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From the Editor

Changing Roles

by Sim Segal



Editor

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Last Year

Having served as last year's Chair of the Management & Personal Development Section, I gained a deep appreciation of all that our section does, and I want to thank the council members for their dedication, creativity and excellence. It is exceptional that council members choose to give charitably of their time—our most scarce commodity. I also want to tell you about a special friend of the section, Sudha Shenoy, last year's Chair of the Actuary of the Future Section. Sudha spent a great deal of her seemingly limitless energy and patience leading joint ventures between our sections. So, if you have a moment, and if you have enjoyed some of what our section has offered over the past year, please turn to page 23, select a member of our team, and e-mail them a brief thank you note. It would only take a minute and would be appreciated.

This Year

I look forward to serving you as editor of this newsletter for the final year of my three-year elected term. I plan to provide you with at least one article in each of the five topic categories which are the focus of our section. The five categories are:

Management

1. People management (leadership, recruiting, performance management, etc.)
2. Business management (decision-making, strategic thinking, etc.)

Personal Development

3. Career development (marketing yourself, interviewing, etc.)
4. Communication skills (presentations, writing, listening, etc.)
5. Interpersonal skills (negotiation, influence, etc.)

I need your help. Please try to do at least one of the following:

- Consider contributing an article. We are especially looking for articles on business management (topic category #2 above).
- Share what you like. Show articles you like to others who may not be members of the section. When we help other actuaries improve their management and personal development skills, we all benefit.
- Tell me what you dislike. Share your feedback on this newsletter, since this will help us serve you better.

I can be reached at sisegal@deloitte.com. I look forward to hearing from you. □

Actuaries Awake!

by Daniel L. Shinnick

Imagine what would have happened, if when Paul Revere and his companions rode through the countryside shouting "The British are coming, the British are coming!" that the minutemen said "don't bother me, I'm a farmer"—and then rolled over and went back to sleep ... we'd be playing cricket and eating Bangers and Mash.

Over the last decade I have heard SOA president after SOA president sound the clarion call that we must change to maintain/recapture our relevance in the marketplace. In the technical world, we are in danger of being replaced by financial engineers. In senior management, MBAs, lawyers and marketers are replacing us. But the rank-in-file actuary seems reluctant to change. We seem to be happy in our little cubicles—just like the frog in the pot of water that is slowly being heated to a boil. If we do not wake up to the changes we need to make and individually take action, our profession will become much less relevant and our job security will continue to disappear.

In 2003, the Society of Actuaries conducted a survey of our members and employers in the financial services industry. The research gave great insight to what others think of us, areas where we are seen as strong and areas where we need to improve.

Employers (and actuaries) think we are very strong at:

- Being ethical
- Quantitative skills
- Solving complex problems
- Financial assessment and reporting

Employers (and actuaries) think we are weak at:

- Communicating
- Focusing on the big picture
- Being proactive
- Being bold, taking informed risks
- Business acumen

We certainly should continue building on our strengths through our examination program, job experiences and continuing education. In my opinion, the SOA and its members have done a good job building technical skills and maintaining ethical standards.

However, as a profession and as individuals we need to recognize that our current strengths are only table stakes. To thrive, we must bring more than ethics and technical skills to the table. We must learn to communicate effectively and participate in running our organizations.

To help actuaries develop these skills, the Management and Personal Development Section over the last five years has offered actuaries over fifty sessions on communication, people management, general business management, interpersonal skills and career management.

In 2004, we will offer sessions on self-marketing, building a winning culture, business savvy, thinking like a CEO and a disciplined approach to product development. We will also be working with other sections to offer tailored development sessions at their seminars.

As actuaries, we need to be proactive and improve our non-technical skills. It is critical that each of us takes ownership of our own development and we commit to developing the skills required for success. At your next SOA meeting, seriously consider attending at least one Management and Personal Development session.

Actuaries Awake! Take action. The financial engineers are coming! The CPAs are coming! The MBAs are coming! ☐



Chairperson

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“As actuaries, we need to be proactive and improve our non-technical skills. It is critical that each of us take ownership of our own development and that we commit to developing the skills required for success.”

The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership: Follow Them and People Will Follow You

by Faisal Siddiqi

The following is a review of John C. Maxwell's book, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*. I was introduced to this book only in December 2003, though it has been available since 1998. Mr. Maxwell has written an excellent summary of the characteristics that are found in many leaders. He has also followed up this text with supplementary texts, such as "Developing The Leaders Around You," amongst many others that create a process for developing a set of leadership skills. This review provides a general outline of the approach used and illustrates some of the key laws.

