

CITIZEN OF THE WORLD GUIDES

FIND THE RIGHT JOB & EXCEL

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

STEELE CURRY

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CITIZEN OF THE WORLD GUIDES

MAKE THE RIGHT IMPRESSION
FIND THE RIGHT JOB & EXCEL
BE A “PRO” COMMUNICATOR
WHAT’S REALLY IMPORTANT

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INTRODUCTION

FIND THE RIGHT JOB & EXCEL

You are about to start your career. You are anxious about finding the right job and performing well once you start it. You want to become an effective co-worker and ultimately a manager. You also know you will encounter lots of other difficult issues where you work.

Let this book act as your personal coach or mentor to help you deal with all these challenges. It is an all-encompassing, A to Z guide designed to provide the straightforward answers you need to attain a successful career and achieve your full potential.

This book was written primarily for individuals in their twenties and early thirties who are beginning their careers in business or a profession. It is also intended to assist people working in smaller organizations, service firms, non-profit groups and government bodies.

There is a great deal of confusing and conflicting behavior occurring in both business and politics around the globe. Not a day goes by without another news headline about a shocking scandal or major corruption being uncovered somewhere. Financial disasters of one kind or another have become commonplace. Much of the world seems to have lost its way and forgotten the importance of values, civil harmony and the environment.

Colossal greed, hubris and ignorance of prudent risk avoidance have resulted in a devastating global financial meltdown. The leaders of many of the world's largest banks, insurance companies and investment firms have committed gross mismanagement while receiving ludicrously high executive compensation. It could take the worldwide credit and stock markets a decade to recover.

Many of the chapters in this book contain a common theme — the need for individuals to conduct

themselves with integrity in an ethical, responsible manner that respects the dignity and rights of others. Not to do so means you have lost your soul. True success and fulfillment in life are only possible when you follow such a code of behavior. By doing so, you will also help to promote a compassionate, civil society wherever you live and work.

If you have questions about any subjects in this book or suggestions for additional advice that should be included in future editions, please contact me through the Web site at www.COTWguides.com. The first book in the *Citizen of the World* series is *Make the Right Impression*. The next two books after *Find the Right Job & Excel* are *Be a "Pro" Communicator* and *What's Really Important*.

All four books in the *Citizen of the World* series are closely related. This is especially the case with *Find the Right Job & Excel* and *Be a "Pro" Communicator*. The more you improve as a communicator, the better are your chances of advancement in your career. This includes your ability to conduct productive meetings and be a skillful negotiator.

PART ONE

FINDING THE RIGHT JOB

PART ONE
INTRO

FINDING THE RIGHT JOB

You have just finished your formal schooling or received your college degree. Alternatively, you find yourself working in the wrong job or at the wrong organization. You realize you will be spending approximately 50% or more of your total waking hours from now on at work, including travel time to get there. It is time to get serious about your future.

Finding the right job to begin your career is a challenge. There is a process to follow that increases your chances of making the right job search decisions. To say that you have got to persist, persist, persist and follow up, follow

up and follow up to achieve a successful outcome is an understatement. Approach finding the right job as a “job” and make a full-time commitment to it.

This section covers all of the basics to finding the job that is right for you. Follow your passion. The more you love what you are doing, the better you are going to be at doing it. This is much more important than the starting salary.

See *Follow Your Passion* in the *Citizen of the World Guide, What’s Really Important*.

CHAPTER 1

GETTING STARTED

The first step to finding the right job is to do a personal inventory of yourself. Be honest in identifying your strengths and weaknesses from the standpoint of getting things done and working with others.

DOING A PERSONAL INVENTORY

Ask yourself, what are you especially good at? What types of activities do you most enjoy? What are you most interested in? Do you get turned on by interacting with people, being on the Internet or making things? What type of work best suits you — being in some type of profession or working in personal services, retailing, technology, communications, natural resources or manufacturing?

Do you think you would prefer to work in a large, established organization or in a small, less formal organization? There are pros and cons to both large and small employers. One's job responsibilities are usually more tightly defined in larger organizations but they are more likely to offer formal training programs. Looking ahead, do you see yourself being happiest as an entrepreneur or working for someone else?

When I was starting my career, I knew that I would not be happy working at a large, bureaucratic corporation. Instead, I wanted to work at a small firm where I could benefit from having lots of contact with the owners and, as a result, more quickly learn about the business.

Doing a personal inventory is the starting point. You need to identify a career field that appears to best match your personal aptitudes, abilities and interests. While these will change over time as you gain more experience, there is one overriding fact of life. The more you enjoy what you are doing, the better you will do it. To be hugely successful in your career, you have to have a passion for your work. You need to be proud of what you do, regardless of what it is and how much you are paid.

In addition, you have to think in the broadest sense about what have been your past accomplishments and what are your personal assets that might be applicable to a job, even stretching it a bit. What projects have you been involved in? Can you give examples of when you demonstrated initiative, creativity, leadership or teamwork skills? The reality is that getting a job requires "selling" yourself.

PERSONAL WORKSHEETS

To assist in determining the right job and vocation for yourself, develop a set of written worksheets under each of these subject headings: "Things I Like Doing", "Things I Don't Like Doing", "Options", "Past Accomplishments" and "Skills". Make the first two worksheets task and function oriented. As you progress in your career, review and update these worksheets on a regular basis.

LIFELONG NETWORK

Your most important asset in finding the right job is having a diverse network of friends, contacts and associates to utilize as a source of information and advice. You should start building such a network when you

are young, with your teachers and professors, and continue doing so throughout the rest of your life. Make an ongoing effort to stay in touch with these individuals, congratulate them on their accomplishments and promotions, and demonstrate that you are thinking of them from time to time and are interested in how they are doing both personally and work-wise. Look for ways to perform small or large favors for those people to help them remember you.

Take advantage of opportunities to expand your network through meeting people you otherwise would not meet. Engage in volunteer activities and attend alumni meetings, cultural events, professional gatherings and speaker clubs. Preferably do so on your own so you are forced to meet different people.

Finally, Google “finding the right job” for more career ideas and sources of information to help advance your thinking. Consider taking some of the free career online tests you will find there.

CHAPTER 2

THE BEST OPPORTUNITIES

Even when times are tough, it is still possible to identify fields and industries that are likely to experience an increase in the demand for new employees.

Some of the best opportunities for building a career and advancing in management over the next five to ten years are likely to exist in the following areas:

- ★ Developing solutions for the world’s serious environmental problems of climate change, the loss of biodiversity and waste management.

- ★ Health-care and wellness, especially preventative medicine, dealing with an aging population, and biomedical research.
- ★ Responding to the “economics of scarcity” (to use a favorite term of Jeffrey Immelt, General Electric’s CEO) in such critical areas as alternative clean energy sources, aquaculture and water treatment.
- ★ Consumer electronics design and software.
- ★ Product development, brand management and marketing in the beauty, cosmetics and fashion business.
- ★ Worldwide supply logistics and outsourcing.
- ★ Information technology innovations, currently in the areas of search, security, networking and database management.
- ★ Accounting and legal services.
- ★ Civil and structural engineering related to infrastructure projects and transportation.
- ★ The not-for-profit and education sectors, including the areas of conservation and fund development.

In addition to the above, there are other areas that will experience above-average future growth as a result of continuing globalization, changing demographics, an increasing environmental consciousness and rising world-wide living standards. You have got to select the area that is right for you and where you want to live and work. In doing so, cast your net as wide as possible. Some fields out-of-favor today can become hot tomorrow. And, vice versa.

If you are a woman, look for female-friendly organizations that are known for promoting women to senior positions and having strong policies against discrimination and sexual harassment. Usually, you can find an indication of this on an organization’s Web site. For example, check on the number of senior female executives as well as how many women are on the organization’s board of directors.

Alternatively, select an industry that has few women in it, providing you have lots of self-confidence and are prepared to battle traditional male resistance. If you are passionate about what you are doing, there are usually lots of opportunities for women to stand out, even in male-dominated work environments. As

examples, Catherine McLeod-Seltzer and Eira Thomas have become highly successful in the mining industry and jointly run Stornoway Diamond Corporation, one of Canada's largest public diamond exploration companies. Recently, Cynthia Carroll, an American geologist, became the CEO of Anglo American, the world's second-largest mining conglomerate.

The most female-friendly companies are likely to be found in consumer goods, cosmetics, finance, retailing, publishing and communications, which all have a large number of female customers. Women probably have a better chance of advancement working in the operations, sales and marketing areas of such companies where there usually are far fewer senior positions already held by females than in the staff side.

SERIOUS RESEARCH REQUIRED

When you have narrowed your potential career choices down to one or more fields, you now need to work hard to learn as much about them as you can, using every possible available source. This includes the Internet, local libraries, trade publications, your college career center and, most important, talking to as many people as you can who have experience in that field.

Take advantage of career fairs to gain a better understanding of the job market. When you do so, take your résumé to give to employers that are of special interest to you. Do your homework beforehand on these organizations so you can make a good impression. Ask their representatives how you can follow up on specific job opportunities with them.

It is a filtering process, going from the "big picture" down to specific local opportunities. First, you want to gain a broad understanding of the general characteristics of the overall profession, business or industry you are most interested in. Is it a field with a multitude of local, national and international participants or is it dominated by a handful of large multinationals? How large is this field in terms of total revenues and employees worldwide and in your own geographical region, country and local area?

Over the past three to five years, has this been a growing, healthy and prosperous field? What appear to be the most significant factors and challenges currently affecting the viability of this profession, business or industry? What stage of maturity is it at — early days, established steady operations or at maturity when the larger organizations start taking over the smaller ones

in order to continue growing? What impact are the Internet, government regulations and globalization having on this field? How does the future look in terms of the demand for its products or services and from the standpoint of competitive pressures?

Second, you need to identify which are the principal organizations or companies operating in your field of interest on a global, regional, national and local basis. Are any of the leaders and major competitors active in your area? What is their reputation in terms of being a progressive employer and the manner in which they conduct themselves? Which ones stand out as possibly being the best employer for you?

Once you have targeted the specific organizations or companies of most interest, search out their Web sites and get as much information from them as you can. Print out the names of all of the officers and directors at each of these organizations. Also, Google variations of the organization's name to learn more than what is available on its Web site.

Next, ask your friends, teachers, professors, school alumni, relatives, neighbors and parents for the names of anyone you should contact to learn more about these organizations and companies. In most cases, this will

be your most valuable source of insight about where someone with your background and interests will find the best employer. Ask such contacts for their advice and views of the industry, its outlook and the participants in it. Show each of them the lists of the officers and directors and ask whether they know any of these individuals, as sometimes they may be unaware that an acquaintance of theirs is associated with that organization. Ask them, if they were in your position, where would they look for a job, and who would be the best person to contact there in this regard.

If one of your contacts knows someone at that organization, request that your contact phone that person to describe your interest in finding a job there and to ask for his or her assistance. Suggest that your contact offer to e-mail your résumé to that person so that it can be passed on to the appropriate individual in the organization. Often, your contact will hear information from this person that is helpful to you in obtaining a job there.

A caution about using your contacts to obtain information — never waste a good call to a valuable source too early in your learning process. Save your best sources for your really strategic questions. And do not

waste anyone's time by asking questions when you can easily find the answers elsewhere.

ONLINE JOB SEARCHES

Increasingly, major corporations and other large organizations are resorting to online recruiting to fill the majority of their posted job openings other than at the senior management level. By posting available positions on their Web sites, these employers are hoping to attract the largest number of qualified applicants from not just the local area but also regionally and even internationally.

Companies engaging in online recruiting ask applicants to e-mail their résumés and often conduct a prescreening process online to reduce the number of unqualified applicants. Afterwards, the employer may send out job applications to those individuals who appear to possess the necessary qualifications. The extent to which this practice is being adopted varies considerably. Within five years, online recruiting is probably going to be used by most large and medium-sized employers around the world.

The larger Internet search engines, such as Google and Yahoo, are also making it easy for job seekers to

locate sites that provide a range of career advice and actual job postings. For links to sites for general information, type in: job search. For specific sites offering job openings, type in: job search — [the name of the country or city that interests you]. Once you are on a job-search Web site, enter keywords and search criteria to obtain only those listings that may be of interest to you.

Some of the largest sites for job seekers to check are *www.monster.com*, *www.hotjobs.com* and *www.career-builder.com*. In Canada, also check on *www.workopolis.com* and *www.jobpostings.ca*. Two other large job recruitment sites in the U.K. are *www.jobsite.com* and *www.totaljobs.com*. In China, the largest job recruitment sites are *www.ChinaHR.com*, which is partly owned by Monster Worldwide Inc., and *www.51job.com*.

After you have decided on a particular field of interest, look up its industry and professional associations for job postings and links to other sources of information. Some associations allow students to become members which gives them an advantage in finding jobs. Access to the Web sites of a number of associations is restricted to their members.

The Web sites of executive search firms also are an excellent source of online job postings as some of these organizations specialize in filling mid-level and more junior positions. The names and Web sites of such firms in your area can usually be found in the yellow page telephone directories under the listings for “Executive Search Consultants”.

CHAPTER 3

WHAT TO AVOID

Never provide personal financial information, including your social security number, to a prospective employer, especially online. Also, be careful about the privacy risks of posting your résumé and other personal information with online job boards. And, do not deal with anyone guaranteeing to find you a job. They are invariably bogus.

In determining where to start your career, attempt to avoid getting involved in what are fundamentally “bum businesses” and “mission impossibles”. There are certain businesses whose inherent characteristics doom most of their industry participants to a mediocre or declining

future, regardless of their quality of management or how diligently their employees work.

Examples of bum businesses include most commodity-driven industries selling mass-market, undifferentiated products or services whose prices are out of anyone's ability to influence, such as many natural resources and agricultural goods. The exception is when any of these products is in a state of chronic scarcity or short supply, e.g., oil and precious minerals. Other examples are industries plagued by chronic over-capacity, such as airlines and automobile manufacturing. The same applies to any high-cost businesses vulnerable to global competition, as are many basic manufacturing companies whose plants are based in Europe or North America. Yes, there will always be a few companies in these fields that are highly successful but they are the exceptions.

Warren Buffett, one of the world's all-time most successful investors, rightly said, "When a management with a reputation for brilliance tackles a business with a reputation for bad economics, it is the reputation of the business that always remains intact." He also stated: "In a difficult business, no sooner is one problem solved than another surfaces — never is there

just one cockroach in the kitchen. Time is the friend of the wonderful business, the enemy of the mediocre."

Other businesses to avoid are those riding fads that invariably turn out to be temporary and those dependent upon government protectionism or support for their survival. Personally, I also would have some reservations about working in the gambling, liquor and tobacco industries. The same applies to working for any organization that creates serious environmental problems or manufactures armaments. At the end of your life when your grandchildren ask, "What did you do?," I think you want to be proud of your answer.

In addition, be on your guard against "mission impossible" jobs where the two or three previous job-holders all failed to perform satisfactorily. Sometimes, organizations create positions with expectations and demands that are impossible for anyone to fulfill as a result of being badly conceived in the first place.

Employers are routinely starting to use search engines on the Net to see what information may exist there on potential new hires. Everyone who is active on the Internet is creating an indelible personal footprint there. Do not be indiscreet online with any comments or opinions that could come back to haunt you, includ-

ing those made in a chat-room, blog or forum. Do not take chances online that will put at risk your personal safety, expose you to identity theft or raise unnecessary questions about your character in the minds of prospective future employers.

In the case of online social networking sites, such as Facebook or MySpace, be careful about what you post there under your own name. Avoid making any negative comments about your employer, supervisor or co-workers. Refrain from using offensive language, referring to any questionable behavior on your part, or posting revealing personal photos. Set up privacy settings to prevent the general public from accessing your postings but do not count on this protection working. Also, never use the same password on your social networking site that you use for any sensitive e-mail, financial or payment accounts.

Finally, do not get discouraged in your job search. Be tenacious and persevere. If what you are doing is not getting results, unplug and try another approach. Do not over-rely on the Internet to find a job. Meet face-to-face with as many people who might be able to help you as you can.

Giving up is not an option. Do not let yourself become seduced into taking a job in a fundamentally bum business or one that is a mission impossible. No matter what you are paid, it probably will not be worth it. To get the right job, you have to keep a positive frame of mind and be pro-active in finding and pursuing all promising opportunities.

CHAPTER 4

YOUR RÉSUMÉ

Producing a well-prepared résumé is essential to obtaining the right job. Ideally, you will have thought about the need to “build” your résumé a number of years beforehand.

GETTING YOUR RÉSUMÉ NOTICED

While there are many guidebooks and online Internet sources for advice about résumé writing, keep in mind these general points:

- ★ Challenge yourself to make your résumé stand out from the mass of other résumés being sent in for any job. Make yours a memorable sales document that demonstrates some verve, imagination and passion in how you present

yourself as the right candidate for the position you are going after.

- ★ **Customize your résumé for each organization you are submitting it to.** Failing to do so is the most common mistake of job applicants. Your résumé should match the stated requirements of the job as closely as possible and highlight your past accomplishments.
- ★ **Limit your résumé to one or two pages.** Think of it as an ad or billboard on why you should be hired for the job. Avoid using the word “I”, clichés, industry jargon and abbreviations. Omit vague, non-pertinent, long statements. Stick to the same print font throughout. Be extremely careful not to make any spelling errors, factual misrepresentations or grammatical mistakes. It is common for a prospective employer to verify an applicant’s education credentials and prior work history.
- ★ **Most people reading a résumé are looking for reasons to screen out applicants.** The more information you include, the greater the risk you will trigger one of the screener’s negative biases. As you gain more work experience, your résumé

could expand to a second page. One approach is to use a single-page résumé for the initial contact and then leave a second more detailed résumé with the interviewer or send it in afterwards.

RÉSUMÉ FORMAT AND CONTENT

Here are recommendations regarding the format and content of your résumé:

- ★ **Organize the format of your résumé to make it easy to read and find the key information.** Use bold print for your name, section headings, sub-headings and bullets, and all capital letters for your name and section headings. Just capitalize the first letters of the words in your sub-headings. Do not underline any headings or sub-headings. Leave a fair amount of space on both margins, and do not use too small a type-size.
- ★ **At the top of the first page, put your name and then underneath put your mailing address, telephone number and e-mail address.** Do not use a silly or cute-looking e-mail address. Omit the word “résumé” in the heading. If your résumé continues to a second page, repeat your name in bold at the top of the second page.

- ★ Place a brief summary statement at the top of your résumé underneath the heading “Objective” stating why you are the right candidate for the job. Be direct and state something along the lines of: “To obtain the position of [the job you’re applying for] at [organization’s name] using my skills of [list your two or three most important and relevant skills].” Try to keep this statement to 25 words or less.
- ★ Next, under the heading “Work History” briefly list in reverse chronological order the positions you have previously held and now currently hold together with the name of your employers and a concise description of your responsibilities in each position, including the number of persons you supervised if any. On the left side, give the dates you held each position. Be consistent in the way you list the details applicable to the different jobs you have had. Do not mention why you left any prior jobs.
- ★ As you gain meaningful job experience, you have the option of making your next heading “Professional Experience” to add functional information that describes your strengths and

- prior work experiences that are especially relevant to the job you are seeking. In doing so, you can use functional sub-headings such as “Leadership”, “Business Development”, “Marketing and Sales”, “Team Building”, “Operations” and “Communications”. If you decide to include this section in your résumé, limit yourself to using three to five such sub-headings.
- ★ Then, under the heading “Education” list in reverse chronological order, showing the applicable dates on the left side, where you attended college, university and any technical institutes. Include the degrees or diplomas you received, plus information on any scholarships, awards or prizes you were granted. If your grade average was 3.5 or higher out of 4, you graduated with honors or you received any other academic awards, also include this information.
 - ★ If you are fluent in more than one language, make the next section of your résumé “Languages” and list the languages in which you have verbal or written fluency.
 - ★ The last heading for your résumé is “Personal Background” where you provide other

information that may be relevant for the job, such as being involved in any professional associations, engaging in community volunteer work or experiencing a challenging situation where you had to set a goal and achieved it. Omit any references to activities, such as hobbies and sports, that have no bearing on the job.

