

CareerSmart Advisor™

Strategies & Solutions for Your Career Success

A Note From Dave

Oliver Wendell Holmes said, “One’s mind, once stretched by a new idea, never regains its original dimensions.”



Holmes statement, and the history of innovation, illustrates that by reshaping the mind, one can reshape the world. Many may have become famous for one single invention, but they are often built on a series of great ideas.

While many of us may have had some “Eureka!” moments, fewer take those great ideas to fruition. This issue’s cover story reveals methods for displaying innovation in the job search and in the workplace, with expert tips on how to think more creatively in any function and industry.

We recently invited ExecuNet members to submit any questions they might have for executive recruiters, and the overwhelming favorite was, “Why don’t you call back?” Executive recruiter Carol Nevin answers a few of the submitted questions in her article, *Parts of the Recruiting Puzzle*. She also includes some techniques for how executives can present their cover letters and résumés so that the documents are easier for recruiters to review.

The word from Allan Hoving, ExecuNet’s managing editor of online content, is that the newly expanded “ExecuNet Forum” is now open. By consolidating all general discussions into one area of the site, members will be able to more easily connect online with others who share their special interests.

I invite you to take a look:

http://members.execunet.com/e_eunnet.cfm

Sincerely,



Dave Opton
Founder & CEO
ExecuNet

Selling Yourself as an Innovator

By Robyn Greenspan

In a crowded marketplace, executive candidates who differentiate themselves are the ones who are likely to get noticed by hiring managers. But how do you make your work history and experience stand out from similarly skilled competitors? By positioning yourself as an innovator, you’ll accomplish a number of goals — you’ll garner attention; prove you’re a problem-solver; and possibly counter concerns about age.

“You might be the greatest accountant or engineer in your field,” says Dr. Billie Blair, president and CEO, Leading and Learning, Inc. “They will hire you for your background, but you have to stand out from the group and be different.”

Recent Challenges to Innovation

Innovation is the underpinning of corporate America, where some of the best inventions and ideas have been built; but budgetary constraints, liability concerns and inexpensive outsourcing is edging innovation out of the marketplace. In a 2004 survey of 500 executives conducted by *BusinessWeek*, 46 percent said that reduced R&D spending was the greatest barrier to the future of U.S. innovation, closely followed by the public education system, and corporate bureaucracy.

Most Innovative CEOs

- Bill Gates (Microsoft)
- Steve Jobs (Apple)
- Michael Dell (Dell Computer)
- Jeff Bezos (Amazon.com)
- Meg Whitman (eBay)

Most Innovative Companies

- Apple
- Microsoft
- Pixar



Source: *BusinessWeek*

According to the National Science Foundation, research and development (R&D) across all fields grew a scant 1 percent in 2003 to \$284 billion — a sharp drop from its average annual growth of 5.8 percent between 1994 and 2000. Budget allotments in the Federal Government fare even worse — only defense R&D and the Pentagon are slated for the biggest increases in coming years.

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FastTrack Programs –
June 2005
Hosted by Dave Opton,
founder and CEO, ExecuNet

- 6/14 — **Running Under The Radar (How To Look For Job When You've Already Got One)** — Karen Armon
- 6/14 — **How to Land the Job You Want When You're Over 45** — Jean Walker
- 6/15 — **Converting Interviews to Offers with DISC** — Linda Dominguez
- 6/16 — **Winning Interviews: Convincing Conversations** — Judy Rosemarin
- 6/22 — **Branding Yourself In A Buyer's Market** — Nick Papadopoulos
- 6/23 — **Market Yourself: You're a Big Ticket Item** — Steve Conner
- 6/23 — **Winning Networking: Great Contacts Become Offers** — Bill Belknap
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- 6/14 — **Charlotte, NC** — Patrick H. Pettengill
- 6/15 — **Parsippany, NJ** — Linsey Levine
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- 6/16 — **Minneapolis** — John Wetzel & Barbara Adams
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- 6/21 — **Raleigh/Durham** — Stuart Levine
- 6/22 — **Toronto** — Martin Buckland
- 6/22 — **Denver** — Karen Armon
- 6/23 — **Atlanta** — J. Patrick Haly
- 6/23 — **Columbus, OH** — Janine Moon
- 6/24 — **St. Louis** — Jim Clarkson
- 6/24 — **Detroit Senior Roundtable** — Marge Larsen

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

Insider Insights

Parts of the Recruiting Puzzle

By Carol A. Nevin

In response to our queries in the ExecuNet Forum and the monthly Executive Employment Outlook survey, ExecuNet members came up with a list of questions they would like to ask recruiters. Executive recruiter Carol Nevin offers some answers and insight into the executive search process, based on her firm's policies and procedures.