General Approach

His approach to the 21 Laws makes his book easy to read and easy to understand. He approaches each law through an explanation of the law. He then cites an example from his personal experiences and generally cites an example of famous or infamous individuals who have followed the law and succeeded, or not followed the particular law and found their achievement was less than expected or had terrible consequences. In some chapters, he elaborates on the law and again provides examples to illustrate his point. He ends each chapter summarizing the particular law and stating the law again.

Illustrative Laws

The first law is the "Law of the Lid." I thought it was a strange law to begin with, but, after reading it, I realized the power and why Mr. Maxwell started off with this law. In essence, this law shows that many people are dedicated to being successful but they may not be developing their leadership ability. As a consequence, some people work very hard, yet are not thought of as being very effective. By developing leadership skills and characteristics, Maxwell graphically illustrates, on pages six and seven, that hard work combined with developing leadership skills will remove the lid

that is capping your effectiveness. An excellent example is provided with respect to McDonald's restaurants.

The second law is the "Law of Influence." The style in which this chapter is set up is very good and I will go into some detail here. Maxwell quickly sums up leadership as having the ability to influence people, and to influence people you have to earn their respect. In this chapter, he also reviews some common myths about leadership. The myths he discusses are as follows:

The Management Myth: This myth is the misunderstanding that managing and leading are one and the same. Leading people involves influencing them while managing people involves maintaining systems and processes. A test of this myth is to ask someone to affect change which can only be done through leadership.

The Entrepreneur Myth: This myth is the belief that all salespeople and entrepreneurs are leaders. An example is given about how a salesperson can convince you to purchase an item but that same person cannot really change you for the long term.

The Knowledge Myth: This myth is the belief that those who possess the most knowledge have the most power and are therefore leaders. This myth may be particularly true in actuarial circles, but the problem cited here is that knowing a lot does not necessarily equate into being a good leader who can convince people to follow. Other skills besides knowledge are required.

The Pioneer Myth: This myth is the observation that the person who does something first is a leader. Though this may be true in some



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Six Sigma, Black Belts and Actuaries

by Xin Liu

We all have heard about Six Sigma and its many success stories. I, in particular, have heard a lot from my husband. As a Black Belt of the Six Sigma projects, he is a firm believer of the methodology. His enthusiasm and deep involvement in his projects often generate many interesting discussions over our dinner table. To me, what he does draws a lot of similarities to what we do as actuaries—define a problem, measure and analyze it quantitatively, set up models or procedures and evaluate/measure the success rate. He takes a lot of pride in his work and his projects, and he is also well rewarded for the results of the projects at the end of the year. That's why it inspired me to learn more about the Six Sigma methodology and the role of the Six Sigma Black Belts.

What is Six Sigma?

By definition, Six Sigma means six standard deviations; it is a measure of quality that indicates no more than 3.4 defects per million opportunities. Like many other initiatives we have seen in the past, the goal of Six Sigma is to increase customer satisfaction, reduce cost and ultimately, to improve the bottom line. The fundamental difference between the traditional approach and Six Sigma is best summarized in the following chart by Dr. Mikel Harry and Mr. Richard Schroeder at Six Sigma Academy in their book entitled *SIX SIGMA—The Breakthrough Management Strategy Revolutionizing the World's Top Corporations*.

As we can see from the chart, Six Sigma is a structured, data-driven, problem-solving approach using rigorous data-gathering and statistical analysis. It requires the culture change and total commitment from the top management to empower the project teams.

How does Six Sigma work?

As an actuary, I would like to summarize Six Sigma in the following equations:

Six Sigma = People Power + Process Power

People Power = Executive Leadership + Champions + Master Black Belts + Black Belts + Green Belts

Process Power for existing process = Define + Measure + Analyze + Improve + Control (DMAIC)

Process Power for new process = Define + Measure + Analyze + Design + Verify (DMADV)

People Power

One of the most important elements of Six Sigma is the role everyone plays. The Executive Leadership is the driving force behind adopting the Six Sigma philosophy throughout the whole organization. The executive leader selects individuals who will champion Six Sigma within specific business units across the organization. They oversee, support and fund the Six Sigma projects and ensure personnel necessary to get the job done. The Champions select Master Black Belts to act as in-house experts for disseminating the Six Sigma knowledge throughout the organization. Master Black Belts devote 100 percent of their time to Six Sigma, assisting Champions in identifying improvement projects, training and coaching Black Belts and Green Belts and communicating the overall progress and the status of projects within their areas of business. Black Belts work under a Master Black Belt, applying the Six Sigma's tools and knowledge to specific projects. Like



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One of the most important elements of Six Sigma is the role everyone plays.