- ★ Underneath the basic information in each section, use bullets to list in concise and specific terms your past accomplishments, activities and involvements of consequence. Wherever possible, also emphasize the results you achieved. Make sure that what you write in this regard is relevant to the reader of your résumé and the job you are seeking.
- ★ If you are responding to a specific job ad or posting, try to include the same keywords and phrases they contain in your résumé's stated Objective and Work History, providing you can put them in some relevant context. This will increase the likelihood of the hiring manager being attracted to your résumé.

See the Appendix for a sample résumé.

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Also consider these additional recommendations regarding your résumé:

- ★ Women should consider continuing to use their maiden names when applying for work and in any employment documents including résumés. If your name changes one or more times, it makes it difficult for someone to track your career and puts you at a disadvantage.
- ★ In North America, do not include your date of birth, gender (if not obvious), marital status or ethnicity in your résumé. In Asia and most of Europe, it is standard to include such information, plus sometimes even a photograph.
- ★ Do not include any reference to past salaries or desired compensation. Also, it is not necessary to state "References Available Upon Request". It is assumed this will be the case.
- ★ Never include your current work phone number or e-mail address at your employer when you are applying for a position at

another organization. It makes you look unprofessional if you do so.

- ★ Remember to make sure the voice message on your phone sounds appropriate.
- ★ When you are sending your résumé electronically, make it readable as a Microsoft Word attachment to your covering e-mail or message, which should include: "Please see my attached résumé."

Challenge three of your most literate friends to find any mistakes (typing, spelling, spacing, wording or grammar) in a draft of your résumé before you finalize it. If possible, also ask some individuals you know in a business management position to critique it.

After your résumé has been finalized, send it as an e-mail attachment to the same three friends to verify 100% that they can access and print out this attachment on their computers without any problems. The more professional your résumé looks, the better your chances of being regarded as a serious candidate for any job.

Throughout your career, make every effort to maintain continuity of your name, identity and contact

information, especially your personal e-mail address and ideally also your cellphone number. You never know when someone with your old résumé or prior employment information may want to contact you about an exciting new job opportunity.

CHAPTER 5

MAKING CONTACT

You have used many sources, including the Internet, to research the industry, your target organization and the positions currently available there. Now, you have got to go back to all of your personal contacts to express your specific job interests and enlist their assistance in approaching the most appropriate individuals to contact for the job. The majority of positions, including entry-level jobs, become available and are filled through leads provided by an organization's employees without ever being posted externally.

One way or another, you have to identify who are the key hiring managers and officials at your target organizations for the type of position you want to obtain. Enlist the help of your personal contacts to obtain the name, e-mail address and direct phone number of the hiring manager or human resources official responsible for filling the position. If this is not possible and you are unable to find this information elsewhere such as online, then call the organization's human resources department, switchboard or receptionist to ask for assistance in obtaining this information.

Your objective is to talk directly with the key hiring manager or human resources official in order to arrange for a personal interview. To do so, your challenge is to get around his or her assistant or secretary who usually acts as that person's "gatekeeper" in screening calls and making it difficult for people to talk directly to that individual. One way to get around a gatekeeper is to call the key person on his or her direct phone line after the gatekeeper has left the office, say anytime between 5:15 and 6:00 PM.

This is why it is always an advantage to have a good introduction to clear the way. Whenever possible, ask one of your contacts to call a senior person at the

organization to "open the door" so you can say, "Mr. So-and-So recommended that I call you regarding the position of _____ at your organization", using an upbeat, positive, confident tone of voice. If the person is not there, leave a brief voice message requesting that he or she call you back giving your phone number and a time when you can be reached.

If you are not able to talk directly to the person responsible for hiring, e-mail a covering letter together with your attached résumé directly to the individual's e-mail address. Put the title of the position being filled in your e-mail's subject line.

Before you respond to an online job posting at an organization you have identified as an attractive prospective employer, again try to find out who is the hiring manager or the name of the person in the human resources department handling the hiring. Use his or her name in responding. Make every effort to secure a face-to-face meeting with a representative of the organization. Often, you may need to utilize other personal contacts to help you arrange such a meeting in the manner that was described previously.

With most online job postings, the employer is likely going to receive hundreds, if not thousands, of

responses. You better make sure that yours stands out from the herd. Customize both your response and your résumé so they are highly relevant to each specific employer.

THE COVERING LETTER

Almost as important as your résumé is the covering letter you send with your résumé. It should be addressed to the specific individual responsible for interviewing and hiring for the available position. As was described earlier, you have to use your best sleuthing efforts to find out that person's name.

Start your letter "Dear Mr. Jones:" as opposed to "Dear Bob:". Make certain you use the correct spelling for the individual's name and title. Sign off the letter with: "Sincerely yours," and your first name. Underneath, put your full name and contact information.

Make the covering letter brief and to the point. Keep it to a maximum of one page. Do not make your letter too stiff or formal. Inject some of your personality into how you express yourself. Consider including the three or four most compelling points on why you are qualified for the position, using bullets to do so.

You want to grab the attention of the reader and make that person want to read your résumé and meet with you.

As is the case with your résumé, attempt to include the identical keywords and phrases contained in the job ad or posting in the covering letter, especially where you can use them to describe your qualifications for the position. If the job ad says that applicants "must have a passion for customer service" and this describes you, state in your covering letter and résumé that you "possess a passion for customer service".

Keep in mind that some people will not bother to read the covering letter and will go straight to your résumé. Consequently, make sure that any important points contained in your covering letter are also in some way included in your résumé.

Similar to your résumé, get someone you trust to proofread a draft of your covering letter as silly, small mistakes can cause a quick rejection of your application. Never rely solely on your computer's spell-check to catch any spelling or grammatical mistakes.

In most cases, it is best to send your covering letter and attached résumé by e-mail as opposed to by snail-mail. If you have any serious doubts about this, you

can always also send them by mail with a small note attached saying, "Sent to you by e-mail on [the date]."

After you have e-mailed your covering letter and résumé, follow up with a phone call to the hiring manager, using his or her direct line, two or three days later. Again, try to avoid having to go through that person's "gatekeeper" as it is usually advantageous to speak directly to the individual who received your e-mail. Say that you recently e-mailed your résumé to her or him, state that you definitely are interested in this position, and request an opportunity to come in for an interview. Expand briefly on why you think you are qualified for the job if you are able to do so.

In the event the secretary or assistant of the hiring manager is blocking you from talking directly to the key person, you have to be diplomatic and professionally friendly in enlisting that person's assistance in getting your message through. The more you can establish some form of rapport with this gatekeeper, the better your chances are of ultimately speaking to the right person in the organization.

CHAPTER 6

PREPARING FOR THE JOB INTERVIEW

The best way to separate yourself from the competition and boost your confidence for an interview is to become "over-prepared" in terms of your knowledge of the company and industry, and your understanding of why you are qualified for the job.

To prepare for a successful job interview, take these steps:

- ★ Learn as much as you can about the company or organization, its competitors and the industry. Talk to as many current and former employees as you can find to secure insights

into what is really important at this prospective employer. Review its Web site and look up any publicly available information, such as news articles, press releases and its most recent annual report and quarterly shareholder statements. Wherever possible, always visit the prospective employer's locations, facilities or stores, and inspect its products or try out its personal services beforehand.

- ★ In the case of public companies, go to the investor relations section of their Web sites and follow the links usually found there to read the latest research reports prepared by investment brokerage firms. These will usually contain more objective comments, including potential problems and challenges facing the company. Other excellent sources of information on companies can be found at the Web sites of *www.hoovers.com* and Dun & Bradstreet (*www.dnb.com*) and at the libraries of university business schools.
- ★ Develop your answers in writing beforehand to the most likely questions you will be asked. Most of these will probably be about your

interests, strengths and qualifications, including computer literacy. The best interviewers use questions to gauge the degree to which you are smart and creative, how well you solve problems and work under pressure, and whether you are likely to be passionate about your work. Interviewers also try to determine how well you will work with others as part of a team and the extent to which you are a good communicator.

- ★ Recognize that interviewers will usually pay a lot of attention to what you have done in the past as a basis of predicting how you will perform in the future. The more specific you can be in talking about prior accomplishments, including using numbers to quantify any improvements you attained, the better.
- ★ Be prepared to give your "verbal résumé" in less than two minutes in response to the question: "Tell me about yourself." In replying, concentrate on your passions, personal assets and prior experiences that may be relevant to the job. Also, be prepared for the question, "What are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?" Give a succinct answer that emphasizes your

strengths. In the case of your weaknesses, you obviously have to be careful about your answer. Try to give a negative that is also a positive, such as sometimes you tend to be a perfectionist or try to be overly organized. Rehearse the answers to these questions. If you do have any “serious weaknesses” applicable to the job, you should discuss them as they will likely surface with your reference checks.

- ★ Anticipate other common questions such as “Why are you applying for this particular job?,” “Where do you want to be in five years?” (to probe how career-oriented you are), “Can you describe a situation where you have been in a leadership position or had to solve a tough problem?” (to sense whether you have any leadership skills and are a problem solver), and “Tell me about your last job.” In answering the last question, never speak badly of any prior employer or about any individual you have previously worked for or with.
- ★ One of the best ways to answer a question is to tell a brief, unusual story about yourself that gives the interviewer a positive illustration of

your character or how you deal with challenges. For example, “In my last job, we were faced with a serious customer service problem. To correct this situation, I took the following actions with my TEAM: ...”

- ★ Organizations are increasingly using a technique known as “behavior descriptive interviewing,” which involves asking applicants a structured set of standard questions to probe how they responded in the past to specific situations selected for their relevance to the requirements of the job. This technique is also used to pre-screen candidates online. Such questions could include, “Tell us about the biggest challenge or problem you have ever faced and how you handled it” or “Give me an example of when you disagreed with your supervisor and tell me how you dealt with that situation.”
- ★ Employers want to hire candidates who can think creatively when they are under pressure. As a result, interviewers are starting to ask “puzzle questions.” Microsoft is famous for doing this with questions such as “Why are

manhole covers round?" (Possible answers are: "So they're easier to move when they roll" or "Why do you assume that they're all round?"). Another example of a puzzle question is "How do you design a car for a deaf person?" Try to think out-of-the-box in attempting to answer such questions. Resist giving an obvious answer as it is likely to be "wrong".

- ★ Be prepared to talk about your interests outside of work. What sports, hobbies and cultural activities do you engage in? The more diverse your interests, the better.
- ★ Think through the most important questions for you to ask the interviewer. Usually, the interviewer will start with "the big picture" and work down to the details of the job through a process of the interviewer and yourself exchanging questions and information. Some possible big picture questions for you to ask are: "What is the organization's key competitive edge?", "What are the organization's other most significant strengths?", "What is the impact of the Internet and globalization on the organization (if this is relevant)?", and "Are there

any major threats facing the organization from the standpoint of competition or government regulations?"

Here are some other matters you need to address prior to any job interview:

- ★ Make sure you know exactly where the interview meeting is being held and take a practice run at the same time of day to determine how long it is going to take you to get there.
- ★ Write down the correct spelling of the name of the person who is going to be interviewing you. Take three copies of your résumé and any other supporting materials relevant to your prior work and interests with you to the interview.
- ★ Try to determine beforehand the organization's everyday dress code and dress in accordance with it and the level of the job. Err on the side of formality if you have any uncertainty about what to wear. You can always take your tie and jacket off if you sense you are overdressed for the interview.
- ★ Avoid any form of sloppiness or wearing anything seductive and flashy, including large

jewelry. Shined shoes, a well-ironed shirt, pressed pants and pulled-up socks will help men make the right impression. If you are a woman, go easy on the makeup and do not wear perfume or anything else with a strong scent. The latter also applies to men. In addition, do not chew gum or smoke, even if you are told it is permissible to do so.

You will notice that I use all capital letters whenever I write the word TEAM. This is to emphasize its importance in how you approach getting anything accomplished in the workplace. Most goals and projects are achieved by people working together as a TEAM. Interviewers know this and are looking for signs that you understand the need for teamwork as opposed to you stressing “Here is what I have done on my own.”

CHAPTER 7

HAVING A SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEW

There are many things you can do in the actual interview to improve your chances of a successful outcome.

THE START

Here are some key points regarding the beginning of any interview:

★ Arrive with at least five minutes to spare.

Ask to use the nearest bathroom. Check your appearance in the mirror there. Turn off your cellphone, pager and any other PDA's. Be courteous and friendly to the receptionist and anyone else you meet before, during and after your interview.

- ★ Countless studies have shown that the impression you make in the first 30 seconds, especially with your handshake, has a huge impact in making the interviewer favorably disposed towards you for the entire interview. Introduce yourself to the interviewer by saying: "Hello, my name is ____ ____," using your first and last name. Smile, look the interviewer in the eye, and give him or her a firm handshake. Walk with your shoulders back and your head up in a confident manner to the interview room.
- ★ Often, you will be asked if you would like a coffee, tea or something else to drink. Ask the interviewer, "Are you going to have anything?" If the answer is yes, then ask for what you would like. If the answer is no, then also decline to have anything.
- ★ If you come to the interview wearing a suit or sports jacket and your interviewer either is not wearing a jacket (or suit top) or takes his or hers off at the start of the interview, ask, "Do you mind if I take off my jacket?" Then, remove your jacket and hang it over the back of your chair before you sit down. This gesture helps to

- demonstrate that you are in the same mode as your interviewer and that you will "fit in".
- ★ Unless you have met the person before, address the interviewer by his or her last name ("Mr./Mrs./Ms. Jones") until you are requested to use the interviewer's first name.
 - ★ Look the interviewer in the eye from the start of the introduction when you first walk into the room through to the end of the interview for at least 80% of the time you are together. If more than one person is interviewing you at the same time, maintain eye contact with whomever is speaking or asking a question and with that person when you are responding to the question.
 - ★ Sit up straight, keep your hands and arms relatively still except when you are talking, and refrain from fidgeting or crossing your arms. Do not worry if you are nervous at the beginning of the interview. Everyone is. Just try to relax and be yourself.
 - ★ One of the purposes of an interview is to enable the interviewer to get a sense of what you are like as a person. Show your enthusiasm

and passion for the job and the work you do. Put some emotion in your answers and demonstrate that you have a sense of humor. Do not come across as being arrogant, boring or desperate. And, do not apologize for your lack of experience.

- ★ When you are being interviewed in someone's office, look for common links in the interviewer's personal effects, such as the photos on the walls. If it appears that you both share a common interest, briefly comment on that either at the start or the end of the interview.
- ★ The well-known TV interviewer Barbara Walters was correct when she said: "You're not making a social call when you apply for a job, so don't be cozy. Comments about the office furnishings or what the interviewer is wearing are inappropriate. In the same vein, don't be too confiding. The question, 'Are you married?' requires only a yes or no, not a recital of your divorce action." While the latter question may be illegal in an interview, it still might be raised.

In many cases, the attitude you display in a job interview is more important than your past experience. Employers are often prepared to teach you new skills if they perceive that you have an enthusiastic, positive, inquiring attitude. Interviewers also want to gain a sense of how well you are going to get along with the other employees.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Follow these recommendations in answering and asking questions:

- ★ When you are asked difficult questions, pause and think about your answer first before responding. Thinking before you answer is much better than giving a glib, superficial, quick response. Remember the adage, there are no embarrassing questions, just embarrassing answers. Sometimes it is better to say that you do not know the answer than to make a wrong guess.
- ★ In the event you are asked a personal question that is inappropriate or illegal, there is no point in taking offense or objecting to the question.

You could respond by saying, "I'm surprised you asked that but yes I ...". The nature of the questions you are asked gives clues as to the character of the organization.

- ★ Sometimes, female applicants will be asked, "Are you planning on having a family?"
Answer, "Who knows what will happen in the future but my career is very important to me."
- ★ If a question is unclear, do not be afraid to ask for clarification. Say, "I'm not sure I understand your question. Could you please repeat it? Are you asking about ...?"
- ★ Some interviewers take the approach of asking confrontational questions in an antagonistic manner, such as: "Why in the world do you think you are qualified to take this job?"
When this happens, smile sweetly, count to three while you are thinking, and respond in a calm, rational manner to show how well you conduct yourself under pressure. Never lose your temper or let anyone get you flustered. Also, do not get into an argument with the interviewer.
- ★ Use your questions selectively to indicate that you have done your homework without

appearing to be a know-it-all. Ask follow-up questions and probe deeper with the interviewer to gain the information you require if you are given an opportunity to do so but avoid being confrontational or appearing overly aggressive in asking too many questions.

- ★ In asking questions, refer to your source of information to indicate that you have made an effort to become informed about the organization. "I saw in Morgan Stanley's report on your company that it is facing a major challenge in such and such an area. Do you think this is a valid point? Can you tell me what are the company's plans in this regard?"
- ★ When it comes to the details of the job itself, you need to gain a clear understanding of the specific responsibilities and duties of the job as well as the environment where you would be working. Ask who held the job previously, how well did he or she do at it, how long was the person in that position, and where is that individual now. In addition, inquire about what future advancement opportunities will likely be available if you deliver excellent performance in this position.

- ★ Ask the interviewer, “Could you tell me what are the most important attributes you are looking for in a successful candidate for this job?” Also, demonstrate an interest in the interviewer’s personal views by asking such questions as “May I ask what caused you to join the company?” and “What do you yourself like most about working here?”

DEALING WITH COMPENSATION ISSUES

Take this approach concerning compensation issues:

- ★ Save your questions about compensation, benefits and holidays until the end of the second interview or preferably let the interviewer be the first to raise these subjects. Never attempt to negotiate any of these matters until you have actually been offered the position, recognizing that there will be limited opportunity to do so for entry-level jobs. When it is clear that the organization wants to hire you, you may be able to negotiate for an early salary review (say in three months time), a flexible work schedule or reimbursement of relocation costs.

- ★ If you are asked “What is your current salary?” or “What are your salary expectations?”; respond by saying, “For me, salary is not the most important factor compared with the type of work I’ll be doing, who I’ll be working for, and the organization I’ll be working at. I would like to know, however, what does the job pay?”
- ★ The problem in disclosing your current salary and expectations is that this information may cause the hiring manager to reduce the salary offered to you below what he or she was originally intending to offer you for the job. If you are pressed, however, give an honest answer about your current compensation.
- ★ When the salary you are offered seems too low, ask about “the total compensation package” for the job including the opportunity to earn a bonus or participate in any incentive compensation or profit sharing plans. If the total compensation offered is still too low, ask about the salary range for the job given good performance on your part and about the salary range for the position immediately above the one you are discussing. In this situation, you

need to try to gain an understanding of the organization's basic compensation philosophy.

THE END OF THE INTERVIEW

Address these matters at the end of the interview:

- ★ If you sense that the interviewer is being evasive or vague in answering questions about the company or your specific job duties and your attempts to gain greater clarification have failed, make your last question: "Is there anything about this position or the organization that we have not discussed that you think I should know about?" Often, in such circumstances it is a good idea to request a written copy of the position's "job description".
- ★ Unless it has already been covered by the interviewer, one of your other last questions should be: "Could you please tell me the process you are going through to fill this position, what is the next step and when might I hear back from you?" In many cases, you may need to have two or three other interviews at the organization before you receive a specific job offer.