The candidate selection process reminds me of the many hours I spent as a child with my brothers and sisters putting 1,000-piece puzzles together. We always started by separating out the edge pieces, then those with similar color or picture portions were sorted into separate groups. While there certainly were several that fit in each of these categories, when it came down to needing the exact piece for one specific place, it had to have the matching color and pattern, as well as having the right combination of “knobbies” and “alcoves.”

In recruiting we go through a similar systematic sorting process using the client company's basic “must-have” puzzle needs as our starting point. This puzzle piece requirement is usually *quite specific*, i.e. a particular degree, a specific industry, product background, a certain length of experience, a particular function or combination of functions, being in or out of a competitor, or well-known companies, etc., etc.

Finding the “Must Haves”

That is precisely why companies use retained search firms — to find those rare, hard-to-find candidates. Some think that recruiters are narrow in their view of candidates; but if a client company says they only want someone out

“It is important that the candidate do the same level of analysis at the beginning of a search as we do during the rest of the search.”

of the heavy equipment industry, then that's what we must provide for them. Out of necessity and sheer volume, we must make quick initial assessments as we search the résumés for the client's “must haves.” We also look for steady career progression, stability of time with companies, quality of the companies worked for, individual accomplishments and educational credentials.

With these tags in mind as our initial sort, we quickly review résumés we have received from all sources, i.e. our substantial database, network contacts, referrals, selected postings, and recruiting calls covering the industry of focus. Unfortunately, some potentially-qualified candidates who have excellent, transferable skills in another

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Carol A. Nevin is vice president of New Directions Search, Inc. located in Wheaton, IL. A retained executive search firm, placing manufacturing executives in all functions director level and up, nationwide, New Directions Search, Inc. is celebrating 25 years of solid business growth. For more information on their values, processes and clients, visit their website at <http://www.ndsearch.com>

Insider Insights

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industry do get eliminated.

Many of our client companies ask us to find candidates from within their industry or related industries. We make some tough decisions; and because of time constraints and the volume of applicants, we cannot provide phone or face-to-face meetings for everyone. We do send an e-mail note acknowledging receipt of résumés, and we also let applicants know that if they don't hear from us within two weeks they should assume that we will not be moving forward with them.

Looking for the Bonus Features

From the selection of résumés that meet the “must-have” criteria, we move to the additional list that the client company provides us, containing the “would be nice to have” characteristics. Those candidates whose résumés indicate that they also qualify through this second sort will be called by the executive recruiter responsible for this search. After an hour-long investigative phone interview, the executive recruiter will decide if they do, in fact, match the search needs. Those who do, will be asked to provide an initial reference and information needed to verify degrees.

After the information is collected, we decide whether a face-to-face interview with one of our account executives is warranted. The account executive is the gatekeeper for the client and knows their culture, their people and their needs very well. Following that face-to-face-interview, the account executive and the executive recruiters meet to select the group of candidates to present to the company. Their résumés and references, along with our recommendations, are submitted to the company for their review. We then work with the company to set up on-site meetings with the decision-makers.

How Candidates Can Help

Applicants can have an impact on the initial sorting process by making it easy for us to read their résumés. It is important to put considerable quality time into formulating this document. Résumés

Help Us Help You

- Résumés should be concise
- Include a brief career summary and bullet point your top achievements
- A one-page cover letter is desirable
- Cover letter and résumé should be in one document

need to be concise, stating factual information, and free from fluff. A well-written résumé is key to our quickly identifying your industry, level of experience, breadth of responsibility, locations, education and management style.

A concise career summary at the top of the document is very important. Be sure to tell us the size of the companies worked for and the products or services they sell. This helps us know the working arena in which the candidate has functioned. Briefly state your basic responsibilities and bullet point your top achievements. We want to be able to quickly see what you have done.

