Strategy

One way in which to help employees “inherit” the desired knowledge and behaviors is to provide mentors who can guide those desired actions. “When an organization creates a mentoring culture, knowledge-sharing is part of the culture that helps everyone win,” says Dr. Lois Zachary, president of Phoenix-based Leadership Development Services and author of *Creating a Mentoring Culture: The Organization’s Guide*.

“In today’s business climate, the need for continuous learning and knowledge management has never been greater,” adds Zachary. “At the same time, the hunger for human connection and relationship has never been more palpable. Because mentoring combines learning with the compelling human need for connection, individuals are better able to deepen their personal capacity and maintain organizational vitality in the face of continuous challenge and change.”

Zachary adds that organizations that utilize mentoring gain many benefits across the board — benefits that lead to success in the present and future. The positive results of mentoring programs that these organizations achieve, according to Zachary, include:

- Increased retention rates
- Improved morale
- Increased organizational commitment and job satisfaction
- Accelerated leadership development
- Better succession planning
- Reduced stress
- Stronger and more cohesive teams
- Heightened individual and organizational learning

“Today’s organizational leaders must think systemically and create mentoring cultures rather than opting for the more expedient route of running a program,” says Zachary. “A mentoring culture is a learning and development culture. It deepens the ways employees manage their own growth and development, relate to one another, and facilitates organizational learning.”

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Building the Pipeline Through Internships

Internships are also an important way in which to manage the knowledge base of your organization. By welcoming interns into the company, you're bringing in individuals you can personally train and mold into employees you truly want to comprise your future workforce.

They don't bring knowledge from previous positions like other new employees, so the transition to learning your company's business protocol and becoming fluent in your organization's native business language should be a smoother process. Internships enable organizations to find employees who are a good fit in culture and skills, and can accomplish this in a very economic-friendly way (since many internships are low- or non-paid).

"You're test-driving a potential employee for low risk and low cost," says Matthew Zinman, executive director and founder of The Internship Institute, a Newtown, Penn.-based nonprofit organization that provides resources to help employers establish and maintain internship programs. "You're grooming them [for a position in the company]." You'll know what type of employees they will be before they're officially hired.

Several well-known companies have taken the time to create their own internship programs, and their successes are well-documented. According to Zinman, the most successful include Enterprise Rent-A-Car, Sherwin-Williams, IBM and DuPont. Last fall, *BusinessWeek* released a list of the 50 best companies who offer internships to undergraduate students. Accounting firms PricewaterhouseCoopers, Ernst & Young and Deloitte & Touche comprised the top three.

According to the list, 88 percent of

If you're going to spend time and effort building your team, you need to do everything you can to ensure the longevity of the team.



PWC interns received full-time job offers; 87 percent accepted. At E&Y, 98 percent received offers and 92 percent accepted; 87 percent of Deloitte interns received offers, with 92 percent accepting.

A study released last summer by The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) revealed that employers offered full-time positions to two-thirds of their interns, and more than 70 percent accepted the offers. These employers who participated in NACE's 2007 Recruiting Benchmarks Survey also reported that almost 31 percent of new graduate hires from the Class of 2006 participated in their internship programs.

For internship programs to be successful, they must receive buy-in throughout the organization, from the executive level to the HR department. "The time has come for internships to be a strategic asset in an organization's talent pipeline," says Zinman. "It requires the HR executives to assume ownership and champion a mandate for these programs to be well-managed."

But once these interns become an integral part of a company's knowledge base and culture as full-time employees, companies must then shift their focus to ensuring that they successfully manage that knowledge throughout the employees' lifecycle with the organization. Deepening the knowledge base and

strengthening the talent pipeline have to become continuous processes.

A Solid Retention Strategy as the Foundation

Ensuring you have the right people "on the bus" has a direct impact on your success as a leader. The war for talent isn't going to make the challenge any easier. If you're going to spend time and effort building your team, you need to do everything you can to ensure the longevity of the team. That's why overall retention efforts have to complete knowledge management process, to keep that knowledge safely in-house.