- ★ At the end, give the interviewer a firm handshake with a smile and say, "It was a pleasure to meet you." As you are leaving, ask for the interviewer's business card so you have his or her contact information. If it is not on the card, ask if you may have the interviewer's e-mail address. When more than one person was involved in interviewing you, obtain their business cards and, if you can tactfully do so, their e-mail addresses as well.

When you are invited back for a second interview and you sense that it went well, it is often a good idea to ask when you will have an opportunity to have a tour of the office, plant or facilities and to be shown where you would be working if you were to be successful in obtaining the job. Taking such a tour will give you an opportunity to ask more questions and to size up the morale and mood of the people working there.

If the premises appear to be well-organized and maintained and the employees are friendly and going about their work in an efficient manner, then there is a reasonably good chance that the organization is successful. When the reverse is the case with premises

that exhibit sloppy, poor housekeeping and employees who seem to be harried with no one smiling or looking you in the eye, be cautious about accepting a job there. These are usually sure signs of poor management and a struggling organization.

PHONE INTERVIEWS

Some interviewers will use an initial phone interview to screen candidates. Try to be as well-prepared for a phone interview as you would be for an in-person interview. Put a smile in your voice and stand up when you are talking on the phone as this causes most people to speak much more clearly and louder than when they are sitting down. Have your résumé in front of you with a list of the principal points on why you are qualified for the job and a good fit for the organization.

Conduct your phone interview from a quiet room. Shut off your cellphone and computer. Do not chew gum, eat anything or smoke while you are talking on the phone to an interviewer.

Concentrate on listening carefully to the interviewer's questions. Insert some of your own questions and personality in the interview as if you are having a conversation.

Do not put the interviewer on hold for any reason. Ignore call-waiting. And, do not use your cellphone for a phone interview. At the end, restate your interest in the job, ask when it would be possible for you to come in for an in-person interview, and obtain the interviewer's direct phone number and e-mail address.

After the phone interview, send an e-mail to express your thanks to the interviewer for taking the time to call you. Include in the e-mail any other points that you did not have an opportunity to mention regarding your suitability for the job. If you think the phone interview went reasonably well and you have not heard back in a week, call the interviewer on his or her direct phone line to ask, "Would it be possible for me to come in for a personal interview?" Again, it may be necessary to call after-hours between 5:15 and 6:00 PM to avoid having that person's "gatekeeper" prevent you from getting through.

CHAPTER 8

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Many attractive employment opportunities are missed as a result of a failure to properly take the initiative in following up after the initial job interview.

YOUR FOLLOW-UP

If you are interested in the position, no later than the morning after the interview, send an e-mail to the interviewer thanking that person for taking the time to meet with you, describe the organization and the job, and give you a tour if he or she did so. Reiterate that you are seriously interested in the position, and briefly comment on what especially impressed you

about the organization. Also, include in this e-mail your response to any key issues raised in the interview. End the e-mail by giving the information on how best to reach you outside of your office or workplace.

For some types of jobs, at the same time you should also write a letter by hand to the interviewer covering the same points but expressing yourself differently. Use reasonably good quality stationery or an appropriate card for this purpose. Try to deliver this letter to the interviewer's office yourself if it is possible to do so.

When more than one person interviewed you, send a thank-you e-mail or, if this is not possible, a written note to each individual, changing the wording slightly for the different interviewers. Take extra care to ensure that your thank-you e-mails and letters are free of any grammatical, spelling or other mistakes, and be sure to use the correct name and title of each person they are addressed to.

In the case of jobs in manufacturing, production and technology-oriented industries, just send your thank-you message by e-mail. When the job is in advertising, fashion, publishing or any other creative field, use both an e-mail and a handwritten letter to thank

the interviewer. Handwritten letters usually have more impact than an e-mail.

Even if you are no longer interested in the job, it is still important to write a courteous thank-you e-mail or letter within two days following the interview. You never know where the interviewer may end up working. It could be in a position at another organization where you want a job in the future.

ASSESSING THE INTERVIEW

It is a good idea to sit down after an interview and make notes on the points discussed. Make a list of those subjects where you need to obtain additional information before you can make a decision about the job. Also, write down any additional points you should make if you have another interview for this job.

Sometimes, an interview will reveal certain issues that are warning signs about some serious negative problems that may be facing the organization. Do not ignore these. Often, you have to do further "due diligence" research to determine if such concerns are valid, including discreetly talking to current and former employees if you can.

Examples of the more serious issues to watch for include the organization's financial health and whether it is vulnerable to being sold or taken over by a competitor in the near future. Is the company currently losing money and, if so, how long has it been unprofitable? Is the company burdened with too much debt and at risk of going bankrupt as a result? How is the company faring in comparison with its competitors? Has the company been losing a significant amount of market share sales-wise to its competitors? Obviously, you want to avoid joining a sinking ship.

If you have not heard back within one week following the initial interview, contact the interviewer by phone or e-mail to reiterate your interest in the position and ask when you may hear further about it. This needs to be done diplomatically without you coming across as being pushy.

REFERENCES

Invariably, serious prospective employers will ask you to provide them with references, namely individuals whom they can contact to verify the contents of your résumé and ask questions concerning your suitability for the position you applied for. In most cases, they will

primarily be interested in probing your work habits, performance and any demonstrated strengths and weaknesses in your prior jobs.

The most appropriate references to give a perspective employer are one or two of your supervisors, co-workers and subordinates, if you had people working for you. Another possible reference is one of your teachers or professors who knew you well. If you had a major volunteer involvement with a community organization and someone in a senior position there is aware of it, include this person as one of your references. Do not use friends as references unless you have worked with them. Give a total of three to four references. In each case, include the reference's name, contact information and your relationship with that reference.

Think carefully about who you should give as references. One of the common questions asked of previous employers is: "Would you hire this individual again if you had an opportunity to do so?" Keep this in mind in selecting your references. Only give out your references when you are asked for them.

Always ask the individuals beforehand if you can use them as a reference. It is also a good idea to alert them that a specific individual and organization may

be calling to check your references in connection with the job you are attempting to obtain. Describe the job.

Do this by phone or in person to gain an idea of how your potential references will respond to any questions about your suitability for the job. Do not give someone as a reference unless you are reasonably confident that the individual views you in a positive manner.

Throughout your academic and working career, identify individuals who can serve as potential future references, including your teachers and professors. Keep in touch with these individuals over the years and nurture your relationship with them.

CHAPTER 9

THE JOB DECISION

When the person conducting the hiring and you have agreed on the details of the job offer, it is usually a good idea to request that your duties and compensation be outlined in a letter to you. If you are keen about the job, accept it with enthusiasm as soon as you receive such a letter. Shake the person's hand to accept his or her offer when you meet again in person.

In the event you are undecided about whether to accept a job offer, ask for up to one week to think it over. Before committing, you may want to request to meet the person you will be reporting to. Even after you have done all your homework and due diligence,

the decision to accept a job offer still requires a certain leap of faith and courage on your part. You have to trust your instincts and judgment when you have done everything you can to make a well-informed decision.

Some organizations will ask you to sign the bottom of their job offer letter to acknowledge that you are accepting the position. For more senior jobs, you also may be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement as well as a non-compete agreement restricting your ability to work at a competing company in the future. Ask a lawyer to look over such agreements before you sign them so you fully understand their contents and the extent to which their restrictions are in fact enforceable.

Embarking upon your career is like going on a long journey with many destinations along the way. Hopefully, you have thought through how the job will help position you to be where you want to be career-wise three to five years from now. Ideally, you will be offered worthwhile opportunities for advancement in the future at this organization if you demonstrate excellent performance in your position.

Apart from gaining an income, the decisive factors for taking a position at an organization usually are:

- ★ It enables you to enter a particular profession, field of work or industry that excites you and where hopefully you can be passionate about what you are doing.
- ★ It makes you a member of a successful, well-managed organization with an exciting future where there will be many opportunities for advancement as it continues to grow.
- ★ It gives you an opportunity to learn about and gain experience in a specific business that has strong appeal to you from an entrepreneurial standpoint, one where you may want to go into business for yourself in the future.

The level of your starting salary should not necessarily be the most important factor in your decision, especially when you will be able to earn additional incentive compensation. If the starting salary is low, ask when performance and compensation reviews are held for your position. If the answer is annually, then request that your performance and compensation be reviewed in three or six month's time. Also, attempt to gain some understanding of the organization's compensation philosophy and the promotion opportunities available to

you. Often, more important than your salary is whom you will be working for and the type of work and projects you will be engaged in.

The starting salary of my first job following completion of graduate business school was exactly one-half the average amount being paid to my peers but my new employers promised to review my performance and compensation at the end of each month. I took the job as I wanted to become involved in the field of real estate and was extremely impressed by the firm's two partners and their approach to running the business. One year later, my salary was 200% higher.

After graduating from the same business school, a friend of mine decided he wanted to go into the cable TV business for himself when it was in its infancy. To learn the business, he took a relatively low-level position in the then-fledgling cable division of a major U.S. media company. His salary was negligible but after one year he had gained enough knowledge and experience to start up his own cable TV business in Canada where virtually no one knew anything about the industry. He used this advantage to build an extremely large and successful company. To say that he started out being

totally committed to being a success in the cable TV business would be an understatement.

One final note of caution. Do not take a job if it involves having to work for someone you do not like, respect or trust. If your instincts warn you that such is the case or that you are going to have a difficult time working for someone, look for another job. Life is too short.

CHAPTER 10

INTERNSHIPS

Increasingly, major companies and non-profit organizations are offering summer internships to college students, especially in the U.S. Information on these programs is posted on the Web sites of these organizations and is available at college career centers. Some colleges are starting to offer grants to their students who are doing summer internships.

The actual work performed by interns varies significantly from make-work and grunt tasks to projects that are fun and challenging, depending on the employer and the initiative of the intern. The benefit of an internship is that it gives you an opportunity to learn first-hand about a field or organization where you may want to work after graduation and to establish contacts

there. If you make a good impression as an intern, it definitely enhances your chances of gaining a full-time job with that employer after graduation.

Many internships do not offer any paid compensation, especially those with non-profit groups and some highly coveted “glamorous” employers in the arts, fashion and media. If you are particularly interested in working at a certain organization, send a letter to its president, executive director or division head expressing your interest in having a summer internship there and follow-up afterwards with a phone call to demonstrate the seriousness of your interest.

Before you commit to any summer internship, do your homework to make sure it is likely going to be a worthwhile experience, regardless of the pay. Ask for a written job description to determine if the work is going to be meaningful. Try to gain exposure to different parts of the organization. After you have been interviewed and offered an internship, ask to speak to individuals who were interns previously and to meet the person you would be working for, if that is at all possible, before you make a final decision.

Depending obviously on whether you can afford to do so, taking an exciting summer internship even if it

does not offer any pay will look much better on your future résumé than taking a low level summer job doing work that is unrelated to your future career.

OTHER SOURCES

Three excellent sources of additional advice on how to be successful in finding the right job are the books *The Pathfinder: How to Choose or Change Your Career for a Lifetime of Satisfaction* by Nicholas Lore, *Where Have I Gone Right?* by Jim Hayhurst and *What Color Is Your Parachute: A Practical Manual for Job-Hunters and Career-Changers* by Richard Nelson Bolles. More information about the latter book and its author can be found at the Web site www.jobhuntersbible.com. Another good source of advice on this subject is the Web site www.jobbound.com.

PART TWO

DOING YOUR JOB EFFECTIVELY

PART TWO
INTRO

DOING YOUR JOB EFFECTIVELY

You have accepted a job offer. You are about to start work. It is “show time” in terms of having to perform in the real world. Hopefully, you are excited about the opportunity to demonstrate your capabilities and learn more about your organization and what it does. This is the beginning of your career.

There are techniques for you to use to get the most out of your attention, energy and time at work. There are also some points to keep in mind when you are making decisions.

This part provides you with a playbook for performing your job effectively. It also gives some guidance on the need for handling stress.

YOUR WORK PHILOSOPHY

It is a big asset to bring to your job a well-conceived personal work philosophy that serves as a framework for how you are going to approach the duties, responsibilities and challenges of your new position.

To achieve both professional and personal success, incorporate these principles into your work philosophy:

- ★ Be committed and passionate about what you are doing. No one achieved great results just going through the motions. You have to strive to be the best at whatever you undertake. The more passionate you are about what you are doing, the easier it will be for you to find success.

- ★ Accept the fact that, to get ahead in today's competitive world, you must make an extra effort to go beyond just meeting people's expectations of yourself in the workplace. Many positions, especially those in management and most professions, require 10 to 12 hour workdays on a regular basis. Having to spend some time working late into the evening and on weekends is also common. This is why it is imperative for you to enjoy your job and see it as a worthwhile challenge.
- ★ In most organizations, the care, well-being and satisfaction of customers or clients are MISSION #1, the first priority of everyone. In fact, just meeting their expectations is not good enough. If this is not clearly understood by front-line employees, support workers and management, the organization is headed for deep trouble. As Sam Walton, the founder of Wal-Mart, said: "There is only one boss. The customer. And he can fire everybody in the company from the chairman on down, simply by spending his money somewhere else."

- ★ There is only one path to follow in your professional and personal life and that is the ethical, moral and fair way. Always treat other people the way you would like to be treated yourself and never compromise your principles.
- ★ If something is worth doing, it is worth doing right. Furthermore, it saves a great deal of time, expense and effort if you do it right the first time. In most cases, doing it right equates to the quality of the product, service or task performed and the speed with which it is delivered or executed. Regardless of what task you are given, always do the best job you can do.
- ★ Most results in organizations are accomplished by people working with people, by TEAMS. Establishing strong working relationships with customers, co-workers, supervisors and suppliers is essential. Wherever possible, foster a partnership TEAM mentality. Lone rangers rarely go far.
- ★ Beware of conventional thinking, so-called experts and media reporting. Treat all of them with a high degree of skepticism, especially

what you read, hear and see on all forms of the media. Think for yourself and trust your instincts. The more informed you become yourself, the harder it will be for others to manipulate you.

- ★ Excuses should be used extremely sparingly. You not only have to do your best, you have to do what is required. Complaining and griping wastes energy and time, plus annoys your supervisor and colleagues at work. Stay focused on the solution, not the problems.
- ★ Learn from the past but concentrate on the future. What is done is done. Let it go. What counts from now on is taking charge of your future destiny.

Each gender has its challenges. Women sometimes have trouble being taken seriously in business or at certain organizations. Columnist Dr. Joyce Brothers rightly advised: "Don't try to be one of the boys. Be yourself. Capitalize on your female strengths and use the psychological tools you have acquired to deal with male chauvinism as well as to climb the ladder of success."

THE START

Yes, on your first day of work you need to make a positive, friendly, co-operative impression on everyone you meet. Good first impressions have a way of establishing the tone of future relationships. Poor first impressions are hard to shake off.

Do your homework so you are clear beforehand on the start time, dress code and any security issues you will face in your job. Observe good manners with everyone you encounter. Do not forget to use the words "please" and "thank you".

Your biggest and most important challenge on the first day is to meet with your immediate supervisor to gain a sound understanding of his or her specific expectations for you in your position and what is really important to your supervisor results-wise. You need to find out what your role is in making your department or TEAM a success. You also have to know the basis on which your future performance is going to be evaluated.

If it is possible to do so, take an 8½" x 11" notepad with you to this meeting and make notes on the key points discussed. Do not be afraid to ask questions to clarify your responsibilities and assignments. After your supervisor covers an important subject, consider repeating back your understanding of it by saying, "May I summarize what you said were my priorities [action items or main responsibilities]? You want me to ..." This will provide you with more acknowledgment or greater clarity.

In addition, it is always helpful to hear your supervisor's views on "the big picture". What is your supervisor's vision for what he or she wants your department or area of the organization to achieve in terms of medium- to long-term objectives? How

does this relate to the rest of the organization? What does your supervisor regard as the biggest challenges facing his or her department and the organization as a whole? Some of this information from your supervisor may have to be covered at a subsequent meeting but the sooner you know it, the better.

Following this initial meeting with your supervisor, sit down and expand your notes on what was said. Review them to identify any issues on which you may need further clarification from either your supervisor or co-workers. Keep these notes for future reference.

Now you are ready to "make it happen" in your job.

THE FIRST 30 DAYS

Make the first 30 days of your new job count. Don't miss any opportunities to make a positive first impression on your co-workers, your supervisor and the other members of your organization.

To ensure your career has a strong launch, take this approach with your new job:

- ★ Recognize that every newcomer to a job has to go through a process of proving oneself and will initially likely be given the least interesting and lowest-value tasks to perform. Treat this as a learning experience and opportunity for you to demonstrate your ability to meet deadlines and handle greater responsibility.

- ★ From the beginning, establish a practice of under-promising and over-delivering on any assigned tasks and projects. Early on, you need to establish a reputation that you can be depended upon to do what you say you are going to do, including meeting deadlines and being punctual at work and meetings. Your punctuality will signal your dependability.
- ★ It pays to adopt a sense of urgency in pursuing your tasks. Procrastination is definitely a vice. As the author Mark Twain said, “The secret of getting ahead is getting started.” Be action oriented. Avoid distractions such as surfing the Net and wasting time in excessive social chatting at the office.
- ★ Get into a productive daily work routine. Use a print or electronic diary to plan your future work, listing the calls, principal tasks, meetings and deadlines you have to attend to on a daily basis. Also, record your future travel dates and plans in this diary. For this purpose, I prefer to use an annual bound print diary that allots one page for each day of the year.
- ★ Develop your own system for keeping on track in planning and scheduling what you need

- to accomplish each day, week and month. Consider adopting the practice of taking time at the end of each day to review your “to-do list” for the next day. Do the same at the end of each week and month in order to plan the following week or month. Allow for interruptions, unanticipated demands and review times. Remember the rule of 5 P’s — “prior planning prevents poor performance”.
- ★ Establish priorities for the major issues and opportunities that you have to concentrate your attention on. Keep them limited to a maximum of three to five. You cannot attack everything at the same time. Break up big challenges and projects into smaller, more manageable pieces to avoid getting snowed under. If it helps to do so, make written to-do lists for each of your principal tasks. Often, what you need to do first is what you most want to postpone doing.
 - ★ Be friendly and collegial with all work colleagues, especially during lunch and other breaks. Make an effort to learn about their families and non-work passions. Remember and use their names as much as you can. People always

respond more positively if you use their names in talking to them. When you go to a meeting, map out the table or meeting area and put down the names of everyone in the correct place.

- ★ Your best orientation to your job and organization will come from asking a few of the right questions of co-workers, other employees, customers and suppliers and then demonstrating your skills as a “great listener”. Do not assume you know what is truly important to your supervisor, co-workers and organization. Often, things are different from what you were initially told to expect or how they appear on the surface. Size up how the organization really operates and decisions are made. Become aware of the conflicts and tensions that may exist in different parts of the organization.
- ★ Find out which parts of your job your predecessor did really well and “go to school” with that person on how he or she did them.
- ★ As soon as you can, spend time out of the office visiting the field operations of your organization, especially at the level where customers and clients are served. Become customer-grounded.

This is a vital part of your company orientation. If you are in a support function, spend some time working with those you are supporting. Put yourself in their shoes. For example, if you are working in the head office of a retailer, ask to be able to work in the stores for at least two weeks before you assume your office responsibilities. When you do so, dress for working in the store, not as you do for the office.

Keep these other points in mind as you start your new position:

- ★ **Go above and beyond your job description.** Take the initiative to improve the practices of your job and the performance of your department. Adopt a thrifty mindset. Always be watchful for ways to save money and time. In the end, the lowest-cost operators in an industry are invariably the most successful.
- ★ **Try to keep calm and cool when you are under pressure.** Avoid becoming burdened with feelings of fear and frustration. Never, never allow yourself to lose your temper regardless of the provocation. If necessary, count to ten and unplug, even if it is only

to go for a walk around the block. Such negative emotions only serve to sap your energy level.