Include a succinctly written, one-page cover letter as the first page in the résumé document instead of having it as a separate file. This makes it much easier for us and our client company to circulate the information without having to keep track of two files. A couple of sentences stating the circumstances surrounding the current job search and a few facts matching your experience with this particular position are sufficient.

Another activity a candidate can do to reduce frustration is to clearly and rationally evaluate how well she or he actually fits a particular search. It is important that the candidate do the same level of analysis at the beginning of a search as we do during the rest of the search. Surprisingly, approximately 30 percent of the résumés we receive in response to an executive posting are not even close to the specs on the posting. Do not submit résumés to searches for which there is clearly not a good fit. It is a waste of everyone's time.

Sharing Available Information

Sometimes, candidates wonder why executive recruiters haven't called with status updates, assuming that the search firm has data it is not sharing. On the contrary, we give candidates as

much information as we can. We even invite our candidates to call us anytime they think too much time has lapsed. Good searches take time, it comes with the territory.

While we often don't have the resources to contact every applicant, we give feedback to all the candidates with whom we have phone and face-to-face interviews and to those who meet with the company. We are constantly asking our client companies for more specific feedback to give to candidates. We like to give candidates clear reasons as to why they are eliminated at any given stage.

Sometimes companies give us limited feedback because it is difficult for them to articulate the reasons for a particular choice in candidate. The final two or three candidates are often so close in their qualifications, but a choice has to be made. Sometimes a decision is based on “chemistry” and is so subjective that it escapes explanation. This can leave us with very little to report to the other candidates.

New Directions Search, Inc. sends all face-to-face and into-the-company candidates a Candidate Satisfaction Survey for them to grade us and our processes. We consistently get high marks for our position profiles, the support they receive scheduling the interviews, their face-to-face interview with the account executive, and the personal attention they receive. However, we get less favorable marks on after-interview feedback, because we are limited in what we can pass on to candidates.

Search is a very complex process, with many pieces and many requirements that have to be sorted through, much like putting a puzzle together. Our client company is “the puzzle” into which the candidate “piece” must fit. As retained executive recruiters, it is our commitment to keep looking until we have the exact fit. ■

Selling Yourself

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Budgets are not the only barriers to innovation; organizational impediments exist as well. Lack of incentive, workplace transparency and long-term vision, along with the drain on productivity, creates environments that are not conducive to innovation.

“Old or new, all companies want to stay in the game,” says Marjan Bolmeijer, founder, Change Leaders, Inc. “With all the financial scandals in the US, there seems to be no lack of innovation in the financial departments of our companies.”

Innovative executives have to find a way to strike a keen balance — how to distinguish themselves in the marketplace as innovators, while also illustrating the ability to play within company rules.

“Executives can demonstrate innovation and creativity without being seen as ‘loose cannons,’” says Shelle Rose Charvet, president of Success Strategies.

“Hiring authorities do indeed mistrust highly innovative people,” says Dr. Laurence J. Stybel, cofounder of Stybel Peabody Lincolnshire. “Corporations can afford to have only a few creative people.”

Stybel categorizes innovation as either creativity or adaptability, noting that adaptive people have the ability to take concepts that work in one setting, tweak them, and make them work in totally new settings. This characteristic is also an advantage when making the shift from one industry to another.

Where Innovation Thrives

Despite the challenges, innovation is being inspired in some industries, particularly technology. Most notable is Google’s “20 percent” philosophy, whereby engineers are required to spend one-fifth of their time working on personal technology projects. Results of the 20 percent projects include gmail, Google’s e-mail client, and orkut, the company’s foray into the social networking space.

Google’s example of encouraging employees to “think outside the search box” and bring new and vibrant ideas into development has helped it to achieve success in today’s business environment, where it is imperative to foster new ideas to remain competitive.

“Competitive companies will look for every angle to get a leg up, and senior executives are the first to jump to opportunities to do something different if it means that they will win,” says Bolmeijer.

“As we seem to approach the last legs of an economic downturn, companies have to shift from cost cutting to growth. Businesses, nonprofits, education and government sectors have been cutting costs by imposing structure, order and control.”

Linear, narrow and fear-based thinking often results in a lack of innovation, but the landscape appears to be changing. “Now companies are looking again for the magic wand of innovation. Turning the thinking patterns around among their executives will take a little while,” Bolmeijer continues.