"We have entered an era that we call the 'New Reality,' a talent shortage based on multiple reasons," says Watson. "CEOs must put their human resource executives at the executive table and make sure talent acquisition is at the forefront of the executive staff's agenda. It's both getting it right when you hire, as well as keeping it right — [through] retention."

Unfortunately, according to Watson, companies are not placing more emphasis on those retention strategies, even as more attention is paid to getting and maintaining knowledge management plans and a conscious building of a strong talent pipeline.

"More creative ways to retain people need to be explored and implemented than in the past; [those] that fit the company and the culture," he says. Among those new ideas are job rotations, continuing education, in-house seminars (non-work related), daycare centers, creativity sessions, outside activity support and family open house functions, adds Watson. ■

Expert Resources:

- John A.K. Lowe, Hilltop Global Associates (HilltopGlobal.com)
- Milo Sindell and Dr. Thuy Sindell, Hit the Ground Running (HitTheGroundRunning.com)
- Steve Watson, Stanton Chase (StantonChase.com)
- Alan Weiss, Summit Consulting Group (SummitConsulting.com)
- Dr. Lois Zachary, Leadership Development Services (LeadershipDevelopmentServices.com)
- Matthew Zinman, The Internship Institute (InternshipInstitute.org)

Your Career Advisor

How to Make Sure Your Skills Stay Fresh

By Deborah Brown-Volkman

Every industry changes over time. Think about the industries that have come and gone before. Mining for gold in California used to be a big industry. That industry has disappeared. Whales used to be hunted for their blubber. That industry has disappeared too.

If you work in an industry long enough, there is a good chance that it will change or go in a different direction. Maybe your job will be sent to another country or become computerized. Maybe what you've spent a lifetime learning and excelling at will become obsolete.

Don't think that where you sit on the organizational chart protects you. No one is immune from change.

Many executives with whom I speak tell me they knew when their change began. They can pinpoint the time their industry began to alter, but they chose not to act. Many tell me it was because they were busy. Or that they planned to get around to it "someday." Some tell me they hoped they would not be affected. These executives all had one thing in common: they knew that the inevitable was coming, but decided not to do anything about it — until it was too late.

Your goal is to not get caught off guard. If you can anticipate what's happening around you, you can ensure that when your industry changes, you are able to change with it.

So, how can you make sure your skills stay fresh? Ask yourself the following questions:

Am I Stagnating Where I Am?

Do I come into the office in the morning keyed up about my job or am I going through the motions? Standing still means you are headed backwards. If the marketplace is moving forward, a motionless person is falling behind. You can't be passionate about your job if you aren't excited about what you do everyday.

Solution: Find the good in your work. Remember why you entered your

chosen profession and keep that memory alive. Write it down and look at it daily. Concentrate on what you do well, and decide to do more of it.

Have I Stopped Reading and Taking Classes?

Have you stopped learning? Is it because you think you know all there is to know? Do you believe that further education is not necessary? Are you pressed for time?

We always find time for the things that are important to us. Your career should be one of those things. Unless you are knowledgeable about where your industry is going, and what skills are vital to your success, the ship that is carrying your paycheck will sail away without you.

Solution: Learn something new that will help advance your career. But learn in a way that works best for you. If you like to learn by computer, take an online class. If you like to learn by reading, get a book.

Is There Less Demand for My Skill Set?

You know when your job skills are becoming outdated. You look at job ads, and there are fewer listings. Or, you speak with your network, and they are worried about their own jobs going away. Many people I speak with use what they find as proof that they should stay where they are and not make any waves.

Solution: Research where the demand is. Visit the online job boards and enter the keywords that are relevant to your industry. What do you see? What skills are listed in those job descriptions? Do you have what the marketplace is looking for? If not, what are you going to do about it? You would much rather know now, than when you are looking for a job, that you don't have what's needed.

Am I Blaming Others for My Predicament?

We are a society of blamers. (We all do it.) Even though we criticize others for not looking inward, when it's our turn and

something happens to us, we look outward. We need to point a finger at someone or something, and in many cases, the finger does not point in our direction.