- ★ Keep track of the names of other people's secretaries or assistants inside and outside the organization. Often, these individuals can be extremely helpful in arranging appointments and telling you when is the best time to meet their boss. Like everyone else, they will always be more receptive to doing so when you use their names in talking to them.
- ★ Do not be a totally "open book" for everyone at work. Preserve some mystic about yourself and what makes you tick. Do not confide in anyone at work, including the human resources department, about your personal problems or social life. Be especially careful about not including any such information in e-mails sent by you from the office. Just because you ask someone to keep what you say confidential does not mean he or she will do so.
- ★ Keep your opinions about others at work or what the organization is doing to yourself. Both inside and outside the organization, never express critical views about your superiors or

co-workers to anyone, no matter how strong your feelings are in this regard. Refrain from saying anything about someone that you would not say if that person was in the room.

- ★ Treat all sensitive information about your organization and its customers and suppliers as being totally confidential. Never discuss such information with anyone outside of your organization. Be extremely discreet regarding what you say on elevators, escalators, planes and public transportation. Remember the World War II dictum: "Loose lips sink ships".
- ★ Be on guard against engaging in any company gossip or politics. Lou Gerstner, IBM's recent CEO, said it best: "I can't stand politics in an institution. I will not tolerate people who criticize others at their own game, who'll say, 'This person's not doing his or her job,' or, 'That part of our company isn't performing well.' If we want to criticize, let's go beat up on our competitors. But we're all in it together, and that teamwork was important to IBM."
- ★ Do not become part of a clique at work. Be friendly to everyone but do not rush into

friendships there. Avoid excessive socializing after hours with work associates, especially if it involves drinking alcohol. Although this is a common practice in some countries, I regard frequent after-work drinking as a huge waste of time and money.

- ★ Assess the education requirements for doing your job superbly. Find out which are the best trade and business publications for keeping on top of what is going on in your industry and related fields. Start reading them on a regular basis after work. Attend trade shows. Consider enrolling in some online or night courses at local educational institutions to shortcut your learning process work-wise.

After the first 30 days, ask to meet with your supervisor to get some feedback on how he or she thinks you are performing your job and obtain some suggestions for improving your work. Listen, do not argue.

THE NEXT 60 DAYS

Your orientation period is over and you are starting to settle down in your new position. It's now time to begin trying to make a difference to the success of your organization.

Here are some recommendations for doing so:

- ★ Think through the question of which relationships inside and outside of the organization will be critical to your success. Start to cultivate and build these relationships to maximize the number of allies and supporters you have as a source of potential help in the future.

- ★ A recent survey by a high-powered international headhunter, James M. Citrin, on what differentiated “extraordinary people from merely successful ones” found that extraordinary businesspeople spent 80% of their time doing their jobs and 20% doing work that was not required of them. Virtually 90% of these people also focused on the success of those around them and the overall TEAM at least as much as on their own success.
- ★ Do not be afraid of making mistakes. As the saying goes, nothing ventured, nothing gained. Think of your mistakes as a learning experience. Organizations understand this. What they do not want to see are the same mistakes being repeated and people who are incapable of admitting their mistakes or taking responsibility for them. All organizations have to take calculated risks from time to time in order to succeed and prosper. The same applies to you but measure the risk before you leap into unknown territory.
- ★ Familiarize yourself with the leading organizations in your industry or profession.

Do the same with your organization’s local competitors. Determine what stands out about them and their practices in terms of their strengths and weaknesses.

- ★ Start keeping track of individuals you meet or hear about who are really good at what they do both inside and outside of your organization. Think of them as potential internal and external resources or assets that you might need to call upon at some time in the future. The broader your network of such contacts, the better.
- ★ Be prepared to admit it when you do not know the answer to a question. Say, “That’s a good question. I don’t know. I’ll get back to you with the answer.” And, do it as soon as you can.

At the end of this 60-day period, again seek feedback from your supervisor on how you are doing. Ask, “What should I be doing differently?” and “For you as my supervisor, what represents a touchdown or gold medal performance in my job?” Also, ask for suggestions on how you can better support the efforts of your entire work group and TEAM. Listen, do not argue.

AFTER THREE MONTHS

You are now well underway in your job. Your work routine should be well-developed and people in the organization should be starting to take you seriously.

Start to address these issues:

- ★ Find a mentor at work or outside of the organization who is experienced, well-respected and wise. You require someone with whom you can meet every month or so to discuss important work-related issues, problems and opportunities on a confidential basis. Having such an individual serve as an independent sounding board and source of

advice will be a major asset to building your career.

- ★ The selection of the right person to approach to serve as a mentor depends first on which areas you need the most help and second on that person's willingness to spend a certain amount of time meeting with you on a regular basis. When you request that someone consider acting as your mentor, be clear in describing what is involved in terms of your goals, desired outcomes and need for honest, constructive feedback given by someone you respect and trust. Rather than use the term "mentor", say something such as, "Would it be possible for me to meet with you from time to time to obtain your advice on various things relating to my position and work?"
- ★ You are much better off to find your own informal mentor than to wait for your organization to assign one to you on a formal basis. Take an inclusive approach in identifying who would be the best mentor for yourself. If you are a woman, you may gain greater benefit

from having a man as your mentor in terms of obtaining a valuable, different perspective.

- ★ Conduct your own original analysis to figure out what are the truly critical performance and productivity measurements for your job, TEAM, department and organization. Go beyond the ones that have always been used for this purpose in the past. Search for new ways to measure product quality, what matters most to customers, and the other factors important to the organization's success. Review these with your colleagues and then your supervisor.
- ★ Be receptive and open-minded to making changes and taking advantage of new industry developments. The survival of organizations depends on their ability to anticipate and adapt to changing circumstances and opportunities, including those of a global nature. Identify the major trends and changes affecting your customers, associates, suppliers and competitors both locally and globally. Think creatively about how technology and the Net are going to impact your organization and industry from both an

opportunity and threat standpoint. The same applies to changing demographics, globalization and government regulations. Revisit these issues regularly.

To keep on a positive track, keep these points in mind:

- ★ When it comes to your job, confine your worrying to subjects you can change, control or influence. Spend little time worrying about matters beyond your control except for how you should respond in an emergency. Do not generate unnecessary stress for yourself. Stay focused on your area of control.
- ★ Try to avoid getting saddled with “mission impossibles”. If a project or assignment has consistently defeated everyone who has attempted it in the past, it probably represents a mission impossible. Look behind the obvious factors to determine the fundamental or structural flaws that made the repeated failures inevitable. Say to your supervisor, “I’ve done some research — a number of really capable people haven’t succeeded in this job. Why is

this?” Make your supervisor in effect your partner in any such challenging assignment.

- ★ Pick your battles carefully. Avoid getting involved in contentious issues unless the stakes are serious for the well-being of the organization and you have something meaningful to contribute to their resolution. Refrain from making any personal attacks or charges. Focus on the task at issue, not the person.
- ★ Do not let yourself burn out in your job. After the first three months, it is time to be disciplined about keeping some balance between the demands of work and the need to have a meaningful personal and family life. Nobody should have to work more than 50 to 60 hours a week. If you find yourself having to do so, then perform a serious rethink of your work routine, practices and priorities. When your job requirements are too great for any one person, review this with your supervisor.
- ★ Some supervisors will impose demands on you that are excessive from any standpoint, testing what they can get away with. While you obviously have to be careful in doing so, there

may be times when you just have to say “no” firmly without apologizing. You may have to negotiate by saying, “I can do that if you no longer require me to do this” or “If you want me to do a proper job, I can have this ready by Wednesday but not by Monday.” Sometimes, it is necessary to establish parameters with your supervisor on what you can and cannot do.

- ★ **Learn how to compartmentalize your professional and personal lives.** Do not let your personal and business problems become scrambled together. Mentally and emotionally keep any problem you are experiencing in the compartment it belongs in and do not take it home or vice versa. Failing to do so will affect your productivity and sap your concentration, energy and ability to enjoy life.
- ★ **Crying is not acceptable in the workplace regardless of the provocation.** Tears make supervisors think you are being emotionally immature or trying to be manipulative. If you feel you are being unfairly attacked or criticized, down-shift your emotions into low gear. You will never win an argument by getting

emotional. Do not let someone push your hot buttons. If necessary, say you would like to continue this discussion after you have an opportunity to think over what was said and excuse yourself from the meeting.

- ★ **Take your job seriously, never yourself.** People will forgive you for almost anything unless you are full of yourself and your own self-importance. Demonstrate your sense of humor, including an ability to laugh at yourself.

After you have been in your job for three to six months, you have to be able to talk to your supervisor about compensation, promotion opportunities and workplace issues without giving the impression of being too pushy or a whiner. The key to doing so successfully is to be able to substantiate your request or discussion of the issue in a factual, non-emotional manner. Keep the conversation focused on the present as opposed to some indeterminate point in the future. It also is an advantage to pick the right time and place to have this meeting, such as at the end of the day in a quiet office.

Do not be afraid to make reasonable requests of your supervisor or manager. What is the worst that can happen? An answer of “no” and maybe the benefit of you sending a tactful message that you should not be taken for granted.

CHAPTER 16

GETTING RESULTS

The end goal for every job in an organization should be to produce results that count, on budget and on time (with a minimum amount of wear, tear and stress). To do so, you have to use four critical variables to the best advantage – your time, energy, mind and work space, including the tools there. How well you mobilize each of these four “inputs” will largely determine your job success.

The degree to which you exercise control over how you conduct your job obviously depends on the type of position you hold. The more senior your position,

the more discretion and control you have. Everybody, however, works for somebody, including CEO's.

To get the best results, you have to take control over how you utilize your time, energy, mind and work space to the maximum extent possible. You have to control your work as opposed to letting your work control you.

RESULTS BLOCKERS

Some of the most common characteristics of individuals who have difficulty achieving results are:

- ★ Failing to establish a daily and weekly work routine that makes the best use of your time, energy, mind and work space. Certain tasks are best done at certain times of the day or week. You have to match the activity with your natural energy level. Some times are better for you than others for thinking periods, writing reports or returning e-mails and phone calls. There are times when you should make yourself available to talk to colleagues and there are times when you need to work uninterrupted on your own. If you do not carefully plan your daily and weekly

routine, you will have a great deal of difficulty getting anything of consequence accomplished.

- ★ Allowing yourself to be constantly interrupted by others or doing it to yourself while you are working. the *New York Times* columnist Thomas L. Friedman believes that we are living in "the Age of Interruption" where everyone is going to "get diagnosed with some version of Attention Deficit Disorder." In such a state, it is impossible to accomplish anything meaningful or creative. Every time you let yourself be interrupted or switch what you are doing, you lose traction work-wise as it takes your mind 15 to 20 minutes to get back on track with what you were previously engaged in doing. This applies to randomly checking e-mails, text messaging, answering phone calls, and conversing with a colleague.
- ★ Being a chronic procrastinator who has difficulty starting and completing important tasks and projects. Such a person is prone to waiting too long to begin what needs to be done and is easily sidetracked from meeting deadlines.

Rather than starting early on a project, these individuals put off doing anything until the whole project has to be done in a rush at the last minute or beyond.

- ★ Spending too much time in unnecessary or unproductive meetings. There are few organizations in existence that could not benefit greatly by eliminating 50% of their meetings at every level. It is impossible to get anything done if you are constantly in meetings.
- ★ Multi-tasking as opposed to doing one thing at a time. When you try to do more than one activity simultaneously, such as talking to a colleague while going through your e-mails, neither gets done properly. Multi-tasking is not a way to save time. It is a recipe for sloppy work, missing things and making mistakes.
- ★ Trying to do it all. When you are given a new task or responsibility, that usually means you have got to make some changes in your existing ones. Activities that are of a low value to yourself and the organization need to be regularly discarded or reduced. Trying to do it all usually

means nothing gets done well. You need to fish, not boil the ocean.

- ★ Allowing one's personal life to regularly interfere with one's professional duties and workday beyond responding to emergency situations.

RESULTS BOOSTERS

There are a number of methods you can use to improve your ability to achieve results in your job. While you need to determine what works best for you, the following practices will enable you to utilize your available time, energy and brain power to produce above-average performance:

- ★ Develop your own work "systems" to handle and keep track of what needs to be done. Think of it as engineering your flow of work to maximize your productivity. Become disciplined about following your work systems on a daily basis.
- ★ Try to start work each day with a brief period quietly devoted to reviewing and organizing what needs to be accomplished that day.

Tackle your most important tasks and projects when you are freshest and have the most energy. For most people, this is usually first thing in the morning. Do not permit yourself to be interrupted at that time.

- ★ Keep separate to-do lists for your e-mails, phone calls to make, and different categories of tasks to perform. Do not try to store all this information in your mind. Carry a notebook when you are out of your office or workplace to write down ideas and points to remember. Or use your PDA for this purpose.
- ★ Get into a set routine or system of blocking out two periods of downtime each day for handling your e-mails and returning phone calls as opposed to doing so randomly throughout the day. Deactivate your e-mail ringer. Only leave your cellphone or pager turned on when it is necessary to do so, not all the time nor when you are in a meeting.
- ★ Keep your office or workspace well-organized, uncluttered and clean. Place everything you need for phone calls, reports, and each major project or task into separate working file folders.

Develop a simple filing system, organized by subject and date, for retaining materials that you may need to refer to later. By doing so, you will avoid wasting time having to hunt for things in your office when you require them. The only things on your desk should be materials and files you are planning to use that day. A disorganized office with piles of files and papers all over the place sends the wrong message to others. People often assume that the state of your office reflects the state of your mind.

- ★ Determine what are your most important tasks and make sure you are definitely spending the majority of your time on them. Keep an action list of your three to five highest priority projects or issues in front of you.
- ★ Concentrate your mind and energy on doing one task at a time and focus 100% of your attention on that task. Thrust everything else to one side. Carlos Ghosn, the CEO of both automakers Renault and Nissan, told *Fortune* magazine that the most important way to achieve results is to “focus relentlessly”. Be disciplined about not letting yourself get

distracted or interrupted when you are “on task”. If possible, try to set aside regular times each week when you are not to be disturbed.

- ★ Recognize the need to pace yourself in dealing with tasks. There are limits to what your mind and body can do before your productivity starts to decrease significantly. Do not over-schedule yourself by booking too many activities in a day. Give yourself some time-outs between activities to refresh yourself. Try to match what you are working on with your energy level which fluctuates throughout the day. Work exclusively on one task for up to 1 ½ hours and then take a 15-minute break to do something entirely different before returning to your main task.
- ★ Start major projects by first breaking them down into manageable pieces and then establishing deadlines for yourself and others for each of these pieces or steps. Consider preparing a workflow map or critical path chart that covers each of the successive tasks involved in reaching the end result and the dates for completing them. Start to work early on the project and complete each piece in sequence

before moving on to the next one. If possible, allow some extra time in the project schedule to provide for contingencies.

- ★ Do not make up excuses for missing deadlines. Get into the habit of completing projects well in advance of their deadlines. Reward yourself and your colleagues for doing so. If a project looks like it is going to require extra unanticipated work, negotiate an extension of the deadline with your supervisor early on as opposed to at the last minute.
- ★ Use meetings extremely sparingly. Try to minimize your time spent in meetings. Always start meetings on time (see Chapters 3 and 4 in *The Citizen of the World's Guide: Be a “Pro” Communicator* for more recommendations on meetings).
- ★ Keep all assignments, tasks and projects as simple and as results-oriented as possible. The more complicated you make something, the more time it is going to take. As the American author William James stated, “The art of being wise is knowing what to overlook.” Keeping everything simple and focused requires

tremendous discipline but the payoff from doing so is huge.

- ★ Strive to deal with each incoming e-mail and piece of paper only once — when it first arrives. Otherwise, each additional time you have to go back to it, you are doubling the amount of effort and time you are spending to act on it. When Winston Churchill was England's prime minister and received a memo or letter, to speed things up he would often handwrite his response directly on the document and return it to the sender.
- ★ Allow yourself some quiet uninterrupted time to think strategically, to reassess the importance of what you and others are working on, how it is being done, and if it is generating meaningful results. You need to ask yourself whether you are spending the majority of your time on what really counts and on what is going to make a significant difference to the success of the organization. Such thinking should be done on a regular basis at a time when it is best for you to do so.

- ★ Be careful about letting technology (laptops, e-mail, cellphones and BlackBerrys) push your work into your home and family time. Resist making yourself available 24 hours a day and on weekends unless it is an emergency. Use your off-buttons to unplug from work when you are home.

Many of the issues described above are typically covered under the subject of "time management" but that is only one dimension of what you have to manage. The amount of time, energy, mind-power and work space you have available to perform your job is finite. Pay attention to how well you utilize each of these four resources.

MAKING DECISIONS

In any position, you will be faced with having to make everyday keep-it-moving-in-your-job decisions, other people's decisions, and occasionally important decisions. You have to make the first type of decision as you go, based largely on common sense and your instincts, without agonizing over them. You have to insist that other people make their own decisions as opposed to passing the buck to you. And, you have to take the time and follow a certain process to make the right big decisions.

When you are tackling important decisions, here are some points to keep in mind:

- ★ Determine whether this is a decision to make on your own or if you need to pull together a group from your and other departments to participate in making the decision with you. If the outcome will have serious consequences for a number of parties, you are usually advised to broaden the participation in making the decision. People will accept adverse situations and additional demands much more readily when they have been constructively involved in arriving at the decision.
- ★ Approach the analysis required for making major decisions as a process that has these six steps:
 1. Properly define the decision to be made.
 2. Establish the objectives and criteria that the decision must meet.
 3. Obtain the necessary facts and numbers.
 4. Determine and evaluate the alternative solutions.
 5. Assess the consequences and risks.
 6. Make the decision.

- ★ Start with the mentality that the customer drives the business. Usually the first factor to consider is how will this affect the customer. Obviously, the more positive it is for the customer, the better.
- ★ Do not try to deal with big amorphous issues or problems that you cannot easily get your arms around. Break up large decisions or issues into a number of smaller, more manageable pieces and then tackle each individual one in logical sequence.
- ★ Make certain the issue, challenge or opportunity you have to make a decision on is being seen in the right perspective and is properly defined. With problems, take the time to determine exactly what is the problem and distinguish between what should be happening as opposed to what is actually happening. You also need to know what is going well as opposed to just focusing on what is wrong.
- ★ Base your analysis as much as possible on the facts and numbers concerning what's really important. Try to minimize the extent to which unsubstantiated generalities, emotion,

proprietary interests and the “not invented here” syndrome get mixed up in determining decisions.

- ★ Be careful when virtually 100% of the people in any group are in agreement. They could be totally wrong. The pressures of groupthink often act to suppress any viewpoints being expressed that deviate too far from the consensus. Treat the use of computer models and future projections based on past experience with extreme caution. Seek diversity of input from a range of different sources.
- ★ Think “out-of-the-box”, be a contrarian, ignore conventional wisdom or practices, distrust so-called experts, challenge the consensus, and do not accept “statements of fact” just because they were expressed by someone in a position of authority. As the supremely successful UK entrepreneur James Dyson said, “I enjoy choosing the path that others don’t.”
- ★ Identify, question and test the basic assumptions being relied upon in your analysis. When there is a conflict of opinion between head office representatives and those

working in the field, place a greater weight on the latter group as they are on the firing line closer to the actual action and live customers.