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Master Black Belts, Black Belts dedicate 100 percent of their time to working on Six Sigma projects and undergo extensive training in statistics and problem-solving techniques. Black Belts are also responsible for training Green Belts. Green Belts are employees throughout the organization who execute Six Sigma as a part of their overall jobs. They do much of the legwork in gathering data and executing experiments in support of Black Belt projects and focus on projects that tie directly to their day-to-day work.

Process Power

There are two basic Six Sigma methodologies: DMAIC and DMADV. The DMAIC process (Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve and Control) is an integral improvement system for existing processes falling below specification and looking for incremental improvement. The DMADV process (Define, Measure, Analyze, Design and Verify) is an improvement system used to develop new processes or products at Six Sigma quality level.

There are many Six Sigma consulting firms specializing in providing training and software support for deploying the Six Sigma methodology.

Who Uses Six Sigma?

The concept of Six Sigma was originated by a group of engineers at Motorola to measure and increase the quality levels in the early and mid-1980s. Since then, hundreds of companies around the world as diverse as AlliedSignal, General Electric, Sony, Honda, Maytag, Raytheon, Texas Instruments, Bombardier, Canon, Hitachi, Lockheed Martin, Polaroid, Johnson&Johnson, Fidelity Investments and Caterpillar Inc. have adopted Six Sigma as a way of doing business. The most notable success is General Electric led by Jack Welch. The operating margin reached 16.7 percent in 1998 up from 13.6 percent in 1995 when GE implemented Six Sigma.

What can Six Sigma do for the insurance industry?

The Six Sigma methodology can also benefit the insurance industry. With the competition in the insurance industry becoming more and more intensive, companies are investing huge sums of resources in developing cutting-edge products, searching for alternative distribution chan-

ISSUE	CLASSICAL FOCUS	SIX SIGMA FOCUS
Analytical Perspective	Point estimate	Variability
Management	Cost and time	Quality and time
Manufacturability	Trial and error	Robust design
Variable Search	One-factor-at-a-time	Design of experiments
Process Adjustment	Tweaking	Statistical process-control charts
Problems	Fixing	Preventing
Problem Solving	Expert based	System based
Analysis	Experience	Data
Focus	Product	Process
Behavior	Reactive	Proactive
Suppliers	Cost	Relative capability
Reasoning	Experience based	Statistically based
Outlook	Short-term	Long-term
Decision Making	Intuition	Probability
Approach	Symptomatic	Problematic
Design	Performance	Productivity
Aim	Company	Customer
Organization	Authority	Learning
Training	Luxury	Necessity
Chain-of-command	Hierarchy	Empowered teams
Direction	Seat-of-pants	Benchmarking and metrics
Goal setting	Realistic perception	Reach out and stretch
People	Cost	Asset
Control	Centralized	Localized
Improvement	Automation	Optimization

nels and undertaking other initiatives. It will take years for the investment to break even.

Many companies have a well carved out product development process and a very committed product development team to roll out new products periodically. How about the other side of the coin? How about taking care of the investment made in the past—to squeeze out every penny from the dollar already spent? I am talking about still doing what we are doing now but doing it faster, cheaper and with fewer errors. In Six Sigma terminology, this is called “increasing customer satisfaction and reducing cycle time.”

The systematic approach of Six Sigma can be applied to improve the existing business process (e.g., underwriting/issue, customer

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Six Sigma, Black Belts and Actuaries • continued from prior page —————

service and administration), increase efficiency and reduce errors to minimum. There is a lot of room for improvement in the existing process. Besides having a product committee developing and managing those excellent new products and spending the money, how about adding a process improvement committee? For every dollar spent, make it well spent; for every customer, keep and make him/her a satisfied customer!

Actuaries can be good Black Belts!

I think actuaries are well suited for the roles of Black Belts. By default, we have excellent statistical/quantitative and problem-solving skills, which is an essential requirement of the Six Sigma process.