It's easy to assign blame. Maybe there is someone (or many others) who are keeping you from moving forward in your position. Maybe you see the hand-writing on the wall and you are not sure what to do about it. As long as you stay angry, you are wasting energy that can be better used toward finding a way out.

Solution: Don't get angry, get ready. Instead of waiting for someone to save you, save yourself. Take responsibility for your career. When you accept responsibility, your energies will no longer be focused outward, but inward on yourself.

Do I Have a Game Plan?

Nothing great happens by accident. Think about all of the goals you have reached in your career. I'm sure you had a picture of what you wanted to achieve in your mind and then you took action on a regular basis to make that picture real. You may have had setbacks or moments of doubt while you were pursuing your goal, but you kept going.

Think about where you are now. Do you have a goal that gets you excited? If not, maybe what's missing is a new game to play.

Solution: Develop a game plan that includes what you want to happen, the steps you will take to make what you want happen, with a date you will reach your goal. Once you have your game, what's next is taking the necessary steps so you can win. ■

Deborah Brown-Volkman is the president of Surpass Your Dreams, Inc. a career, life and mentor coaching company. She is the author of several books, including Coach Yourself to a New Career and How to Feel Great at Work Everyday. Brown-Volkman can be reached at SurpassYourDreams.com, Career-Escape-Program.com, info@surpassyourdreams.com or at 631-874-2877.

From the Forums

Joining a Private Equity Fund

ExecuNet's Forum is the online community area where members can meet and help one another network their way into their next assignment or share information and experiences. [Access the Forum under "Make Connections" on the ExecuNet member homepage.] In this excerpt from a recent Forum conversation, the question about how to join a private equity fund is raised. [Some content has been edited.]

ExecuNet member DC Exec: I am sure many ExecuNet members, who are seasoned executives with several years of experiences under their belt, can be a great asset to the private equity funds at a partner level or at a senior-advisory level; especially to advise on operating, financial, management due diligence, or they could become a member of the management team for a company funded by a PE fund.

The question is how does one approach these PE funds to start a dialogue about one's aspirations. Is it just cold calling? What network forums would be useful?

ExecuNet member BobB: Unfortunately, many of the people who meet with PE firms want to join them. In general, the one thing they don't want to hear is that you would like to be part of their organization. They want to hear that you like to build businesses; that you want to get your arms around an organization and grow it, etc.

I have found that the best way to meet any of the "financial" firms is through networking, which they seem to respect more than others, if possible, or through forming a relationship when they have a need.

If they are unaware of you, they need to see that you can produce, either as a member of senior management of one of their portfolio companies or a consultant within a company and execute optimally.

After you have formed a relationship and they are comfortable with you, then they might want to offer you an advisory position, which will give you entry into the firm.

But understand, they are constantly being told by potential employees that they would like to be an operating partner or they want a similar position. Unfortunately, that rolls right off their backs.

ExecuNet member TonyS: While looking for an engineering position, I happened on Glocap (GlocapSearch.com) which specializes in VC positions. There might be something there. They seem to have a lot of openings, mainly on the East Coast.

ExecuNet member JimPresCEO: I agree that someone with operating experience, who can show prior success in top line growth and bottom line efficiency, would be an asset to a private equity firm. This position would focus on working with the portfolio company to track and

assist in meeting performance goals and help guide the development of opportunities. I am such a candidate with building material, distribution and manufacturing experience, and have started to look for an operating partner's position at a private equity firm.

I have recently submitted my credentials to Glocap and sent my résumé to several private equity firms. If anyone has any other ideas or contacts in this area, I would greatly appreciate hearing from you. If anyone else is interested in pursuing this, I also recommend joining the Association for Corporate Growth (ACG); and if you have turnaround experience, the Turnaround Management Association (TMA).

ExecuNet member Ron L: Unfortunately, it seems that the PE folks are hard to get in touch with. Most times they are not really interested in discussing anything.

Find an investment banker who works with many equity firms. Sometimes they know which ones are looking for operators to either help them make a buy in their industry or to operate one of their existing portfolio companies.

The Glocap concept that I originally asked about in this forum does not seem to lead anywhere except to New York City and is only for MBAs or accountants. ■

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