



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

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The Management Experience Gap

by Jennifer Gillespie

Have you noticed that most management job descriptions list management experience in the requirements section? As a matter of fact, I have been told by a human resources professional that her company policy is to require, not just desire, prior experience for any management level hires. Hearing that caused me to wonder, how does somebody ever get the chance to develop such experience if they can't get their foot on to the first rung of the ladder?

One of the frequently overlooked ways to practice managing and leading is to step outside the walls of corporate America and volunteer time and energy in the community. There are so many organizations in need of assistance, just by getting involved and being willing you may find yourself in a top spot. Take a look around and you will notice youth sports events needing organizers; library fundraisers without an overseer; local political candidates needing to get the word out; charitable fund raising events without enough volunteers to spearhead all the required subteams; or international exchange programs begging for coordinators, for example. Those of you with more vision may identify needs not currently being addressed. You could build programs from the ground up to provide tutoring to students with a language barrier; teaching seniors how to use the Internet; or getting neighbors organized to petition the city for a dog park, for instance. Coordinating the work of other volunteers can be a great training ground for managing a department. There is a way to have fun, feel good about what you are accomplishing, and prepare your resume, all at the same time!

Another way to get management experience within the walls of corporate America is to be willing to step in to a project or to work with a

client when your boss or the company needs help. Perhaps a co-worker has recently left the company or is on a temporary leave. There are skills involved in organizing and running a project team that you can talk about in an interview for a management position. Furthermore, if you have a good reputation for stepping up to do what is needed, you might have a chance to fill in for a manager on a temporary basis. Even if you don't get a chance to be considered for that particular job, you will have some experience to talk about at your next interview.

Actuaries are typically busy people. We are busy at work, busy with studying, busy with family and busy with other activities. It can feel overwhelming to think about voluntarily adding another activity to the plate, and it is tempting to wait for a better time, when things have calmed down. That "better" time might not come soon. If you want to have a management-level position, you have to take the initiative to get yourself ready. ▣



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