A Black Belt must be technically competent, bottom-line driven, customer-focused, a good project manager and be able to train and develop people. Above all, he/she must take ownership of the projects. Does it sound like a GOOD actuary at work? If your company has adopted Six Sigma, try to become a Black Belt. It will be an invaluable career booster. If your company has not implemented the Six Sigma, try to adopt the Six Sigma Black Belt work attitude and method for yourself; you will find you are investing for a bright future.

I am very interested in hearing from people involved in Six Sigma projects in the insurance industry, to see how Six Sigma works in the insurance companies and the roles of actuaries in the Six Sigma projects. □

A Black Belt must be technically competent, bottom-line driven, customer-focused, a good project manager and be able to train and develop people.

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cases, it is not always so. An example is given that Sir Edmund Hillary was the first to climb Mt. Everest, yet the leader of that expedition was John Hunt.

The Position Myth: This myth is the belief that those in leadership positions are leaders. Many counter examples are given, along with the reasons why some people without leadership positions are actually leaders and those with leadership positions are not necessarily leaders.

In general, the second law gives a lot of food for thought and explains why certain people are perceived as leaders while others are not.

The last law I will discuss is the "Law of Navigation." This law expands on the management myth mentioned before. The important point discussed in this chapter is that anyone can steer a ship, but it takes a leader to chart the course. Maxwell brings the point home with a comparison of the two teams who were trying to be first to reach the South Pole. The leader of the first team carefully chartered his course, studied the ways of experienced travelers in these regions, recruited the best people and set up supply points to ensure a successful trip. The leader

of the second team did not plan anything and decided to use all the wrong resources for this trip. The result? The first team reached the South Pole and came back safely, while everyone on the second team endured a difficult trip and all died as a result of trying to return from the South Pole. I liked this chapter in that the examples given were good reading and the idea that planning pays off.

If you have any interest in becoming a leader, I recommend Maxwell's book. It provided important insight into the qualities of leaders. A lot of it came across as common sense, but it's only common sense that comes from experience. □

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Networking Naturally

by Robert M. Musen

We have all read the articles and books suggesting how to work your network if you have been displaced or are looking for another job. But, that assumes that you have built a network. The fact is that we all have in front of us the elements of a network: acquaintances and/or colleagues and a track record. We just need to put them together.

The key is to work your network naturally, everyday on your job, when you don't need it. I will provide four examples.

Former Colleagues

In today's employment environment, there is considerable turnover, so we all know someone who has announced plans to leave our current employer. I suggest that whenever someone makes their intentions known, you ask that person for their new contact information; offer to help them wrap up affairs before leaving and to act as a liaison if there is something that they need after they have left. This is also true for employees who have been displaced. If you feel comfortable, offer to write them a general letter of introduction as they seek new employment and suggest that they contact you periodically to see if you have heard of any opportunities.

You can never have too many contacts at other employers. And, sad as it sounds, former colleagues in new jobs can be more valuable to your career than those colleagues still working for the same employer as you.

Industry Contacts

Serving on industry committees is an excellent way to expand your network. This is a chance to meet people in similar jobs to you at different employers as well as those with similar credentials performing very different functions. Industry committees attract insurance and reinsurance actuaries, regulators, industry association actuaries, consultants and actuaries in private practice. Contacting fellow committee members, to discuss common issues confronting you, provides an opportunity for each of you to get to know the other better. Follow their careers as they move on and keep your contact list current.

Consultants

Those who work at insurance companies have almost certainly had the opportunity to engage or work with consultants (either consulting actuaries or management consultants), and vice versa. Developing a rapport with a consultant or the client is another good way to expand your network.

Unique Opportunities

During the course of your career, you may be asked to testify as an expert witness, or you may be deposed in an arbitration. You might be recruiting talent at a college or university. You might volunteer to teach a course or to lecture at a local college. Each of these opportunities provides you with a chance to extend your network. Get to know the lawyer at the arbitration and correspond with him or her occasionally. Likewise, stay in contact with the career counselor or professor at the local col-



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Flexible Work Arrangements

by Anonymous

For an analysis and communications course in my first year of business school, I wrote a paper on flexible work arrangements. In it, I argued that:

“Because of the broad organizational and cultural implications of flexibility, the greatest gains in retention and productivity will be realized by corporations that also rewrite job descriptions, rethink career paths, promote positive institutional and individual attitudes towards balancing work and family demands and provide open eligibility for flexible arrangements.”