- ★ Resist the temptation of trying to obtain too much information. Only request information that is critical to the decision. Do not let yourself get snowed under with extraneous information. You simply cannot wait to get 100% of the information. On the other hand, resist the natural tendency of focusing mainly on information that supports your point of view as opposed to information that challenges it.
- ★ Be especially creative in determining the alternative solutions worth considering. Evaluate the alternatives on the basis of your objectives and a screening criteria as opposed to solely listing their pluses and minuses. Take into account the likely response of competitors.

A key part of making decisions is a careful assessment of the risks associated with any course of action if things go wrong. Most people have a strong bias towards being overly optimistic. Remember Murphy’s Law — what can go wrong usually does. Be reticent

about assuming any guarantees relating to the performance of other parties beyond your control. Obviously, you need to watch out for those decisions where the outcome may be seriously damaging or even fatal for your organization if they turn out to be wrong.

Do not let yourself be rushed into making decisions prematurely before you and your group have completed the necessary analysis. If you are being overly pressured into making a yes or no decision, say “No”. It is easier to change a “No” to a “Yes” afterwards than vice versa. Keep notes on the key factors taken into account and the alternatives considered so that you have them available to refer to if the decision later proves to be incorrect.

Accept that you will make mistakes. Like baseball players, nobody comes remotely close to batting 100% in making decisions unless they are not in the game. Apart from avoiding fatal mistakes, what is important is that you learn from your mistakes and do not keep making the same mistake over and over again. Mistakes are rarely a sin. Trying to cover mistakes up by sweeping them under the carpet definitely is a sin.

Once the decision is made, implement it with a sense of urgency. At the same time, impose closure

on any further consideration or discussion of the alternatives.

Charlie Munger, Warren Buffett’s partner, talks about the need to have three baskets on your desk: In, Out and Too Tough. He said, “We have such baskets — mental baskets — in our offices. An awful lot of stuff goes in the ‘Too Tough’ basket. And then we work on the rest.” Try to restrict yourself to dealing with decisions within your area of competency and realize when something is either outside of it or too tough to solve.

The self-made Canadian billionaire Seymour Schulich said that he has used what he calls the “Decision-Maker” technique for every key decision in his life. Here is how Schulich describes it in his book *Get Smarter*:

On one sheet of paper, list all the positive things you can about the issue in question, then give each one a score from zero to ten — the higher the score, the more important it is to you.

On another sheet, list the negative points, and score them from zero to ten — only this time, ten means it’s a major drawback. Suppose you are thinking of buying a house, and you tour one that’s in your price range, except the owners have painted

every room to look like a giant banana. If you really hate yellow and can't stand the thought of lifting a paint-brush, you might give "ugly yellow house" a ten, and if it's not that big a deal, maybe a two or a three.

Then you add up the scores on each sheet. If the positive score is at least double the negative score, you should do it — whatever "it" is. But if the positives don't outweigh the negatives by that two-to-one ratio, don't do it, or at least think twice about it.

Schulich used this Decision-Maker to decide where he should attend university, what career choices to follow afterwards and what investments to make. It is hard to argue with his exceptional success.

HANDLING STRESS

Stress is defined as a state of emotional, mental and physical tension. While the majority of stress is usually caused by one's own actions and behavior, it obviously also can result from the demands of others, such as one's supervisor at work.

Most jobs involve a certain amount of stress. Some of it is constructive from the standpoint of causing people to adopt a greater sense of urgency in performing tasks than would otherwise be the case. Deadlines are attached to projects to impose pressure that they be completed on time.

Different individuals have a capacity for handling different levels of stress at work. Some can cope with

it better than others. If you use an index to measure stress, most people can operate with a stress level of 2-3/10. Few people can tolerate a prolonged stress level of 9-10/10 without experiencing emotional, mental and physical health problems. Repeated high levels of stress can result in job-burnout and serious illness.

STRESS MAKERS

The principal causes of self-created stress at work are:

- ★ Poor planning of one's daily work schedule, including over-scheduling of activities.
- ★ Engaging in chronic procrastination, continuously putting off what needs to be done.
- ★ Failing to establish proper priorities and allocate sufficient time to deal with them.
- ★ Having a disorganized office or work space, causing one to waste time looking for things.
- ★ Lacking the ability to focus on one task at a time and allowing oneself to be constantly interrupted.
- ★ Being an e-mail junkie throughout one's work day.

- ★ Exercising weak project management skills lead to setting unrealistic deadlines.
- ★ Failing to negotiate appropriate boundaries with your supervisor and work colleagues, including saying "no" when one needs to do so.
- ★ Bringing one's home and personal problems to work and worrying about them there.
And, vice versa.

These behaviors will lead to stress and raise the risk of you becoming overwhelmed by your work. Being in denial about any of them is not going to help matters.

STRESS BUSTERS

Some of the best ways to combat stress are:

- ★ Getting into the habit of taking some form of regular exercise and engaging in non-work activities, hobbies or sports that take your mind totally off your job.
- ★ When you are constantly working, taking off a minimum of one full day (i.e., 24 hours) from what you are doing every week regardless of the pressures not to do so, as opposed to working seven days a week.

- ★ Enjoying the company of your friends and family, and experiencing “adventures” and other fun events with them.
- ★ Getting enough sleep on a regular basis.
- ★ Using the full amount of your allowed holidays each year without fail.
- ★ Refraining from drinking too much coffee, tea and other caffeine drinks or taking stimulants to help you keep working.
- ★ Planning your travel to suit your habits. Include some time for personal activities when you take business trips. Do your best to avoid taking red-eye overnight plane flights.
- ★ Allowing yourself enough time to recover from jet-lag on long trips before engaging in any serious business meetings.
- ★ Trying to leave your personal problems at home and your job-related problems at work.

The benefits of taking positive action to minimize and reduce the stress you experience at work are enormous. By doing so, you will gain a greater sense of control, have more energy to devote to what is important, and boost your ability to think creatively. In the

process, you will achieve higher overall work productivity, have fewer health problems, and be happier both at work and at home.

Some progressive organizations are implementing policies designed to reduce the stress imposed on their employees. One such policy, adopted by Pfizer Canada, is to ban any work-related phone calls or e-mails being sent between the hours of 6 PM and 6 AM. Pfizer calls this popular policy “Freedom 6 to 6”. Other organizations are banning e-mails on Fridays and weekends.

DEALING WITH A “BAD BOSS”

Occasionally, you may find yourself saddled with a “bad boss”, one who is frequently bullying, manipulative, unsupportive or demanding in a totally unrealistic manner. If you come to believe this is the case, carefully assess whether you are the one creating the problem and whether it is possible for you to change your behavior in the job to make your supervisor “happy”.

Determine how you can get this person off your case and stay out of his or her way. Sometimes, you need to request a meeting with your supervisor for a frank discussion of why it seems that you are unable to please this person regardless of what you do. When

this fails to improve your relationship, attempt to switch to another department or location. If you are stuck in such a situation, it is probably best to look for a job with another organization. Unfortunately, complaining about a “bad boss” to the next level of management rarely produces positive results.

CHAPTER 19

IMPERATIVES FOR SUCCESS

As you progress to higher levels of responsibility in your career, there are eight additional overriding principles to follow to maximize your professional success, even when you become the CEO of your organization.

These important principles are:

- ★ Be passionate about your work whatever it is. Be fully engaged in what you are doing. Be committed to excellence and high work standards. The more you love what you are doing, the better you are going to perform your job.

When you are passionate about what you are doing, you inspire others to be passionate also.

- ★ Exercise the awesome power of focus and concentration whenever you have to address any issue of consequence. If you focus all of your mental, emotional and physical faculties mightily on the subject at hand, there is almost no limit to what you can accomplish. As Bill Gates, Microsoft's co-founder, stated, "I've learned that only through focus can you do world-class things, no matter how capable you are." The trumpeter Bobby Hackett said of Louis Armstrong, "He taught me by his example that the key to music, the key to anything in life, is concentration."
- ★ Think creatively, in particular about how to develop entirely new markets for your products and services, including utilizing the Net to do so, and how your organization can partner with others to achieve greater impact and expand its "reach".
- ★ Foster a culture of genuine tolerance in both the workplace and the community. As Thomas Friedman wrote in *The World Is*

Flat, "When tolerance is the norm, everyone flourishes — because tolerance breeds trust, and trust is the foundation of innovation and entrepreneurship."

- ★ Refrain from becoming self-absorbed and impressed with your own importance. Take the time to give credit for "a job well done" to the other members of your TEAM on a regular basis. Write lots of small thank-you e-mails and notes. Always acknowledge the role of your co-workers whenever you receive recognition for your own accomplishments.
- ★ Step up and take responsibility for your mistakes. When you goof or blow it, do not try to hide or ignore it. Admit your mistake, apologize if it is appropriate for you to do so, learn from the experience, and make sure you do not repeat the same mistake in the future. Once you have acknowledged your mistake, however, push yourself on to positive ground and move on.
- ★ Quietly take the time on a regular basis to really THINK about the big picture and what is really important. Shut off the computer and phones, close your door and insist on no interruptions or

disturbances. Allow several hours at least once a month for this purpose. Countless executives boast about how hard they work and being busy 100% of the time. But, working hard and long without really stopping to truly think on a regular basis is a guarantee of mediocre results. Twice a year, Bill Gates engages in his "Think Week" where he spends seven days by himself in a secluded location reading reports and thinking about the future of technology and Microsoft.

- ★ Recognize that there is a huge difference between the word and the deed. In every field of endeavor, what counts is the quality and speed of execution, creativity, and delivering high-performance results. Good intentions are meaningless unless they are followed by actions and accomplishments.

Peter Drucker, probably the most profound business consultant and writer of all time, always emphasized that there is a critical difference between efficiency and effectiveness. Being efficient is doing things right. Being effective is doing the right thing, and that is

what really makes a difference to the success of any organization or enterprise.

If you are a woman, I also recommend that you read Lois P. Frankel's book *Nice Girls Don't Get the Corner Office: 101 Mistakes Women Make That Sabotage Their Careers*. Actually, "nice girls" do get the corner office but only if they have the capacity and determination to do so.

PART THREE

**SUPERVISING
WITH
CONFIDENCE**

PART THREE
INTRO

SUPERVISING WITH CONFIDENCE

At some time in the near future, you are likely to be given the opportunity to be in charge of a department, group or section of people in your organization. Encourage your supervisors to keep you in mind for such a position, especially in those areas where you think you are best suited to assume greater responsibilities.

The time has come. You have been appointed a supervisor. Now your success depends on your ability to achieve results through the members of your work group or TEAM.

This section covers the basics for hiring, motivating, delegating, empowering and organizing your TEAM to attain top performance. It also deals with firing and the requirement for finding some balance between work and the rest of one's life. The goal is to make you an effective leader of your TEAM.

CHAPTER 20

PREPARE YOURSELF

Do not wait for a promotion to begin preparing yourself for a supervisory or manager position. Be proactive in expanding your functional expertise and experience by exposing yourself to the best practices in your field, including those of the competition. Demonstrate initiative in pursuing opportunities and encouraging others to join you in doing so. Attend workshops and read trade and business publications on a regular basis. Research how things are done in other countries and regions.

Equally important, start developing your own sense of leadership philosophy or mantra. Leadership

is not something elusive just practised by CEO's and presidents. While the top person sets the tone and pace, leadership is exhibited at every level of the most successful organizations. Study the individuals both internally and externally who have a reputation for getting outstanding results and promotions. Read about the great business success stories in your country and internationally and the people who created them. Learn by their examples.

Countless articles and books exist on the subject of leadership but the best describe how exceptional individuals built dominant world-class enterprises, such as Steve Jobs at Apple, Akio Morita at Sony, Sam Walton at Wal-Mart, Bernie Marcus and Arthur Blank at The Home Depot, Jorma Ollila at Nokia, Jack Welch at General Electric, Jeff Bezos at Amazon and Herb Kelleher at Southwest Airlines. Ask yourself what stands out about these success stories and the leaders responsible for them.

You will discover that virtually all exceptional leaders share these ten characteristics:

- ★ An infectious sense of real passion and excitement about their endeavors.

- ★ A talent for relentlessly communicating the mission and values of their organization to everyone.
- ★ An obsession with putting customers or clients absolutely first before all else.
- ★ An insatiable curiosity that continually challenges the status quo and conventional thinking.
- ★ A decisive, demanding approach to dealing with issues and challenges.
- ★ A commitment to creating a culture of excellence by hiring the best, brightest and most capable individuals.
- ★ An ability to coach and empower people to achieve their best, in part through leading by example.
- ★ An insistence on the highest standards of ethical behavior and integrity.
- ★ An inclusive, basic fundamental respect for others from all walks of life, regardless of their circumstances, position or background.
- ★ An easy, fun sense of humor combined with a genuine degree of humility.

Visualize how you want to conduct yourself when you are placed in a leadership role anywhere in your organization. Develop your own leadership mantra and realize the need to continuously learn as you go. Recognize that coaches get better results than “bosses” and that teamwork is usually a much stronger force than individual action.

CHAPTER 21

FIRST STEPS

You have now been promoted to a supervisory position. Your success in this role is not rocket science.

Before you go charging off, take these first steps:

- ★ Make sure you completely understand the specific performance expectations of your superiors for your department and yourself.
- ★ Become familiar with any budgets, financial statements and other financial reports used by your department and organization.

Ask your supervisor or another senior person in the organization to help you gain a good

understanding of these documents. If necessary, take a course in basic finance.

- ★ At the start of the first day in your new position, call a brief meeting of everyone in your group to exchange introductions, shaking everyone's hand. State that you know that you need them much more than they need you. Advise them that you want to meet individually with each of them to learn more about the department over the next few days. Tell them a bit about yourself so they can get a sense of your personality and character. Ask if they have any questions. Be yourself and do not play the role. Inject some humor into your comments if you can.
- ★ After three days, consider asking each person in your group to complete a brief confidential questionnaire "for your eyes only", listing their three best ideas for improving the performance and productivity of the department, plus giving them the opportunity to identify any issues of concern to them. Hand each person this questionnaire and ask to receive it back within the next five days. Emphasize that you want to receive each person's individual views

and tell them not to worry about trying to be Shakespeare.

- ★ At the beginning of each day, go on a tour around the department, say "hi" or "good morning" to everyone and take an interest in each person's work station. Ask a lot of questions. When you are a new supervisor, do not worry about asking "stupid" questions. Keep an open mind. Listen carefully to what people say. Be alert to the existence of hidden agendas. Recognize that what people do not say may be as important as what they say. Refrain from expressing your own opinions. Some people will try to test you as soon as they can. Do not get sucked into any quick decisions before you have a better understanding of how the department operates. When you are asked a question, be unafraid of saying that you do not know the answer.
- ★ Start immediately to lead by example. Set the right tone and pace. Be punctual for all meetings. Eliminate reserved parking if it exists so the first to arrive at work get the closest spaces. Meet with others in their offices or workplaces as opposed to

asking them to come to your office for meetings. Adopt a sense of urgency about doing first things first in a purposeful manner while avoiding getting distracted or appearing rushed. Refer to your group as a "TEAM" and refer to its members as "associates", not "employees". Do not say anything negative about your predecessor.

- ★ Let the members of your TEAM know that you are available to discuss any matters of consequence or concern with them. Tell them the best times for doing so. Consider establishing a set time every week for your "open office hours" when you will be available for people to drop in. Alternatively, you could say, "If the door is open to my office, I'm open."
- ★ Be friendly and open with everyone but recognize that you are not there to become their pals or to win a popularity contest. Treat all TEAM members fairly. Be firm in holding everyone accountable, including those who were your peers and friends in your prior position. Do not socialize after-hours with the members of your group.

Take these additional steps to strengthen your position as supervisor:

- ★ Boost your credibility by tackling issues in your early days that can be fixed or improved fairly easily and quickly. The more "early wins" you can pull off, the better. Take the approach of under-promising and over-performing.
- ★ Determine what are the most important three to four opportunities, tasks and issues for you and your TEAM to concentrate on. Make a list of them for you to keep at hand. Similarly, jointly develop a list of the three to four highest priorities for each person reporting to you. Review the progress being made on these priorities with each person every week. Make sure that everyone knows that results are what count as opposed to busyness that consumes a lot of time and energy without accomplishing anything of consequence.
- ★ Begin to rethink how to best measure your department's performance, customer service, productivity and whatever else is really important. Develop new benchmarks for

tracking these factors. Challenge everyone in your group to do likewise.

- ★ Wherever possible, use quantifiable numbers to track the “outcomes” produced by your group. The first step to improving anything is to measure it. As Bernie Marcus, the founder of The Home Depot, once said, “At the end of the day, the numbers rule the game.”
- ★ From the start, figure out who are the key allies and partners that you and your department are dependent upon in the other areas of the organization and develop a good personal working relationship with them, one that is mutually beneficial.
- ★ After 30 days, meet individually with any members of your TEAM who appear to be resentful of your appointment as supervisor, are uncooperative or are undermining the performance of your department. Be totally candid with them about your concerns. State that you are depending on everyone to give you their full support. Ask if you are misinterpreting their behavior. Request that they explain their attitude and position. Try to put yourself in

their place but be firm in saying that, if they are not prepared to give you and your TEAM their total, positive 100% commitment, then they should look for another job. If there has been no significant improvement on anyone’s part in another two weeks, tell that person to look for another job. In some cases, it may be necessary to fire individuals who are dragging down the performance of your group.

- ★ Learn to say “no” when someone comes to you with a request that is unreasonable or will interfere with the performance of your TEAM. It is inevitable that some people will attempt to get away with “nice tries” and, when they do, just smile and firmly say “No”.
- ★ Read the book *The One Minute Manager* by Kenneth Blanchard and Spencer Johnson.

At an appropriate time, explain to your TEAM members that you are relying on them to use their best judgment in performing their duties and dealing with problems as they occur. Admit that everyone makes some mistakes, including yourself, and request that you be told of any serious issues right away so

that together you can take the necessary action. On the subject of “bad news”, Anne Sweeney, co-chair of Disney Media Networks, says to her people, “Tell me early, I’m your friend. Tell me late, I’m your critic.”

The best leaders cultivate feedback from their subordinates on a regular basis. At some point in time, you may want to go a step further and conduct a confidential 360° survey of yourself with your peers in the organization with whom you have regular contact and all of the people reporting to you to obtain their assessment of your leadership qualities. Questions to ask could include what are the four things you do best, what are the four things you need to improve on, what should be your four biggest priorities ranked in order of importance, and what are the largest obstacles standing in the way of achieving these priorities. Compare the answers to your own self-assessment of these questions. Many organizations incorporate such a survey into the annual job performance review of their managers.

CHAPTER 22

HIRING

The reality is that above-average results are only consistently achieved by above-average people who know what they are doing. Approach every new hiring as an opportunity to significantly upgrade your TEAM. Always set your sights on hiring the best person for the job. If that individual is better qualified than yourself, so much the better. Do not hire a clone of yourself — hire someone with a whole different point of view who complements your own strengths.

One of the key reasons for The Home Depot’s dramatic success in becoming the second-largest retailer in the U.S. in a relatively short time was Bernie Marcus’s approach to hiring. When Marcus was staffing his purchasing department after founding The Home Depot,

he said to me, “You have to understand — I don’t just want a good paint buyer; I want to hire absolutely the best paint buyer in the U.S.” Today, Marcus would say, “in the world”.

The first step is to write down both the basic competencies and the most critical qualifications that any successful applicant for the position must have. Keep them limited in number. Next, prepare or review the job description for this position. Then, think through who should be involved in the hiring process.

USING A HIRING COMMITTEE

Most managers mistakenly assume they are an excellent judge of character and have terrific skills for selecting the right person for the job on their own. The best hiring decisions are made when a group of three to five individuals work together in screening the applicants, interviewing the top candidates in a uniform manner, and then making the final choice, subject of course to someone carefully checking the selected candidate’s references.

