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From the Editor

Why Reading This Issue Can Help You Avoid A Career Trap



Editor

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Most actuaries are aware that they lack some business-savvy skills. However, some actuaries are not so convinced. This is usually either because they excel in one particular area (e.g., communication), and conveniently ignore other business savvy skills, or they excel in all business-savvy skills, but only when compared to other actuaries. Both of these are traps that can inhibit growth. To continue to advance their careers, actuaries must:

- Develop a comprehensive set of business-savvy skills, and
- Seek out diverse perspectives to accurately evaluate their competency.

Comprehensive Skills

Gaps in any one of the business-savvy skills can derail even the best career plans. In the last edition of this newsletter, we pledged to offer at least one article in each of the five business-savvy categories—people management, business management, career development, communication skills and interpersonal skills. In this edition, we continue to make good on that pledge, and have again provided this broad range of coverage. When you read the articles in each category, think about how you would rate yourself in each skill discussed.

Diverse Perspectives

Like any other highly technical group, most actuaries spend a large percentage of their time interacting with other actuaries, which gives us a narrow viewpoint. To compensate for this, we should actively seek out perspectives different from our own. As we do, we gain a more complete picture of ourselves as business people and a more honest evaluation of areas needing improvement. In this edition, we offer several articles that present diverse perspectives—each is a unique opportunity to see yourself differently.

- Jim Blair, actuarial program recruiting manager for Prudential, shares his inside view on the importance of “soft skills” to employers; you will enjoy his unique perspective and his quotations, including my favorite Albert Einstein quote
- Lisa Bull, an actuarial recruiter, shows us that two leading indicators of your success are the people with whom you choose to associate and the books that you choose to read; Lisa also provides a recommended reading list
- Marcel Gingras, an independent consultant, discusses some challenges public companies face in trying to serve shareholders
- Eli Amdur, a career coach and adjunct professor of executive communication and leadership, draws on his depth and breadth of experience (including his work with actuaries) and uses a number of anecdotes, examples and quotes to illustrate why actuaries can’t be just actuaries anymore
- Tim Pratt, an actuary originally from Australia, gives an international perspective on the often humorous challenges of communications across cultural boundaries; see if you can translate his opening puzzle before the end of the article without making “a dog’s breakfast” of it
- Bob Morand, an actuarial recruiter for DW Simpson & Company and a veteran of Chicago’s famous “Second City” improvisation group, reveals one of the secrets of the success afforded to those who “follow their fear”

I hope you enjoy this edition and avail yourself of the opportunity to expand the range of your business-savvy skills toward a more comprehensive arsenal, and also to more accurately assess how you measure up after considering a diverse set of alternate perspectives. □