For a career development course in my second year of business school, I assessed my strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes and past work history and discovered a profession that made more sense for me—the actuarial profession. I also wrote a description of what I wanted in an employer. Part of the description was:

“The company should allow me to work part time, take time off or create a flexible schedule. As much as I desire a professional career with the opportunity to take on responsibility and respond to challenges, my family will always come first.”

After I graduated, I went to work for an insurance company, began taking exams and in an effort to make it through the exams quickly and to make up for my somewhat advanced age compared to my entry-level peers, I forgot about work-family policies and balance.

That was nearly 11 years ago. Today, work-family balance is much more on my mind.

For one thing, I am pleased that some of the points I made in my flexible work arrangements paper have come to pass in my corner of corporate America. When I began working part-time five years ago, it was an arrange-

ment between myself and my manager; there was no official company policy other than flex-time (the ability to change starting and ending times) and the need to work 20 hours per week to earn benefits. I knew of perhaps one or two other female actuaries who worked part-time. Today, the company has a full-fledged flexible work arrangement’s policy which is prominently advertised on our intranet, and managers are required to track the number and nature of such arrangements—the better to document the company’s family-friendliness. I know many female actuaries with flexible arrangements, including part-time work and telecommuting. I have maintained my own reduced schedule despite having changed managers twice. Very recently, I heard management describe (1) the hiring of a part-time manager as a perfect antidote for getting work done in an expense-reduction environment and (2) part-timers as the most productive workers. These developments at my company have been extremely helpful and satisfying to me personally, and I applaud them wholeheartedly.

However, what I never thought about in business school was whether having a flexible work arrangement actually equates to a fulfilling work-family balance. With my part-time work, I find it to be a half-empty, half-full conundrum.

Half-Empty:

The “half-empty” view is shaped by the circumstances surrounding my decision to work part-time. It was not the scenario that I had envi-

For one thing, I am pleased that some of the points I made in my flexible work arrangements paper have come to pass in my corner of corporate America.



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Hit a Home Run in Every Interview

By John West Hadley

This article is part one of a three-part series. This first part gives practical tips for hitting a home run in interviews, whether you are seeking a promotion, a new position at your current employer, or a new job. Part two will discuss critical issues to consider when starting a new job. Part three will focus on navigating the roadblocks to achieving your career potential.

Interviews are critical to career success, whether you are looking for a new job at a new company, or simply seeking a promotion at your current employer. In fact, the internal interview can sometimes be the trickiest, because we are lulled into a false sense of security by the fact that it's "among family," when in fact, a poor performance in that situation can reduce your long term career potential with your employer.

Many people feel that an interview is a minefield, where one must take careful steps to avoid the pitfalls that could sabotage their chances of getting a job offer. This is the wrong attitude, one of desperation that often sabotages you all by itself. It is important to come into an interview with an air of confidence, which comes from proper preparation.

The first step in a successful interview comes long before the actual meeting, perhaps even before you are thinking of making a change. This step is to develop compelling accomplishment stories that sell your achievements. The key to a compelling story is twofold: challenges and results. You need to tell what challenge you were faced with, how you overcame it and what you managed to accomplish to reach your goal. And you need to show the result you achieved for your employer. This is where many job seekers fall down. They talk about how they developed a new VUL product, or reported the financial results or designed the illustration system. While this may be important, it's not what interests the hiring manager. What an employer WANTS to know is whether you can produce results: that you developed a VUL product that increased revenues, or reported results in a way that enabled more effective decision-making or de-

signed an illustration system that saved the cost of purchasing and installing an expensive vendor system. And perhaps just as important, communicating results demonstrates that you understand the broader implications of your work. I teach my clients a template for developing these stories that I call TO CARE, because the goal of the story is to get the hiring manager to care about your achievements.

Even if you don't plan to look for a new position any time soon, you should get in the habit of preparing accomplishment stories for every significant project you work on. It's much easier to write a compelling story shortly after the fact than to try to remember and reconstruct it months or years later. They can also help you make a great impression at a company cocktail party, when a senior officer asks what you've been working on lately.