While this may appear to involve utilizing an excessive amount of “resources” in the hiring process, the total direct and indirect costs of mis-hiring mistakes

are substantial. For most positions, they amount to anywhere from two to five times the annual salary, especially when the value of missed opportunities is included.

When you are faced with having to hire someone in a key position who will report directly to you, form a hiring committee consisting of yourself and two or three other individuals who will each bring a different background and perspective to the decision. Ideally, the hiring committee should comprise a mix of genders and people from both subordinate and equivalent levels in the organization to that of the position being filled.

FINDING THE RIGHT CANDIDATES

Ask for help from your peers and other managers in identifying potential candidates within your organization. Depending on the level of the position, consider using a search firm to assist you in the hiring process. Basically, you want to cast the net as wide as you can in obtaining the best qualified applicants both internally and externally.

As Peter Drucker emphasized, what really counts are a person’s strengths, not his or her weaknesses. In particular, you need to hire individuals who have the

right strengths for their jobs. This also means you have to really think through the critical success requirements for each position beforehand.

Reach agreement with the other members of the hiring committee on the key attributes the candidate must possess beyond the following “givens”:

- ★ A proven track record in prior jobs, recognizing that someone’s past performance is the best indicator of that person’s future performance.
- ★ A high level of intelligence and “smarts” (which does not necessarily correspond to the amount of formal education someone has had).
- ★ Lots of energy, enthusiasm, passion and excitement.

Together, screen the résumés of all the applications and then select the four most qualified candidates for personal interviews. Stress with everyone on the hiring committee the importance and benefits of recruiting for diversity. The strongest organizations are definitely those with a rich mix of employees with different backgrounds, cultures, experiences and perspectives. In looking for the best candidate, you need to draw from 100% of the adult population, including women,

minorities and people with disabilities. Regardless of any legal requirements to do so, failing to take this approach puts you at a serious disadvantage in building a highly committed, successful organization.

For front-line positions, there are obvious benefits to having your TEAM mirror the composition of your customers. This includes ethnicity, languages and gender.

Develop a simple Career History Form to send out to your selected applicants prior to their interview. Such a form should ask applicants to give details on all jobs held over the prior five years, including the name of each supervisor, a list of principal responsibilities, reasons for leaving, and the starting and ending compensation for each position held. This form will give you valuable information to help guide the interview. If your organization has a human resources department, discuss the use of such a form with your representative in that department.

THE INTERVIEW

Clearly, the amount of time and resources devoted to hiring for a position depends on its importance and level in the organization. For entry level, non-managerial positions, a one-on-one, 20-minute interview and

only checking two references may be sufficient. The higher the position, the greater the “investment” you have to make in ensuring the right person is hired.

Sometimes, it may be worthwhile to start the interview process by asking each candidate to perform some type of ten-minute mini-project, such as to write a letter to a government official on a particular controversial issue. Give the candidates the choice of either using a computer to write the letter or writing it by hand on a pad. This livens up the interview process and tests the ability of candidates to operate under pressure. The results of the mini-project for each candidate should then be distributed to the members of the hiring team before the interview starts.

Always resist any tendency to shortcut the hiring and interviewing process. Be careful about putting too much credence in your gut instincts when it comes to hiring someone you have just met. “Falling in love” with a job applicant prior to proper screening and interviewing frequently leads to serious hiring mistakes.

Follow a consistent, structured format for interviewing each of the candidates in a similar manner, having the same people asking the identical scripted principal

questions in the same sequence. The four main areas to cover are personal background, education, work history/job experiences, and non-work interests/activities. In each case, utilize a funnel approach where you commence by asking a general question and then drill deeper down into that subject with more specific follow-up questions.

At the start of each interview, the lead hiring manager or interviewer should introduce the candidate to each of the other members of the hiring committee and then make some general comments to help put the candidate at ease. Offering the candidate a glass of water or something else to drink will also make him or her more comfortable.

The lead interviewer should ask the first questions about the candidate’s personal background, and then the different members of the hiring committee should take turns covering the other main areas. Throughout the interview, any of the members of the hiring committee should interject follow-up questions that they believe are appropriate.

In the case of each candidate’s work history and job experiences, the interview should include asking what were the three specific things that the candidate liked

the most about his or her last job and what were the three things that the candidate liked the least. Each candidate should also be asked, "If we called your last supervisor, how would that person describe your strengths, weaknesses and job performance?"

Probe for specific examples of past accomplishments and how the candidate dealt with major challenges and problems. Ask the candidate to quantify any past achievements or performance improvements. Request that the candidate describe a situation where he or she was asked by a supervisor to do something that was unethical or borderline in that regard.

Find out what the candidate does in his or her spare time. Towards the end of the interview, ask what are the candidate's career goals and what would he or she like to be doing three to five years from now. Finally, always make your last two questions, "Do you have any further questions about the position or our organization?" and then "Is there anything we haven't discussed about you or your background that we should be made aware of?"

In almost every case, how a candidate performs in an interview is how that person will perform in the job. If the candidate demonstrates unusual behavior

in the interview, the candidate will exhibit the same behavior on the job.

Immediately following each interview, have the hiring committee make notes individually on what impressed them the most about each candidate, both positively and negatively. After all the interviews, ask each member of the hiring committee to numerically rank each of the candidates on a pre-determined set of attributes. Then, have a group discussion with the objective of reaching a consensus on who to hire.

Proven talent is definitely a plus but so is a mindset of wanting to develop and grow one's capabilities, plus a willingness to tackle challenges and overcome obstacles. Keep in mind that, if someone looks too good to be true, he or she probably is not what they seem to be. Also, be extremely wary of any candidate who committee members do not instinctively like or trust. Avoid hiring people with a high energy level who may not be especially bright. Finally, as Geraldine Stutz, the New York fashion retailer, advised, "When you can't afford to hire the best, hire the young who are going to be the best."

CHECKING REFERENCES

Before making a final decision to hire someone, ask that person to give you a minimum of four references, including individuals at different organizations where the candidate worked in the past. Put these names and their contact information on a form and ask the candidate to sign the bottom under a statement that says the candidate gives you permission to contact the above references. Request that the candidate advise each reference that you will likely be calling that person.

Sometimes, the best time to call references is after work or on the weekend when they are relaxed at home. At the start of your call to references, explain why you are calling and ask, "Is this a good time for you to talk?" If so, then begin by stating that anything they say to you will be kept strictly confidential. Emphasize that your objective is to determine whether the candidate is a good fit for the job. Describe the position and the principal challenges facing the person taking it.

In the case of references at organizations where the candidate was previously employed, ask, "Can you give me the name of two people I could talk to who worked for this candidate and also someone who worked at

the same level?" Try to talk to some of the candidate's prior supervisors and ask them what were the candidate's strengths and weaknesses in the job, and would they rehire this person if they ever had an opportunity to do so.

Listen carefully to what references say. Probe the reasons for any qualified answers or hesitations. Try to draw out any reservations that the reference may have regarding the candidate's suitability for the job. Be careful about rationalizing any negative comments you hear from references.

Often, it is also a good idea to verify an applicant's educational and professional credentials. If someone lies in his or her résumé, that person is likely to lie on the job and engage in other unethical behavior. Look up the candidate on Google and on *www.zoominfo.com*, which gives career information on individuals.

THE RIGHT START FOR NEW HIRES

The final part of the hiring process is for you to ensure that every new person hired for your department gets off to the right start. Beforehand, plan out how to best approach the successful integration of the

new associate into your department. Line up someone to serve as the new person's "job buddy" for the first 90 days. Also, arrange for any necessary job training.

It is important that everything is "ready to go" from the very moment that the newly hired individual shows up for work on his or her first day. This includes the organization of the associate's work area and desk, the setup of any necessary computer equipment, all the required employment forms that have to be signed, security passes, nameplates, identity passes, and any other items the associate needs to perform his or her job. Getting all of these matters well-prepared beforehand tells your new associate more about the organization and its sense of urgency than any words that you can say.

Meet with the newly hired person as soon as he or she arrives for work on the first day to conduct an orientation briefing on the organization, the department, and his or her job responsibilities. Outline the main elements of your leadership mantra. Give the new person the human resources handbook, if one exists, and review his or her written job description. Answer any initial questions the new associate has about the organization, department or the job's principal

responsibilities. Be honest in describing any problems that may exist relating to the job or organization.

During the orientation session, advise the new person that the two of you will be meeting in exactly one month's time to review how he or she is doing in the job. Let the new associate know that such meetings will also take place after 60 and 90 days.

Next, ask a senior person in your department to take the new associate on a tour and introduce him or her to the designated job buddy who should show the newly hired associate his or her office or work station. Have that senior person and the job buddy both stress that they are there to provide any ongoing support that the new associate requires. Often, it is a good idea for you or the senior person in your department to have lunch with the newly hired person on the first day.

The objective of all this is to make certain that the new associate's first impressions establish the right tone and character for his or her future work experience and relationship with the organization. Ensuring the new associate gets off to a highly positive, well-organized, strong start will significantly increase the odds of you adding a successful new member to your TEAM.

For more detailed information on the interviewing and hiring practices used by successful companies, I recommend that you read Bradford D. Smart's book *Topgrading: How Leading Companies Win by Hiring, Coaching and Keeping the Best People* or Geoff Smart and Randy Street's book *Who: The A Method for Hiring*, which was more recently published. Geoff Smart is the son of Brad Smart. As Jim Collins, author of *Good to Great*, said, "The most important decisions that businesspeople make are not *what* decisions, but *who* decisions."

CHAPTER 23

MOTIVATING

Motivating is all about energizing your TEAM members to produce consistently above-average results and assume increased responsibilities. It is also about exercising leadership.

ACHIEVING TOP PERFORMANCE

To achieve the best results from your TEAM, practise the following:

- ★ Be a strong role model in terms of how you conduct yourself. Your people will take their cue from what you do, not say. It is up to you to set the tone and pace for your people. If you work hard and smart, it is likely they will work hard and smart.

- ★ Demonstrate a positive attitude in all work settings. Let your enthusiasm show. It is catching for the members of your TEAM. Do not be negative. This will defeat any chance of obtaining real productivity from your TEAM.
- ★ Treat your people with respect and empathy. Be more of a coach than a boss.
- ★ Refrain from taking anyone on your TEAM for granted. Make each person believe that he or she is a much needed and much valued member of your TEAM.
- ★ Help every member of your TEAM to make his or her “job” more than just a job. Explain to each person why his or her individual work plays a key role in the overall success of your department and the organization.
- ★ Tell your individual TEAM members how they are performing on a regular weekly and monthly basis. Provide lots of quick, explicit, constructive feedback. The number one job frustration worldwide is: “My work is taken for granted. No one ever tells me how I’m doing.” Give frequent credit to your people in public but reserve your criticisms for when you are speaking

- to someone in private. Refrain from criticizing unless you can do so in a constructive manner. (See Chapter 25 on performance reviews).
- ★ Recognize that “thanks” is the most neglected form of compensation. Express your appreciation of work well done but do not ever say anything to someone who works for you unless you can say it sincerely. Writing personal thank-you notes has far more impact than using e-mails for this purpose.
 - ★ Build on the strengths of each TEAM member. Do not obsess about their weaknesses. Eliminate time-wasting activities and tasks for your TEAM and yourself.
 - ★ Give meaning to everyone’s work by communicating the mission of your TEAM and explain how it fits into the organization’s overall mission. Obtain agreement from everyone regarding your work group’s key performance and productivity measurements. Track them. Distribute or post these numbers on a visible wall every week or, even better, daily.
 - ★ Hold monthly TEAM meetings to report on progress being made, important developments in the organization and other

relevant news. Make these meetings fun, crisp and informative. Give everyone all the facts on how your TEAM and the organization are doing. Conduct an annual meeting where you discuss the organization's financial results for the year. Educate your people on what these figures mean.

- ★ Create trust by being candid with both your TEAM members and superiors. Tell it like it is and say what you mean. Do not waste anyone's time by being obscure or sugarcoating what is the true situation. When a problem or difficult issue arises, do not hide or ignore it. Confront it head-on in an honest manner. Develop a reputation for being demanding and tough but always fair.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Ensuring that your TEAM pursues the appropriate goals and objectives is critical to your success as a supervisor. Take this action to do so:

- ★ Involve the members of your TEAM in establishing a set of annual goals and objectives at the start of every year. Goals are the "destination" of where you want your work group to be within one to three years in terms

of improved overall performance. For each goal, develop a set of the principal objectives consisting of the action required to reach the goal. Think of your goals and objectives as being the road map for where you want your TEAM to go over the next year.

- ★ Focus your goals and objectives on what is most important for your work group to accomplish. Therefore, limit the goals in number to four or five with a maximum of two to three objectives supporting each goal. Wherever possible, the goals and objectives should be expressed in quantifiable terms so their achievement can be measured. The level of performance incorporated into the goals and objectives should be that which is attainable with "stretch".
- ★ Make certain that everyone on your TEAM clearly understands the annual goals and objectives, plus the road map for achieving them.
- ★ Remember that individuals are basically happier when their work challenges them in an exciting and meaningful manner. Supervisors typically

do not expect and demand enough from their people. In today's competitive world, incremental improvements are rarely good enough.

BUILD ON STRENGTHS

Build the strengths of your TEAM by following these practices:

- ★ Enable your TEAM members to be genuinely involved in the decision-making process, especially in the case of decisions that are likely to have an impact on them and their work. Better yet, ask them to do the necessary analysis and give you their recommendations on the decision to be made. The fewer decisions you make on your own, the better.
- ★ Within the organization, let your TEAM take the credit for accomplishments while you take the blame and responsibility for any shortcomings. The more you credit other people, the more they will strive to make more good things happen.
- ★ Whenever you launch a new initiative or project within your workgroup, appoint someone on your TEAM to be the internal

"champion" to be responsible for leading the drive to make it happen. The same applies to tackling major issues or problems.

- ★ Give everyone a fair chance to demonstrate what he or she is capable of doing but get rid of your poor performers sooner rather than later. Keeping them is unfair to everyone else working for you. Make it known that you will not let anyone lean on excuses for failing to perform his or her responsibilities. Hold people accountable for achieving their required level of job performance.
- ★ Encourage the members of your TEAM to use their own best judgment in dealing with any unusual problems or issues when they first arise, especially those involving customers. Stand by their decisions even if you would have handled the situation differently.
- ★ Take advantage of opportunities to expose your high potential TEAM members to upper management. If you become known as a manager who showcases the talent of your people, you will have people beating down the door to work for you.

- ★ Help your TEAM members, both as a group and individually, to upgrade their expertise and job skills through special training, educational workshops and seminars. Take an interest in everyone's personal career development.

DEMONSTRATING LEADERSHIP

Develop your reputation as an effective leader and supervisor by this conduct:

- ★ Observe high ethical standards in all dealings with your TEAM. Keep promises. Integrity is your most important quality. Make sure that everyone on your TEAM shares these important values.
- ★ Be extremely careful to base any pay increases or promotions strictly on merit so that you avoid any semblance of favoritism.
- ★ Respect and trust people regardless of their title or position. Herb Kelleher, the founder of Southwest Airlines, said, "I try not to judge anyone by superficial standards. I try to approach them with an open mind. I'm very interested in their ideas ... If I'm talking to a

- person, that person is the only person in the world while we're talking. They're owed that."
- ★ Communicate face-to-face on all sensitive issues, such as compensation matters or department cutbacks, as opposed to via e-mail or memos.
 - ★ Make having fun a regular part of working on your TEAM for all your associates. Hold up-beat and zany events to celebrate TEAM accomplishments and high performance. Engage everyone in some type of sports activity or non-business contest. Exhibit a good sense of humor. Do not take yourself too seriously.
 - ★ Be especially visible when times get tough. Keep calm and cool in a crisis or when you're under a lot of pressure. Regardless of the provocation, never ever lose your temper. When you do so, you automatically lose control of the situation. Try not to make rushed decisions, especially when you are in an angry or emotional state. Never shout at anyone. Demonstrate resiliency and bounce back from setbacks with a smile and determination.

★ Keep your TEAM's workplace informal in terms of dress code and a lack of hierarchical behavior. If you are meeting with your bankers, then wear more formal attire. It may also be appropriate to do so when your work involves dealing with clients or customers. Otherwise, I am all in favor of informal dress for everyday work. I will always remember visiting the head office of The Home Depot shortly after its annual sales reached \$1 billion and finding everyone working in informal dress, including both the chairman and the president. Informal, by the way, means "business casual", not wearing jeans, shorts or T-shirts.

Follow the above steps and the confidence, morale and performance of the people on your TEAM will soar.

DELEGATING / EMPOWERING

Results are achieved largely by working through others. Do not try to do everything yourself. It is impossible. Once you have the right people on your TEAM and create an energizing work environment, you now have to delegate tasks in an effective manner.

Here is the formula for doing so:

★ Assign critical tasks to the members of your TEAM. Put in writing the mutually agreed-upon timelines for each phase of the work, deadlines for completion, and the results to be achieved. Establish targets that are achievable with stretch or extra effort. Be demanding but fair. Request that you receive regular feedback on progress being made.

- ★ Keep your work instructions simple and straightforward. The more complicated you make something, the more time it is going to take. Do not over-communicate or micro-manage by getting too involved in discussing the details of how to do the work. You are primarily interested in the end-results. Challenge your TEAM members to be innovative and seek new ways of improving their performance and productivity.
- ★ Emphasize that nothing significant is ever accomplished without taking calculated risks and making some mistakes. Stress, however, that you never want to be blindsided with any surprises. All mistakes must be addressed in an open, constructive and timely manner. If anyone discovers a serious problem or that something is starting to go wrong, you want to be alerted to this issue immediately.
- ★ Explain that everyone's job description is just the starting point for what they are being paid to do. Say that you are counting on all of your people to use their best judgment in solving problems and dealing with issues when they arise

as opposed to running to you for answers. Firmly resist your TEAM members engaging in upward delegation by asking you what they should do. Keep the monkey on the right back. When people come to you with a problem, insist that they go back, think through the alternative solutions and return to you with their recommendation for how best to deal with the situation.

- ★ Check back on a regular basis to determine the progress being made, clarifying your expectations when necessary. Offer your support to help deal with any roadblocks or provide required additional resources.
- ★ Adopt an open-book approach with your TEAM members by helping everyone understand the key performance numbers and financial reports for both your department and the organization as a whole. Invite questions about these numbers. Urge everyone to give you their ideas and suggestions for improving them. Basically, your objective is to empower everyone to take a real sense of ownership regarding the overall success of both your department and the total organization.

- ★ Wherever possible, incorporate some form of TEAM-wide profit-sharing or incentive compensation into how your people are paid. The same goes for facilitating a share ownership plan for all employees if you are in a position to do so. These steps, together with an open-book approach, will do wonders in changing employee attitudes, creating a strong sense of loyalty and trust, and boosting the performance of your department and organization.

Through delegation, you provide opportunities for your people to expand their expertise and develop capabilities for assuming more responsibility. The more you delegate, the more they will learn and grow. In this way, you will develop your own successor to make it easy for your organization to promote you to a higher level.

The one time when delegation is not appropriate is when a crisis occurs. This is when you as the supervisor must stand up and decisively take charge of the situation in a visible manner. Under such circumstances, your TEAM members will look to you for strong leadership and direction.

PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

There is a popular misconception that supervisors need to hold a lengthy “performance appraisal” meeting once a year with each of their people. When this practice is followed, both participants approach the annual meeting with a great deal of stress, tension and apprehension — call it dread.

A far better approach is for supervisors to meet with each of their associates for a much shorter “performance review” four times a year. Properly conducted, such quarterly meetings can be much more focused and successful in keeping the individual associate and your TEAM on track on a current basis.