Risk-Averse Environments

Innovation can mean different things in different industries, and some industries may appear less receptive to innovation than others.

“Manufacturing tends to go for safety, because they have traditional and solidified relationships, and unions play by rulebooks. When you work in a unionized environment, it is a procedural environment,” notes Charvet. “Banks are like that too.”

Just because innovation doesn’t flourish in these types of industries doesn’t mean there isn’t room for innovators. Charvet says that the language executives use to present ideas could be the difference between getting heard and getting shut down.

“Executives should find a way to speak in procedural language, and innovation should be presented as standard operating procedure,” suggests Charvet. “Don’t say, ‘We need to find a way around this’ or ‘Let’s look at the options.’ Instead, say, ‘Let’s go to the next step’ and it will make suggestions look like procedure.”

Innovator Makeover

Marjan Bolmeijer outlines methods for branding yourself as an innovator and passing the creativity onto others.

- Gather information about the company’s culture, and have solid insights about the level of risks the culture is willing to take around innovation.
- Don’t look at your CEO as a role model. The CEO of Oracle takes visible risks during ultra competitive sailing races. The CEO of Virgin Airline rides hot air balloons and takes more risks than most of us. However, what a company’s public figure does to enhance the image of the corporation is not always a reflection of the level of risk the organization is willing to accept when one works there. Therefore, CEO behavior is not a good indicator of the level of innovation you will be allowed.
- Take 5 to 10 percent more risk than the organization is willing to take. Not 25 percent, because that will be regarded as “unsafe” and you will come across as unreliable.
- Become an expert in selling your ideas internally and assisting others in overcoming their initial resistance.
- Don’t just rely on your good work to position yourself. Write for your company newsletter or develop an intranet site that features the innovative ideas within the company.
- Your reputation as innovator will be rock solid once you have earned the right to focus on the strategic organizational question, “How do we attract, create and develop more innovators in the company?”

The benefits of becoming an innovator reach beyond self-interest. “Innovators should be ready to go the next step — to be able to tell the marketplace with clarity why change is needed, and how it will help business,” says Leslie G. Ungar.

“Historically, many innovators have died broke or unknown,” notes Ungar. “Innovators that show leadership are the ones who are successful — those who can identify the strengths of their team and the people who can take ideas to market and prove business value.”

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“Looking at the options’ makes it sound like you are preparing to break the rules.”

Preinterview Illustrations of Innovation

It’s not enough to use the term “innovator” on your cover letter and résumé, documents should illustrate a history of revolutionary ideas and results.

“Innovation and creativity can be detrimental characteristics if they are not presented effectively,” warns Leslie Ungar of Electric Impulse, Inc. “What are the results of innovation and creativity? We tend to focus on the process, in this case the process of innovation and creativity. But they are just that, PROCESS. Their value is in the results that they drive.

What are the results of creativity to the company you are interviewing? What is the value of innovative thinking? Innovative thinking by itself has value only in the academic world. What is the payoff in the corporate world? When you figure that out, lead with the results. Back it up with the process you uniquely go through in order to get those results.”

“The résumé and cover letter should use language that demonstrates innovation,” says Charvet. Rather than using a typical format or opening line, Charvet suggests doing something that creates intrigue.

Charvet notes that one of her clients went a step further in demonstrating an innovative flair by including testimonials in his cover letter. “It adds another layer of criteria to the qualifications — what others who have worked with you have said.”

Innovation in the Interview

Being an innovator doesn’t mean selling yourself as a pioneer who reinvents the wheel, but as someone who can creatively problem-solve.

“Instead of sitting for the standard process of Q&A or getting together over lunch,” Charvet says, “I suggest telling the hiring manager right up front before the interview: ‘There may be a number of people with excellent résumés on the market, but the only way to know if an executive can really cut it in your environment, is to put

Defining Your Innovative Spirit

“Understand your own approach and skills around innovation,” suggests Bolmeijer.

Areas of Innovation: Are you more innovative when it comes to “creating something from scratch” (new) or “expanding something that already exists a little” (grow) or “adjusting something that is big” (change or divestiture)?

Comparisons with Others: How does your creativity stack up against your colleagues or supervisors? Are you able to measure your level of innovation against industry peers? (After all, isn’t that what your recruiter is doing?)