Now that you have your compelling accomplishment stories in hand, boil the key ones down into one or two line bullets for your resume. After all, you need to have a resume that is a strong sales brochure to back you up. Often, it's that resume that will make the difference in getting you the interview. And it's the leave-behind that reminds the hiring manager after the interview of what set you apart from the other candidates. Many times people forget about putting the attention to a high quality resume for an internal interview. This is a critical mistake. If you really want the best shot at that internal promotion, you should prepare a professional resume for that situation as if you were seeking a job with a different employer. And since so many neglect to do so, this can set you head and shoulders above the internal competition.

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Hit a Home Run with Every Interview • continued from prior page

Next, you need to research the opening. Read the company's annual report to get familiar with its market and the issues it is facing. Use your networking contacts to try to find out everything you can about the company and its culture, the position, the department and issues facing that particular area of the market. Get any materials you can from the employer or recruiter in advance of the interview, particularly a job description and organizational chart. Review the job description carefully to see what specific skills, qualities and areas of experience they are most interested in. Then, think about which of your accomplishment stories will best illustrate them. Make a mental checklist so that you can be sure to find ways to weave all of the key stories into the interview.

Now, for the interview itself. The opening salvo should always be your 2 minute pitch, your strong answer to the standard initial request "Tell me about yourself." You should have practiced a good answer to that until it practically rolls off your tongue in any interview situation. This should be a quick summary of the skills, qualities and experiences you bring to the table, and the highlights of your job history. It should never be more than two minutes long, just enough to get across the highlights without boring your interviewer. And if your interviewer doesn't happen to ask right away, ask it yourself. Say something like, "Would it be helpful for me to tell you a little bit about my background?"

Many candidates make the mistake of treating the interview like a Q&A session. The interviewer asks a question, they answer it and repeat. This goes on until some point near the end of the allotted time, when the interviewer asks if the candidate has any questions. The candidate then mentally pulls out his or her carefully prepared list of insightful questions, and now the Q&A reverses directions. This is a very uninspired interview process that rarely impresses the hiring manager.

What you want to do is to turn the interview into a conversation. While you don't want to monopolize that conversation, you do want to ask questions every so often to convert the interview into a comfortable give and take. This

will develop rapport with the hiring manager, and will give you a much more complete picture of the company, position, relationships and priorities. A powerful way to do this is by occasionally giving a short answer, followed by a question to solicit guidance about what is most important to the interviewer. For example, the interviewer asks you "What is your greatest strength?" You respond, "I consider myself particularly adept at project management, building an effective team and mentoring my employees to enable them to perform at their best. Which would you like me to talk about first?" The response helps you understand better which is the most important hot button for the hiring manager. You can even do this right after your two minute pitch, ending it with a question like, "Is there a particular area you would like me to go into in more depth?"

Finally, don't forget the all-important thank you. Even if you meet six different people during the interview process, make sure to write individual notes to each of them, ideally within twenty-four hours after your visit. This is a simple professional courtesy, and since many candidates don't bother, it again differentiates you from the competition. The "thank you" is also an excellent chance to reiterate specifically what you bring to the table, or to bring up a talent you forgot to mention or highlight in the interview what occurs to you which might be important to that employer.

If you follow all of these steps, you will have a successful interview every time, and get more than your share of the job offers!

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Use your networking contacts to try to find out everything you can about the company and its culture, the position, the department and issues facing that particular area of the market.



Got Time?

by David C. Miller

No time to get to the important things in your business or your life? We live in a world where everyone is trying to do more in less time. Look at the progress we've made in the past 100 years: We now have things like dishwashers, automobiles, air travel, personal computers, the internet, cell phones and PDAs. With all these modern conveniences, you would think we would all have a lot more time for things that are important to us.

But instead, it is more typical to feel like you're always behind, like there aren't enough hours in the day. This is a big frustration of business professionals: a life of too much stress and too little time—even our recreation time has to be scheduled!

In an effort to solve this problem, you may have tried various time management systems. In working with many clients on how to better manage their time and their lives, I find that people often get overwhelmed with the tools and mechanics of these systems. It can feel more like work to use these tools than to just go and do it.

What occurs to me is that the system you choose is not nearly as important as the governing principles you apply to your time management tool of choice.

Here are four key principles to help you master the time in your life:

Choice

Time management is more about **managing priorities** than managing time. We may often say we don't have enough time, when the truth is, we all have the same amount of time—24 hours each day. So what's the answer? I believe part of the answer lies in letting go of the fantasy that we can do everything at once and **make choices about what we do with the time we have**. To do this you want to get in touch with those areas of your business and life that are most important to you.