Here are some recommendations for supervisors holding effective performance reviews:

- ★ Give the associate three days notice of your intention of having a “performance review get-together”. Pick a time for the meeting during the workday when the two of you can meet without any interruptions.
- ★ Use the first performance review meeting to jointly discuss and reach agreement on the associate’s annual goals in the four most important areas of his or her job, such as financial, operations (or process oriented), customer support and internal people relationships. Put these goals in some form of quarterly roadmap for “what needs to be done”. Keep these goals simple and limited in number.
- ★ Explain that it is OK for both of you to take notes at these meetings and that you’ll be preparing a written summary each time of what was agreed and discussed for both of you to review within several days following the meeting.
- ★ Concentrate all of your attention on what is being said and have both of you shut off any phones or PDA’s during the meeting.

- ★ Do your homework prior to each subsequent quarterly meeting on the extent to which the associate has made progress on the goals and other subjects discussed at the last performance review meeting. Identify any new issues of consequence that need to be raised.
- ★ Keep the meetings focused on what is really important within the associate’s control. Start by covering what the associate has accomplished over the last quarter or is doing well by saying, “I’m pleased with the way you have ... since our last performance review meeting.” Next, ask the associate to describe the progress made since your last meeting regarding his or her previously agreed-upon goals. Then say, “Everyone has strengths and ‘key development needs’ [as opposed to using the term weaknesses]. What are the one or two areas where you think you most need to improve your performance?” Listen carefully to the associate’s answer and then either agree or add, “Here’s my take on where you need to improve — ... ”
- ★ Raise any serious problems or performance issues openly and honestly. You need to give

feedback that is the “unvarnished truth” to minimize any chances of misunderstandings. Always provide the associate, however, with an opportunity to give his or her side of the story. Mutually agree on an action plan for dealing with any such problems or issues, including the dates for completion or a follow-up meeting.

- ★ Always include as one of your questions, “What have you done since our prior performance review meeting to help the other people on our TEAM or in the organization?” Express your strong support for any action taken in this regard.
- ★ At one or two of the quarterly review meetings held each year, ask, “Where do you see yourself going in our organization over the next one to three years?” Try to ensure that the associate’s expectations are feasible and not unrealistic. Discuss what steps and special training will put the associate in a better position to be promoted.
- ★ Try to keep the meetings to no more than 15 to 30 minutes and end them on a strong positive note.

Following each performance review meeting, sit down and document all material points covered, especially those relating to the agreed-upon goals as well as any serious performance issues discussed. Give a copy of this write-up to the associate. Refer to these notes prior to your next performance review meeting with that associate. When you are promoted, give a copy of these write-ups to your successor so he or she will be current on the performance of everyone in your department or work group.

Recognize that the main purpose of performance reviews is to encourage your TEAM members to leverage their strengths and work together to achieve top performance. While you can nudge people to overcome or minimize their weaknesses, no one is perfect including yourself.

MAJOR CHALLENGES / TASK FORCES

At some point in time, you and your TEAM are likely to be confronted by a significant challenge, threat or opportunity of some complexity outside of the normal course of daily business. Rather than attempt to deal with it on your own, the best approach is usually to draw together a group of people to collaborate in determining “the best answer”.

Depending on the magnitude of the issue and the people resources available, consider forming a one-time task force to deal with this project. Recruit as its “project leader” the individual on your TEAM who is

best at working with different people. With the project leader, jointly select the appropriate people to serve on the task force, seeking diversity of backgrounds, experience and perspectives.

Be creative in coming up with a code name for this project that captures everyone's attention. Pick one that is short, catchy and fun.

Call a meeting of your entire TEAM, describe the challenge and explain that you believe the best way to arrive at the solution is through a task force chaired by the project leader you selected. Say that you will be using such task forces from time to time and that different people will usually be asked to participate in them, depending on the issue. Announce the code name of the project.

With the project leader, agree on the definition of the challenge and attempt to state it succinctly in writing. Jointly decide on the task force's objectives, the steps to be taken by the task force in broad terms, the timelines for performing them, and the deadline for arriving at both a recommendation and an implementation plan. Stress the need for creative, out-of-the-box, unconventional thinking and solutions, including those that utilize the Internet.

At the first meeting of the task force, the project leader should present the written definition of the challenge and describe the task force's objectives and timelines. Jointly, the task force should also decide on when is the best time to meet. The project leader's primary role is to be a democratic facilitator and to attempt to keep the task force on track and meeting its timelines with the greatest possible sense of urgency.

For most projects of this magnitude, the task force should start by preparing a critical path chart or process map that lays out the sequence of the action and steps to be taken, their timelines, and the individuals responsible for completing them. The project leader should update this chart or map for each meeting of the task force.

Encourage the task force to contact successful organizations in other fields to learn how they approached similar challenges. Arrange for the task force to go on field trips to see these companies in action. Ask everyone on the task force to keep an open mind about using new methods and practices.

In developing answers to complex issues, remember the saying that "perfect is often the enemy of good". Caution the project leader that, in many cases, it is

counterproductive to seek the absolutely perfect, all-encompassing solution. Invariably, you lack the time to do so and it is rarely necessary.

At regular intervals, request progress reports from the project leader. When the task force has completed its work, ask the project leader to have the other task force members present their recommendations and implementation plan to you. If you agree with these findings, consider asking the task force to present them to your entire work group as well as to members of upper management. Sometimes, however, you may need to ask the task force to rethink certain parts of their findings before making a group presentation. Ideally, everyone on the task force should participate in such presentations.

The second-last step in using task forces is to ask the task force to conduct a summary postmortem wrap-up session covering the lessons that were learned from this experience. The first such task force will inevitably be a learning experience for everyone involved. You need to know what to do differently when you decide to deploy your next task force.

The last step is to hold a fun event for the members of the task force to express your appreciation for all of

their extra efforts. Give everyone a special memento of some kind and get a group photo of the task force. Write appropriate thank-you letters to the project leader and other task force members.

The benefits of using a task force for this purpose is to attack big issues with your best people in an intense manner over the shortest possible time period. Having a task force concentrate all of its attention mightily on the issue at hand is usually the fastest route to the best solution.

CHAPTER 27

FIRING

Inevitably, you are going to be faced with the need to terminate someone working for you. While you owe it to your people to give them coaching and support to help them perform their jobs, there comes a time when you know you must make a change for the overall well-being of both your work group and the organization. Act decisively and do not procrastinate in dealing with these situations.

When you first assume responsibility for supervising any group of people, you should ensure that everyone clearly understands that certain types of behavior are grounds for immediate dismissal, such as sexual harassment, taking illegal drugs or alcohol at work, or committing any hostile or intimidating acts

towards a co-worker, supervisor or any other third party. If your organization lacks an official policy on these “one strike and you’re out” matters, urge it to formulate one.

Consult your organization’s human resources or legal department whenever you are facing the likelihood of having to terminate an associate. Make certain that you follow the necessary termination steps and procedures to avoid exposing yourself and your organization to any wrongful dismissal lawsuits.

ADDRESSING POOR PERFORMANCE

The best way to address poor performance issues with anyone is to meet with the person in private, explain your concerns in a candid and factual manner, and say you are giving the individual another opportunity to correct the situation. It is always mandatory for you to document in writing what was discussed in this meeting and give a dated copy of this “first notice” to the person concerned.

If the person’s unsatisfactory performance persists, hold another meeting and give the individual a “second notice”, again documented and dated in writing. This time make it clear you will have no choice

but to terminate the person if there is no improvement in his or her performance. Terminate the individual if there is no correction in his or her performance after two warnings but again document in writing the reasons for the termination. Afterwards, you may have to prove in court that you had well-documented business reasons for terminating this person.

The time period between the first and second notice and between the second notice and termination depends on the type of work involved. Clearly, the individual should be given a reasonable opportunity to correct his or her performance. On the other hand, it is a mistake to prolong this process unnecessarily.

Some people may have a great deal to offer your organization but are currently in a position that does not suit them. In these cases, try to find another position for them in your organization where they can do a better job.

If you discover someone on your TEAM has an alcohol or drug abuse problem, you have to make the person understand that a condition of retaining his or her job is successfully dealing with that problem. In most cases, that is going to require obtaining professional help. Offer your assistance and support

but remember the chances of someone “curing” such a problem on a permanent basis are not high. Again, involve a representative of the human resources department in any meeting on this subject.

In the case of performance-related terminations, there is a natural tendency to repeatedly give a person the benefit of the doubt. As a result, you wait too long to replace someone, regardless of having more than sufficient supporting evidence. Inevitably, shortly after you finally do terminate such a person, you realize you actually should have done so many months earlier. Delaying taking the necessary action sends a message to your other TEAM members that sub-par performance is acceptable when it definitely is not.

Often, the individual concerned has known for some time he or she is ill-suited for the job but does not know what to do about it or just wants to keep the job. If you have been conducting the proper quarterly performance reviews with this individual, your intention to terminate that person should not come as a surprise.

The reality is it is in the best interests of both the associate involved and your organization to face facts and deal with the situation as soon as it becomes

apparent. Procrastination never helps the situation. In a certain way, you are doing the employee a favor by freeing them up to find a job that is better suited to his or her capabilities.

THE TERMINATION MEETING

In the case of meetings with any associate that may lead to termination, it is always a good idea to ask either a representative of the human resources department or another member of management to join you for the meeting to have a witness to what is being said. If you are a male and are holding such a meeting with a female associate, ask a female member of the human resources department or manager to sit in on your meeting. Female supervisors should take the same approach by involving a male “partner” in any such meetings with a male associate.

Any discussions with an associate regarding termination must be held in private. Refrain from going into a long, involved explanation for your decision as the person will not hear most of what you are saying except that he or she is being fired. Be firm and state you have made a decision to terminate the person and this decision is final. Express your regrets in a sensi-

tive, respectful manner and attempt to convey it is actually in the person's best interests to find another position that better suits him or her. Do not get into an argument over your decision. Try to end the meeting within 10 to 15 minutes.

Hold the termination meeting on a Monday or Tuesday. Avoid terminating someone on "sensitive" dates, such as on his or her birthday, anniversary or religious holidays. Make every possible effort to help the person "save face" and retain his or her self-esteem. Keep the termination meeting professional and refrain from commenting on personal qualities and the employee's work history. Advise the associate on what your human resource department can do to help him or her find a job elsewhere.

In virtually every case, it is best the associate being terminated ceases work following being told of the decision. Leaving such a person on the job for any length of time is never a good idea. The associate's job performance will be poor, which will adversely affect everyone else's morale. Arrange for someone to accompany the person terminated when he or she picks up any personal affects from the office or work area after-hours or on a weekend.

When you terminate an associate, you need to advise the person about the financial severance package he or she is entitled to receive, depending on the circumstances. In many countries, such severance payments are specified by law depending upon the person's length of service. Check beforehand with your organization's human resources or legal department to verify you are offering the required severance payment. Otherwise, you should consult with an employment lawyer.

It is always necessary to ensure you have legal grounds for termination in order to reduce the risk of a wrongful dismissal claim. If there is any ambiguity in this regard, you will have to negotiate a severance package with the employee in return for his or her "resignation".

RESIGNATIONS

Occasionally, an individual will come to you and say he or she wants to resign and leave the organization. If you regard this person highly, you may want to attempt to talk him or her out of this decision when the reason for the resignation relates to an internal matter. Often, this happens when someone wants to put pressure on you to do something about "a problem in the organization". If this individual comes to you on a second occasion and

expresses a desire to resign again, you are almost always better off accepting the resignation and finding a replacement. Individuals who have “decided” to resign more than once are usually not really committed to their organization.

EXIT INTERVIEWS

Adopt the practice of always conducting an exit interview with anyone resigning from your TEAM or organization. Use a standard exit interview form to document the answers to these questions:

- ★ What prompted your decision to resign?
- ★ What were the most positive aspects of your experience with our organization?
- ★ What were the most frustrating aspects of your experience with our organization?
- ★ If you could change anything at our organization, what would you change?
- ★ Do you have any other recommendations or comments that you would like to make?
- ★ Do I have your permission to share these comments with others in our organization?

The purpose of exit interviews is to identify any critical areas of concern and issues that need to be addressed. The person conducting the exit interview needs to be a “good listener” and refrain from getting into an argument over what is being said.

Whenever anyone resigns or is terminated, make every reasonable effort to have that person leave on as good a basis as possible, thinking he or she was treated fairly and properly by yourself and your organization. Obviously, this is not always achievable.

NEED FOR BALANCE

The number of hours that people work varies significantly, depending on the level of the job and their employers. People in clerical and other junior positions typically adhere to a regular working shift. So-called knowledge workers and employees in service fields, such as accounting, consulting, law and investment banking, often end up working 60 to 80 hours a week. The same applies to individuals in management positions.

While competitive pressures and globalization often mean that organizations have to be open for business 24 hours seven days a week, this does not mean that you should expect any of your employees to be available at

all hours. Those organizations that respect the need for their employees to have a reasonable work-life balance will have a competitive advantage in attracting, motivating and retaining talented people. Such employers will utilize innovative methods for designing and organizing the way work is performed and jobs are designed. They will offer flexible work-hour schedules and encourage employees to take their full amount of holidays.

Be realistic in making demands on your people. Do not ask or expect anyone to work more than 40 to 50 hours a week on a regular basis. You need to have healthy, productive TEAM members who can maintain a sense of balance between their time at work on the one hand and their personal and family life on the other hand.

It is in no one's interest to push the people working for you until they experience burnout. In fact, you should be careful when any of your TEAM members has to frequently work overtime and long hours to complete his or her regular work. Usually, this is a sure sign of either poor organization on the part of the individual or that you need to reassess the expectations for the job.

The most productive and valuable employees in any organization are not those who spend the most time at work. They are those individuals who have the inner resources to think, plan, innovate and work "smart". In most cases, these are individuals who enjoy a healthy balance between their work on the one hand and their family, friends, outside interests and community involvements on the other hand. Such persons usually have a much better perspective on what is happening in their work environment and around the world.

For yourself, the challenge is to find the right work-life balance and trade-offs that are appropriate at this time in your life. This will likely change as you progress in your career and your priorities become different. Your goal should be to become a winner at work, at home and in the community as your life and career evolve.

PART FOUR

**HANDLING
OTHER
WORK ISSUES**

HANDLING OTHER WORK ISSUES

You will encounter many other challenges as you pursue your career. This section covers the most common ones, including asking for a raise, your conduct at the company party, work romances, sexual harassment, holidays and resigning.

Given that your “education” should be an ongoing process, the last chapter provides some recommended books to expand your understanding of the world of business and politics.

ASKING FOR A RAISE

The groundwork for being able to ask for a raise starts when you are first hired. At that time, you should ask what is the salary range for your position and what are your organization's practices regarding performance reviews and compensation. For example, are people in your position eligible for annual bonuses or any other form of incentive compensation and, if so, how are they determined and when are they usually paid?

In many situations, your starting compensation is not as important as what you will likely be earning after

12 months given reasonably good job performance. Similarly, it may make sense to take a relatively low-paying position if it enables you to join a fast-growing, highly successful organization where there will be many opportunities for promotions.

When you are first hired at any organization, it is critical to obtain a clear understanding of the performance expectations of your supervisor for your new position. The more you can fully understand what is really important to your supervisor and the organization, the better you will be able to direct your efforts at work.

At the start, you should also ask if it would be possible to have an initial job performance review three months after you are hired, if it is not already the policy of your organization to do so. This is to review how you are doing in your job, not your compensation.

In the interview for my first job after graduating with a Harvard M.B.A. degree, the principals at my prospective employer asked, "What is the average starting salary for your graduating class?" When I answered, they said: "Fine, we'll hire you at half that amount. Initially you won't be worth much to us until you've gained some experience, but we'll agree to review your

performance and compensation monthly after you start." Since the principals had an excellent reputation and the firm was growing rapidly, I readily agreed to those terms and commenced work there. Within ten months, my salary was 200% higher.

Regardless of the circumstances, you have to play the lead role in taking the necessary action for maximizing your compensation and other related job benefits consistent with the level of your work performance. The reality is that "fairness" of compensation does not necessarily happen automatically. In many cases, you have to strive to achieve it in a firm and assertive manner. This means speaking up for yourself and your accomplishments.

REASONS FOR A RAISE

Unless you are part of a union, raises have to be earned. Just showing up for work and meeting average expectations for your position are not good enough in today's competitive, demanding environment. Similarly, just because your organization is doing well is not a reason to ask for a raise.

The best justifications for getting a raise are demonstrating consistently superior job performance,

experiencing a major increase in your work responsibilities, or obtaining a promotion. Unless you are working in a high-inflation locale, the fact there has been an overall rise in the annual cost-of-living index represents a weak justification for a pay increase.

INFLUENCING FACTORS

Apart from your individual job performance, three other factors usually heavily influence your ability to obtain a raise. The first is the quality of the image or reputation you establish within your organization. Are you perceived as someone who under-promises and over-delivers or the reverse? How effective a communicator are you, verbally and written? To what extent are you regarded as being a hard worker, a supportive team player, and a contributor at meetings? Do you impress people by keeping “cool and calm” under pressure? Conversely, do you waste time gossiping with co-workers and on personal telephone calls?

The second factor is how you are perceived by other senior people apart from your immediate supervisor and by the other departments and divisions within the organization with which you have regular contact. Do you respond quickly and effectively to their demands

and service requirements? Do you conduct yourself in a friendly, professional, supportive manner outside of your own department?

The third influencing factor is the current and forecasted financial performance of your organization and, to a lesser extent, the economic outlook for its industry or sector. If your organization is experiencing major financial losses and is in the midst of numerous job layoffs, you need to take this into account. The same applies when your industry or sector is headed for a prolonged serious slump that will adversely affect your organization. These are not reasons to hold back from having a discussion of your performance and compensation with your supervisor but they definitely should temper your request for any increase in pay.

TIMING

Depending on the compensation practices of your organization, it is usually a good idea to request another meeting with your supervisor to discuss “how you’re performing in your job” after you’ve been with the organization for six months. If you sense you are performing significantly above expectations, you may be justified in asking for a raise at that time.

Certainly, after being in a position for twelve months, it is appropriate for you to request a meeting with your supervisor to review your overall job performance and compensation if such a meeting has not already been scheduled. Ideally, this meeting should take place in a location and at a time when the two of you can have a quiet, uninterrupted discussion. At the start, if your supervisor appears to be pressed for time and stressed out, propose that your conversation be continued at a more convenient time.

Obviously, if your organization has just announced a major round of layoffs and other austerity measures, it may make sense to wait for things to settle down before asking for such a meeting. Similarly, you have to be sensitive to your supervisor's own frame of mind and work pressures.

PREPARATION

Like any form of negotiations, your success in asking for a raise is going to be largely determined by the extent of your prior preparation. Do not ever assume your supervisor knows all about your achievements or contribution to the success of your department or organization.

Make a written list of your job accomplishments since your last compensation review, ranked in order of importance. Quantify them wherever possible in terms of improvements, increases, savings, customer service levels and productivity. Include the results of any special projects which you initiated or contributed to the success of. Compare your actual performance against your supervisor's original stated expectations. Avoid any vague, generalized statements. Do not take credit for the work of other people.

Get an objective assessment of this list from a friend or associate outside of your organization. Consider giving your supervisor a copy of this list of accomplishments two days before the scheduled meeting to review your performance and compensation.

Attempt to find out what your position is worth in the current job market and within your field or industry. Research compensation surveys, comparative salary levels and job listings available online at such Web sites as *www.monster.com*, *www.hotjobs.com*, *www.salary.com*, *www.salaryexpert.com*, *www.indeed.com/salary* and *www.payscale.com*. Try to determine as much as you can about the range of pay and benefits available for

people performing your type of work with your level of experience in the same geographical market.