Learning about Innovation: How are you advancing your skills in this area?

- Take at least two classes in innovative thinking patterns
- Visit innovation-specific conferences
- Develop relationships with others (mentors, peers, colleagues) and exchange feedback about ideas

him or her to the test. I would like to help the company with a difficult problem for free, and then you will know if I am the right person.”

Dr. Blair stresses the importance of illustrating ideas and vision during the interview process. “As a baseline, you want to go in with ideas. That makes people believe you as an innovator.” Blair warns against being perceived as someone who is going to take over and make drastic changes. “They want someone who will move them along and have great ideas that apply to that company.”

“Being an innovator doesn’t mean selling yourself as a pioneer who reinvents the wheel, but as someone who can creatively problem-solve.”

The availability of online information makes it easier than ever to research companies and industries, allowing candidates to identify key issues and challenges. “An innovator will analyze the information available and determine what it means to the company,” says Charvet. “Innovators have the ability to put their finger on the right ‘hot button’ for the right organization,” says Charvet.

“Even in a risk-averse environment, innovators will know to come in and

identify what they need to do to fix the problem. They have to use language that demonstrates they ‘get it.’” For example, Charvet suggests, “I know what you are trying to do, and I know how to get there.”

“Present yourself as someone who will get along and work with people in the company. Someone who brings fresh ideas — but not too many — and have interesting ideas about the company. Think thoughtfully about the company’s challenges and look at the future of the company,” says Blair.

“Be truthful and not just say the things you think people want to hear. Can you take the risk of saying that you have a better way of doing something when the person who created the process is sitting in the room?”

Innovators are Visionaries

“Senior-level executives are always being sought to fix things,” says Blair. “And problem-solvers are innovators.”

Marjan Bolmeijer outlines the three levels of creativity within an organization, illustrating ways to work within an organization’s risk tolerance zone.

- 1. Inventive:** capitalizes on connections that weren’t previously made
- 2. Innovation:** restructure and reorganizes
- 3. Transformation:** paradigm shifts

Bolmeijer uses the examples of evolving from the horse and carriage to the horseless carriage to space travel, and finally, to fiber optics. “Are you better at ‘connecting the dots,’ ‘reorganizing’ or

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Selling Yourself

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‘complete paradigm shifts?’” Bolmeijer asks.

Forward-Thinkers Defy Age Perceptions

By presenting yourself as a futurist, you’ll run counter to some of the common misconceptions employers have about mid-career executives. Among the perceptions that were identified in ExecuNet’s recent report on age discrimination in the executive suite, *Silver Linings: Experienced Executives Gaining the Edge*:

- Inflexible/unwilling to deal with change
- Locked in past ways of doing things
- Lack of energy
- Just waiting to retire

[The entire report can be downloaded for free here: <http://members.execunet.com/promo/pdf/AgeDiscrimination.pdf>]

Expert Resources

Billie G. Blair, Ph.D. (www.leadingandlearninginc.com)

Laurence J. Stybel, Ed.D. (www.stybelpeabody.com)

Marjan Bolmeijer (www.change-leaders.com)

Shelle Rose Charvet (www.WordsThatChangeMinds.com)

Leslie G. Ungar (www.ElectricImpulse.com)

Dare to be Different

“At the top, there are fewer and fewer jobs,” notes Bolmeijer. “The competition is tough, so your peers will be just as good at finance or marketing as you are. It is also safer to assume that your competition will be just as good at politics, network development, or living the company values.”

Additional characteristics in your executive profile will help you land the top jobs. “Having a track record and reputation as an innovator will give you a solid advantage. Why? Because your experience as an innovator is that little extra nobody else offers.”

Innovators are needed during any

economic period, Bolmeijer points out. “During a recession, innovators are needed to find creative new ways to survive. During economic booms, innovators are needed to find creative new ways to reap the benefits of growth.”

“This whole topic of innovation is not something you can just decide on today and forget about tomorrow,” advises Bolmeijer. “It is more like working out: something you do daily and over the entire course of your life. It requires discipline in action (continued learning) and discipline in execution (continued fight internal organizational roadblocks).” ■

Books Worth Your Time

Dennis Bakke’s *Joy at Work*

Can you imagine a company that puts employee satisfaction ahead of profit as a company goal? What a joke! Not so, declares Dennis W. Bakke, cofounder of international energy corporation AES.

