



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

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Standing Out in a Competitive Marketplace

by Mary Kilkenny

In today's marketplace, effective career management doesn't simply mean doing your current job well. The majority of actuaries are knowledgeable about their daily responsibilities and perform adequately in their positions. To stand out from the crowd and make yourself most marketable, you must also focus on your professional skills, attitude and networking ability. Developing these talents and broadening your areas of experience will put you ahead of the competition when it really counts. When the opportunity arises to interview for your dream job, will you be prepared? Whether or not you are currently seeking a new role or promotion, set yourself apart by incorporating the following tips into your career management plan.

Be well-rounded.

Seek out opportunities to grow your knowledge base. This might include tackling job responsibilities outside of your usual scope, or rotating to a different department within your company. Volunteer for corporate committees or projects that will challenge you to work with a diverse set of products, people or systems. Mentor a summer intern or actuarial student. Show current and future employers that you are willing to take on additional responsibilities and are able to work outside of your comfort zone.

Challenge the status quo.

This can't be stressed enough. Employers count on actuaries to improve current best practices in areas such as product development, finance and risk management in order to get a competitive edge in the insurance marketplace. It is no wonder that nine times out of 10, employers look to hire actuaries who take initiative and have a proven track record for innovation. When you have an idea for changing a process or making it more efficient—speak up! If your immediate supervisor won't listen to your ideas, find someone who will. Better yet, do

research or run test data to prove how your suggestions could be effective at saving money or time for your department or company.

Get involved.

We've all heard the old adage "out of sight, out of mind." Don't hide behind your desk all day! Get to know your colleagues by participating in office activities such as potlucks, team sports or group lunches. Demonstrating that you are a team player outside of the office will reflect on your professional habits and abilities. This is also a great way to build a professional network of individuals who will recommend you for future promotions or projects.

Maintain perspective.

We all have a tendency to get stuck focusing solely on the projects that are currently stacked on our desks. Participating in community or volunteer work will provide you with a realistic perspective on the task at hand, as well as prevent job burnout. Believe it or not, the few hours you spend rebuilding an elderly person's roof or tutoring a grade-schooler will help you keep a more level head when dealing with client or management deadlines.

Have a positive attitude.

The key to scoring your dream job is resiliency. Don't let past successes or failures weigh you down. Remember: you may not have any control over a situation, but you have complete control over how you handle it. If you make a mistake along the way, learn from it and move on. You have to bounce back to get on the track to major achievements. If you didn't get the job or promotion this time, know that something better is bound to come along. Encourage yourself: Avoid saying "I'll try" and "I hope to." Replace those with "I will" and you will! ●



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