Formulate your salary or wage demands based on what you think you can justify. Up it by another 10-15% to give yourself some room to negotiate. Also, prepare a written "wish list" of all of the additional job benefits and special work arrangements that you would like to obtain, consistent with your understanding of those available to others, including people at the next highest one or two levels in the organization.

Be cautious about discussing compensation matters with your colleagues at work. If you decide to do so, make certain it is done on a strictly confidential basis and never reveal to your supervisor that you have had such discussions. When there is a risk that any of your co-workers may disclose this fact themselves, avoid talking to them about compensation.

Anticipate your supervisor's reactions and objections to what you plan to ask for. Develop answers to help you overcome them.

NEGOTIATIONS

The time to engage in compensation negotiations is not only at your annual performance and compensation

review but also when you are being given major additional responsibilities or being promoted. Organizations have a strong bias to attempt to obtain the maximum performance at the minimum cost. You have to counteract this bias by being an assertive, skillful compensation negotiator. These ground rules will help you do so:

- ★ Have a valid reason for asking for a meeting with your supervisor to discuss compensation.
- ★ Suggest that the meeting begin by reviewing your job performance. If you think it would help, refer to your written list of accomplishments. Do not be tentative or shy in describing the importance of what you have done and what you are currently doing.
- ★ Maintain direct eye contact throughout the meeting. This is especially important when you are expressing a request for a salary increase.
- ★ Refrain from mentioning why you need the extra money or discussing your personal financial situation. You are asking for an increase in compensation as a result of earning it, not needing it.
- ★ If you sense your supervisor is going to propose an increase, let him or her do so first

so you do not negotiate against yourself.

On the other hand, if you believe your supervisor is someone who always tries to get away with paying as little as possible, you are better off to table your request for a specific increase at the start.

- ★ Always be prepared to answer the question: “What salary increase do you think is reasonable?”
- ★ Express your request for a salary increase in terms of the additional amount per month you believe is “reasonable” as opposed to quoting an annual figure.
- ★ Ask for a salary increase of 10-15% more than you want to give yourself some negotiating room. On the other hand, do not be totally unrealistic in your demands or you will be perceived as being greedy and out-of-touch with the real world.
- ★ Negotiate for more than just your salary. If a major salary increase is rejected, ask for some other job perks or benefits, such as a change in job responsibilities, more flexibility in work hours, a child-care allowance, more vacation

time, or time off to take work-related courses paid for by the organization. Ask to participate in your organization’s stock option plan if one exists at your level of employment. Never assume something is not negotiable.

- ★ When you are at the top of your pay range, consider asking for more responsibilities to justify a higher level of compensation or for a promotion to a better-paying position.

Do not overreact if your request for a salary increase is declined. Respond in the following manner when this happens:

- ★ If your supervisor says the organization cannot afford to give you a raise, ask when it will be in a position to do so. If your supervisor says you do not deserve a raise, ask what specifically you need to do to merit one. Make notes on the answer. At the end of the meeting, ask when the next review of your performance and compensation will take place.
- ★ In the event your supervisor offers you something unexpected rather than a salary increase and you are uncertain whether to

accept it, request that you have a day to think it over before making a decision.

- ★ As is the case with any negotiation, ask lots of questions to probe and clarify your supervisor's position. And, listen carefully to the answers.
- ★ Do not threaten to leave the organization if you fail to get your requested salary increase except as a last resort when you are absolutely prepared to do so.

If you are convinced that you are fully justified in seeking a major salary increase, getting a "no" answer might represent a wake-up call for you to look elsewhere for a job. This is especially the case when you are well-informed about the going salary ranges for your peers at other local organizations and your salary is at the bottom end of the range despite you having produced consistently superior performance.

THE COMPANY PARTY

Several times during the year, your organization is likely to hold social events involving employees and their partners, spouses and other family members. While these occasions are being held to enable the organization to show its appreciation to everyone, there is more to your attendance than just having fun.

Here are some points to keep in mind:

- ★ Attend these events in an affable, friendly, positive frame of mind even if you would rather be a million miles away. Arrive at the beginning of the event.

- ★ Think of such functions as an informal opportunity to build relationships with individuals who may be of assistance to your career, including those in other departments and locations. Find out beforehand who is attending and identify those people you should meet.
- ★ After you say hello to your immediate work colleagues, make an effort to circulate around the venue and introduce yourself to other people. Definitely chat with your supervisor and his or her partner. And, if you have an opportunity to do so, introduce yourself and your partner to the head of the organization if he or she is there.
- ★ Keep your conversation focused on social and appropriate personal matters. Do your homework ahead of time to identify the principal non-work passions and outside interests of those individuals you will be meeting. Also, ask about their children if it appears appropriate to do so.
- ★ Restrict your business comments to thanking people for their past support, including those

- at lower levels of the organization. Try to avoid getting involved in discussing business matters with anyone. Say, "Let's discuss this next week at work."
- ★ Pay special attention to greeting any outsiders who have been invited to attend, especially customers and suppliers, even if you do not deal directly with them yourself.
- ★ Do not share gossip or talk about office politics. If someone else tries to do so, politely change the subject.
- ★ Observe good manners. Enjoy yourself but do not get carried away. Conduct yourself in a way that will boost your image and reputation within the organization, not lower it.
- ★ Limit the amount of alcohol of any type that you and your partner drink. Switch to water or soft drinks halfway through the event. Nothing looks worse than someone who has had too much to drink.
- ★ Leave before the end of the event after you have thanked the people who worked hard to organize it. Never be one of the last to leave unless you are offering to help clean up.

Remember that your conduct at these functions may favorably influence your chances of promotion in the eyes of your supervisor and other senior members of the organization.

CHAPTER 31

WORK ROMANCES

Engaging in a romance at work or the office is definitely a minefield that can result in termination, transfers or divorce. CEO's at major companies have been fired by their board of directors for having an affair with an employee. Work romances happen frequently but often end badly.

An increasing number of major organizations are issuing formal policies on "fraternization", some prohibiting it entirely and others specifying when it is permissible. All of these policies, however, prohibit romantic relationships between managers and their subordinates, and most of them bar such relationships between employees within the same work

group or TEAM. Consensual work romances between employees are usually permitted when neither partner reports to the other but most organizations frown on romances involving senior executives and lower level employees.

Sue Shellenbarger, a columnist on balancing work and life issues at the *Wall Street Journal*, has written a number of excellent articles on employee affairs. Her advice includes:

- ★ Do not jump into any kind of work romance without considering all of the consequences beforehand. Assume the worst outcomes and ask yourself if you are prepared to accept them. For example, how will a breakup of the relationship affect your position at the organization?
- ★ Never get romantically involved with your supervisor or a subordinate. Also, do not let yourself become drawn into an affair with a colleague within your work group.
- ★ If you do engage in a so-called permissible work romance, be discreet and establish clear boundaries with your partner in terms of how the two of you conduct yourselves on the job.

Do not indulge in any affectionate behavior at work. Keep your behavior professional at all times when you are on the job. Do not permit your romance to adversely affect your job performance.

- ★ Before you marry someone from the same organization, make sure you are familiar with that person's non-work personality and character. Also, seek prior mutual agreement that your marriage together is going to come first before anything to do with work.
- ★ Avoid any situations where either of you in the relationship could be accused of demonstrating favoritism at work toward the other.
- ★ Rein in your flirting at work. It is too easy for flirting to be misinterpreted as encouraging someone to go further.
- ★ Do not discuss your work romance with other colleagues at your organization, including after the relationship has ended.
- ★ Do not use your organization's e-mail system to conduct your romance. Your e-mails may be monitored even if you are unaware of it.

Finally, before you become involved in any work romance, ask yourself, "Does my career really need this? Can I really justify all the risks?" When in doubt, opt out before it gets started. And remember, one-night stands always alter work relationships and not for the better.

CHAPTER 32

SEXUAL HARRASSMENT

Sexual harassment in the workplace is illegal in most countries, including the U.S., Canada, Europe and England. The Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC) in the U.S. defines sexual harassment to "include unwelcome sexual advances, requests of sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature." The harasser may be a woman or a man and not necessarily of the opposite sex to the person being harassed.

Vulgar jokes, suggestive remarks or gestures, and unwanted intimate touching of any type, such as hugging, kissing, patting or stroking, are examples

of sexual harassment. Calling or e-mailing a fellow employee to pursue an unwanted romantic relationship is another example of sexual harassment. So too is making verbal comments about someone's physical appearance with sexual overtones or staring at a person's physique.

Some organizations have adopted a zero-tolerance or "one strike and you're out" policy for dealing with instances of sexual harassment. If you are ever fired for sexual harassment, this will probably impede your future career.

If you receive an unwanted sexual advance from a business or office associate, you have to cut off any type of this behavior immediately. If you do not address this situation right away, your inaction may be misinterpreted as encouraging the other person to go further. Firmly say, "Look, I don't think it's a good idea for either of us to get into this situation" or "I am not interested in you in that way." The next day act as if nothing occurred. Also, refrain from gossiping about what happened with others.

After any incident of sexual harassment, record the details of what happened, including the date, time, witnesses present, what each person said or did, and

how you felt emotionally and physically. If such inappropriate behavior continues, carefully consider your alternatives including discussing the situation with your organization's human resources department, which should treat it in a confidential manner and help you resolve the problem. Another option is to confidentially contact either the Human Rights Commission in Canada or the EEOC in the U.S. for advice on how to handle the situation, including possibly filing a formal complaint or grievance and seeking legal counsel. This also applies to any harassment based on race, sexual orientation, national origin, religion or mental and physical disability.

While sexual harassment is unacceptable in any situation and you deserve to be treated in a respectful manner, be aware that making a formal complaint may not result in a satisfactory outcome for you. If no one is prepared to take action to end such sexual harassment, you are likely better off to request a transfer or seek employment elsewhere.

RESIGNING

Someday, you may find yourself in a situation where it is in your best interests to resign from your current position. Despite you doing proper due diligence beforehand, jobs do not always turn out as you anticipated. Supervisors may place inappropriate demands and stress on you. False promises may have been made to entice you to take the job. Or, the job and the organization's culture may be a poor fit for what you want.

It is usually not a good idea to quit your job within the first six months unless your organization is engaged in something that is illegal or totally unethical. Attempt to work things out with your supervisor or see if it is possible to arrange a transfer to a more suitable position. During this six-month time period, you can also

be discreetly investigating job opportunities at other organizations.

When it comes time to make a decision, act both decisively and professionally. Do not let yourself get paralyzed into delaying too long. As A.G. Lafley, the CEO of Procter & Gamble, said: "Life is full of twists and turns. It's important to accept them. Learn from all life's experiences and move on."

Here are some recommendations for managing your resignation professionally for the best outcome:

- ★ Do not beat yourself up if you made the wrong job decision. It is not an uncommon situation.
- ★ When it becomes obvious that you need to leave your job and employer, make every effort to find another more suitable position before you do so. You are much better off waiting to quit your existing job until you have obtained a firm offer for a new position elsewhere.
- ★ Do not use your organization's e-mail or instant messaging systems for sending any job-search related messages or for preparing your résumé. Similarly, do not use your office computer to look up job-search Web sites or

do Internet research about other employers. As much as possible, conduct your job search from your home in the evenings and weekends.

- ★ If you post your résumé on a job-search Web site while you are still employed, do not disclose your identity except to the operator. Also, in your résumé, list your current employer with a generic description as opposed to using its actual name.
- ★ Do not discuss your thoughts about quitting your job or being unhappy about your supervisor with any of your work colleagues. You cannot count on them treating this information in a confidential manner.

Give your resignation in the following manner:

- ★ Think about the script you should follow in telling your supervisor about your decision to resign. At the start of the meeting, say, "I'm sorry to have to advise you that I will be leaving my job here. I have an exciting opportunity for another position that better suits my career objectives [or where I can learn valuable new skills]."

- ★ Do not burn your bridges by saying anything negative about your job, supervisor or the organization. Regardless of your experience, express your appreciation for having had an opportunity to work there and thank your supervisor for his or her support. Never get into an emotional argument or debate.
- ★ Whatever you do, do not say or do anything that runs the risk of alienating or upsetting your supervisor. You never know when you may end up working together again. Even if you do not give your supervisor as a reference, there is a high probability that a prospective employer may contact your supervisor at some time in the future to inquire about your job performance.
- ★ Consider bringing a formal letter of resignation to the meeting to indicate that you are serious about your decision.
- ★ Offer to continue in your position for another two weeks so that you can help train your successor and complete any outstanding work assignments. It is usually not a good idea to agree to stay on for a longer period.

- ★ Do not threaten to resign as a means of improving your job responsibilities or compensation. Even if your supervisor gives in to your demands, it is inevitable that your supervisor will resent your manipulative behavior.
- ★ Adhere to your resignation decision once you have made it. Sometimes, your supervisor will make a counteroffer to try to convince you to withdraw your resignation. In 90% of the cases, it is a bad decision to let such a counteroffer change your mind.
- ★ If you have an exit interview, again keep your comments positive and constructive. Remember that the results of this interview will likely be shared with others in the organization.

After you have left the organization, resist the temptation to say anything negative about your former employer, supervisor or work colleagues. If you are asked by anyone about them, say, "It was a great work experience. I learned a lot and met many interesting people there." This also applies to job interviews.

THE BEST BUSINESS BOOKS

To be serious about achieving the maximum possible success in your career or profession, it is necessary to approach your education as an on-going, lifelong process that never ends. This means always being on the lookout for opportunities to become better informed and wiser about both the field you are engaged in and the world around you.

Get into the habit each year of reading a half-dozen books on business, history and politics to expand your thinking, expose yourself to new ideas, and develop a better understanding of human nature. In the case of business books, do not waste your time reading about the latest management fad or CEO's writing puffery on how great they are.

Over the last 40 years, some 100,000 different books on the subject of business have been published in English, including approximately 5,000 in the past year alone. Apart from those mentioned earlier, I recommend that you read these ten books to enrich your business education:

1. *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* by Steven R. Covey.
2. *Get Smarter: Life and Business Lessons* by Seymour Schulich.
3. *The Wisdom of Teams: Creating the High-Performance Organization* by Jon R. Katzenbach and Douglas K. Smith.
4. *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap ... and Others Don't* by Jim Collins.
5. *The Effective Executive* by Peter F. Drucker.
6. *Built from Scratch: How a Couple of Regular Guys Grew The Home Depot from Nothing to \$30 Billion* by Bernie Marcus and Arthur Blank.
7. *Only the Paranoid Survive: How to Exploit the Crisis Points That Challenge Every Company* by Andrew S. Grove.
8. *Sam Walton: Made in America* by Sam Walton with John Huey.

9. *The Essays of Warren Buffet: Lessons for Corporate America* edited by Lawrence Cunningham.
10. *Leadership* by William Safire and Leonard Safir (a collection of excellent quotes on various leadership issues).

In addition to the above business books, I highly recommend that you read David Halberstam's *The Best and Brightest*, which describes America's involvement in the Vietnam war and how big-league political decisions are made in the U.S. The theme of the book is that there is a critical difference in the decisions reached by those who are supposedly "the best and the brightest" and those who are the wisest.

I also strongly recommend Thomas L. Freidman's book *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* to gain a better understanding of the forces driving globalization today. Freidman is brilliant at distilling complicated major issues into their essence in easily understandable language.

CONCLUSION

As the second *Citizen of the World Guide*, *Find the Right Job & Excel*, points out, attaining success in your career is well within your capability. Yes, having some luck by being in the right place at the right time helps, but the truly critical factors are your own determination, perseverance and hard work.

The first *Citizen of the World Guide*, *Make the Right Impression*, contains recommendations that are clearly relevant to boosting your career prospects. The extent to which you maximize your business and professional success, however, is heavily dependent on your skills as a communicator. The third *Citizen of the World Guide*, *Be a "Pro" Communicator*, tells you how to obtain these skills. In addition to covering all types of regular communications, it includes recommendations for being effective in both chairing meetings and conducting negotiations.

APPENDIX

RÉSUMÉ SAMPLE

JOAN ROGERS

2

Apt. 32, 1228 38th Ave. N.W.

Los Angeles, CA 94248

Home Phone: (310) 861-2943

Email Address: joan.rogers@hotmail.com

OBJECTIVE: To obtain the position of Assistant Manager — Marketing at Wildriver Stores Inc. using my skills in the areas of creative copy-writing, consumer marketing and brand development.

WORK HISTORY:

2004–2008: Product Manager at [name of company] responsible for [principal job responsibilities], supervising a staff of four persons.

2002–2004: [Job title] at [name of company] responsible for [principal job responsibilities].

1998–2002: [Job title] at [name of company] responsible for [principal job responsibilities].

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Leadership: In August 2007, headed a Task Force to determine the best ways [name of company] should use the Internet to speed up customer transactions.

Business Development: Played a lead role in assisting [name of company] to expand its services to include seniors who require..., working together with the Marketing and Operations Departments.

Communications: Prepared an Orientation Manual for new employees at [name of company], working together with the Human Resources Department.

EDUCATION:

2002: Attended three-month Advanced Marketing Program at [name of institute].

1994-1998: Attended [name of college] on a scholarship, majored in English Literature and Political Science, graduated with a Bachelor of Arts Degree with a grade average of 3.75.

LANGUAGES:

- Have verbal and a reasonable amount of written fluency in French.

PERSONAL BACKGROUND:

- Have served as a youth mentor and special events volunteer with [name of community organization].
- Was one of the founders of The Environmental and Wildlife Conservation Club at [name of college].
- Received a prize for being a member of the debate team which took first place in the Annual Debate Challenge event at [name of college].
- Enjoy designing and programming computer graphics.

[Date]

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In writing this book, I first produced several rough drafts based on my own experience and thoughts. Then, I researched the subjects covered and prepared a more complete draft.

Next, I asked a number of individuals with a special expertise or sound understanding of the different issues to give me a critique of the chapters or section they knew the most about. For example, I had three senior executive search practitioners prepare a critique of Part One: Finding the Right Job. In most cases, each subject of consequence was reviewed by three different knowledgeable persons. Armed with this extensive feedback, I prepared the final draft of the book.

Consequently, I want to thank the following members of my informal “editorial board” for their valuable contribution to the contents of this book: Mike Bursaw, JoAnn Compton, Agnes Dallison, Michael Honey, John

Koopman, Dan McAreavey, Tom McCormick, David McDermid, Graham Price, Robert Shoniker, Phil Stiles, Chip Vallis and Nicole Woodward. Any mistakes, however, are of my own making.

I am also indebted to Charlene Dobmeier, Don Gorman, Natalia Nastaskin and Jacob Reichbart for their support in shepherding this book project.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Steele Curry has more than 40 years of business experience, including being the CEO of a successful publicly traded retail organization, starting a tool rental business with The Home Depot, owning a restaurant (always a humbling occupation), and serving on the board of directors of a number of corporations and charities. He was the board chair of the Alberta Mentor Foundation for Youth (2003–2008) and is now a member of the board of directors of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Calgary and Area. Over the past nine years, Steele has served as a mentor to seven high school students under a program now known as “mPower Youth Mentoring”.

Steele received a B.A. from Stanford University and an M.B.A. from Harvard University. He has lived in Canada, France and the U.S. and traveled extensively to

most parts of the world, including Asia, South America, Europe, Africa and throughout North America.

Born in Winnipeg, Canada, Steele is married to Judy Kaganov who has a Ph.D in psychology. They have three children and live in Calgary, Canada. Every summer, the Currys spend two to three months on a Greek island in the Aegean Sea.

Steele is extremely interested in receiving your ideas and thoughts about the *Citizen of the World Guides*. Contact Steele through the Web site at www.COTWguides.com.