In 1981, AES was founded with the business model and operating ethos — “let’s have fun.” In the next two decades, AES became a worldwide energy giant with 40,000 employees in 31 countries and revenues of \$8.6 billion.

Bakke tells the story of how he challenged the business establishment with revolutionary ideas as cofounder and longtime CEO of AES in his new book, *Joy at Work, A Revolutionary Approach to Fun on the Job*. Bakke uses the success story of AES to make his case that the “stranglehold of creating shareholder value” can be replaced with more timeless values: integrity, fairness, social responsibility, and above all fun. Bakke presents the case that corporate success can be achieved by giving employees unprecedented responsibility and respect, while holding them strictly accountable.

Joy at Work, A Revolutionary Approach to Fun on the Job is part memoir and part inspirational business model. It is a remarkable story told by a remarkable man. From farm boy to the executive suite — this is a story about Bakke, the success of AES, the pursuit of a vision, and the belief that this vision can become a reality if companies are willing to take the leap and practice what Bakke preaches.

Joy at Work, A Revolutionary Approach to Fun on the Job is an ExecuNet recommended resource. It is available through the ExecuNet Career Management Bookshelf [http://www.execunet.com/e_resources_bookshelf.cfm]

Dennis Bakke took some time to answer ExecuNet’s questions.

Q ■ Retaining top talent is a key challenge. Did you find that your work environment encouraged employees to have long-term careers at AES?

A ■ Yes. I don’t know of a single senior leader (the top 50 people)

who left the company while I was CEO, unless they were asked to leave. More importantly, the turnover among non-leaders who were not forced out was probably less than 1 percent.

However, you should be careful how you interpret this information. If you follow the *Joy at Work* philosophy as a technique to lower turnover of people, you will have missed a very important element of the philosophy. People should be treated as human beings using the *Joy at Work* approach, not because it lowers turnover or improves productivity, but because it is the right thing to do for the employees.

Q ■ AES is a perfect example as to why corporations should encourage a culture of fun in the workplace, yet this concept has not been widely adopted. What are the primary barriers?

A ■ There are really only two major barriers. The first and most

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From the Forums

Members Share Tips on Building and Extending Networks

ExecuNet's NEWLY ENHANCED ExecuNet Forum (formerly, "Special Interest Networks") is a free online networking area on the site where members can meet and help one another network their way into their next assignment, or share information and experiences. (Access the Forum under "Networking" or go to http://members.execunet.com/e_eunnet.cfm.)

In this excerpt from a recent Forum conversation, a couple of executives present some networking problems they've encountered, and other members respond with solutions that are based on their personal experiences.

WilliamExec: I recently left a senior-management position with a global company in San Antonio. This is not a market with a lot of comparable positions — and it's really not a market we'd like to stay in.

My senior VP position carried a lot of global responsibility, but was primarily internally focused. Most of my contacts are at lower levels and within the company. A few have stepped up to help network, but most of them don't have contacts at the level or the functions I want to pursue. My run at this company was pretty successful, but with a couple of spin-offs, most of the responsibilities are being assigned within the spun-off divisions.

My question is this: what techniques have others used to make contacts in new/different markets? It's not practical for me to go to networking meetings in several cities, how have other folks approached this?

Rick J: I have a similar issue. I was president of a national consumer direct construction business for over eight years in the Cleveland, Ohio area. Much of my time was spent managing the business and building it from \$30M to \$75M with over 750 employees. My higher level contacts were with insurance or bank people or media contacts. Most competitors are smaller, owner-managed or part of a corporation with sound management in place even today, four years later.

I left the company and after a long search I landed in Wilmington, Ohio, a semi-rural area. We grew from \$11M to \$31M in less than two years. But the

president didn't make it, and I was out in a total reorganization, as they brought in a minority partner to run the business.

So over the past 15 years my network has not really grown beyond a bunch of vendor contacts, hundreds of consumer contacts, smaller business owners and company employees.

I have spent numerous hours working my contacts and joined ExecuNet after attending half-a-dozen senior-level networking meetings. I have created a fairly large network of transitional people, but have yet to make the contacts I need to get in front of the right people.

I am a resource for several recruiters and have helped place a bunch of transitional people.

What am I not doing?

I just finished my 1st year of transition. I have had offers at the president or GM level, but not what I want at this point. I've also had one offer go away for an unusual situation; at least three where I guess I was too qualified for the hiring manager; and at least two where the chemistry was wrong between the recruiter and me.

CAOperations: I empathize with your stories as I have had to create my network from the ground up. I am a senior operations director in the CRO industry with lots of experience in business operations, finance, M&A, etc., but my network is limited in my current area because I just relocated to this part of the country. My company then went through a consolidation; and when my job relocated again to

Canada, I decided to stay behind.

What I have done through ExecuNet is target individuals in the Member-to-Member Directory who were in the same industry as me. I wrote an introductory letter, and I have made about 25 connections through this method, I have become friendly with these folks, and we have started to share information.

When I come across something that I think may be of interest to my group or an individual, I send it off, and they do the same in return. I have received two job interviews from this so far, and I will continue to explore this method as I go forward.

Ken Maglothin: I just joined ExecuNet, and I am just becoming familiar with the site. Networking, however, I am familiar with. Having been blessed with a rather large network, I have experienced the same thing that you describe. It seems that the real challenge is getting what you need when you need it. I guess that is the secret to networking in general. Of course no matter what, it never seems to happen quickly enough.

It seems that we know what we want to accomplish...and when...but do we recognize the true opportunity to do so when it presents itself? There have been times when I had the right contact, but managed to either not ask the RIGHT question or ask the wrong question.

I have realized that I will never seize an opportunity that I can't see.

Sometimes I am either looking for the wrong opportunity or worse — I have not established what that opportunity would look like if it jumped out in front of me. I have also found out that just because I know the answer that I want, I think the people I am talking to truly understand what I want or need. I have, too many times, realized too late that they did not hear what I was truly asking.

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From the Forums

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I thought they had, because I knew what I was saying so they MUST be hearing the same thing.

I have learned to put myself in the position of the person I am talking to...to try to see it as they would see it

Books Worth Your Time

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important is the unwillingness of bosses and managers to restrain their use of power to make decisions and control the organization. There are dozens of excuses as to why bosses keep control and make all the important decisions (e.g. they were promoted to their position because they were judged as good decision-makers; their board won't let them; they get paid to make the decisions; subordinates don't want to make the decisions; the boss is responsible).

None of these excuses are valid enough to keep non-leaders from having freedom, control and decision-making responsibility in the workplace and creating a place where it is fun to work.

The second barrier, at least in businesses, is a relatively recent idea pushed by Wall Street-types that the ultimate purpose of business is to make as much money as possible for investors. Few people, if any, find working to pay money to investors a meaningful, fun job.

The purpose of business is to manage resources to meet a need in society and along the way make enough money to

after they put it through their "life experience filter."

When I am approached to help with something, I seem to always ask myself two questions: "Where have I seen this before? What is this probably leading toward?"

My point: when communicating, we must go steps further than just asking.

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Working people can love a job that creates a product or service that benefits the world around us.

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pay employees and investors and the government what they deserve in return for their role in helping the organization meet a need in society. Working people can love a job that creates a product or service that benefits the world around us.

Q ■ How do existing companies begin to systemically implement this revolutionary approach into their organizations?

A ■ Start by limiting executives at all levels from making more than a

We must be accountable for ensuring that the party we are asking understands the question — not take for granted that they understand what we are asking. The quality of the answer is directly relational to the quality of the understanding of the question by the one you are asking to help you! ■

couple of significant decisions a year. Make the Board and the managers primarily advisors to those below them in the organization. Encourage all employees to break out of their organizational boxes and job descriptions (tear them up) and engage in random acts of responsibility. Make one rule: Before you make a decision, you must get advice from colleagues, your boss and maybe even higher executives depending on the issue.

Q ■ Can a single senior executive who has been inspired by your book create widespread employee engagement in the workplace?

A ■ Yes, but it is more difficult to do the farther away the executive is from being the CEO. The only absolute requirement for this person is to greatly restrain their use of their decision-making power so others in their organization can experience the freedom and power and joy of real decision making (being human). The executive should also be ready to lose their job, because implementing a *Joy at Work* philosophy, like any revolutionary activity, can get you fired. ■

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