I have several professional categories (e.g., servicing clients, business development, enhancing skills, administration, etc.) and personal categories (e.g., family, friends, spiritual, financial, emotional, physical, etc.) that I want to constantly improve. I have specific goals defined in each of these areas. At the beginning of each week, I ask myself, "What are the two or three outcomes I want to attain in my business this week?" Then I make a decision and schedule those things. I ask a similar question about my personal goals.

Notice I don't concentrate on all my categories at once (although I do review all my categories each week to make sure nothing gets neglected). I know if I can make massive progress in four to six areas of my life this week, it's been a great week. I've found that this gives me better results than trying to do everything at once, which usually leads to overwhelm and frustration.

Clarity

Get clear and specific on the **what, why and how** of each outcome. First, get clear on your *destination*. What specific result do you want to have? How will you know when you have achieved it? This will give you direction and focus. Next, get clear on the *reasons* you must achieve this outcome. Why must you absolutely get this result? What will achieving it do for you? What will not achieving it cost you? This will give you the motivation to follow through. Finally get clear on *how* you are going to get it done. What specific action steps do you need to take to get your result? How many hours do you estimate it will take to complete each task? This will give you a road map to your destination.

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Got Time? • continued from prior page

Control

This is for all those people who like to “do it all themselves.” Since our time is so precious, it pays to look for ways to **leverage** activities. This means **having someone else perform part or all of the task**. This works especially well with repetitive activities which are time-consuming and don’t necessarily require your expertise. If you have an expert you can leverage tasks to, all the better. You also want to leverage the tasks you don’t do as well (yes, there may be one or two things) to someone who can do them better and faster.

“Leveraging” does not mean you give the task away and forget about it. You want to still make sure it gets done and gets done right. Leveraging also allows you to spend more time on the things you are best at that will profit your business the most. Finally, leveraging will only work if you give up your need for full *control* and opt for *managing* the task instead.

Commitment

Finally, you want to commit to your weekly plan. Commitment embodies the following:

- **Scheduling specific times** when you will work on various projects throughout the week (in essence, making an appointment with yourself to spend time on a certain task)
- **Resisting the temptation** to be distracted and react to the “urgent, but not important” and
- **Maintaining laser focus** on achieving these outcomes by keeping them in front of you daily (or even hourly) and reviewing your reasons regularly for motivation, as needed.

No matter what time management system you use, if you apply these four principles consistently week after week, the months and years will take care of themselves. □

Leveraging also allows you to spend more time on the things you are best at that will profit your business the most.

Networking naturally • continued from page 8

lege. They hear about others who are doing jobs like yours, and who knows, some day you may want to do a job like theirs.

Do it now, not later

Expanding your network as discussed above can produce 100+ contacts in just a year or two. It’s a lot easier to exchange contact information and ask about what’s going on in the job market when you’re not seeking employment. People tend to be more open when they know that you have a job. What is a simple exchange of information when both parties are employed becomes more like a favor when you are out of work and ask about the market.

Building a network takes vigilance. You need to continually update your contact list, and you need to maintain periodic contact with everyone on the list. Otherwise, they become names on a page, not branches of a network.

“The key is to work your network naturally, everyday on your job, when you don’t need it.” □



Tension

by Michael Landrum

Editor's Note: Reprinted from The Passionate Speaker with permission.

*"Do the thing you fear and
the death of fear is certain."*

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

Public speaking is often listed as a top fear for people. We are all made anxious and vulnerable by speaking to a large group, and we become extremely tense. In almost any human endeavor, tension interferes with effectiveness. We can clearly see athletes working to dispel their tensions at the free-throw line, before stepping into the batter's box, preparing to receive a tennis serve. They take large gulps of air and sigh them out, stretch their necks, shoulders backs and legs, fiddle with their hands, their equipment, their clothing. They take practice swings and visualize the perfect performance. Actors, dancers and musicians have similar rituals backstage before entering for a performance. Even painters, sculptors and writers must find similar ways to deal with the anxiety that precedes the beginning of work. The blank page, canvas or block of stone, can provoke a paralyzing tension.

This is not to say that tension serves no purpose. A person devoid of tension would be dead. Tension, as we are describing here, is an excess of energy to the point that energy must be expended to restrain energy. The ideal state is to find a balance between relaxation and tension that permits a fluid mobility. In most activities, once the move begins, the tension is released and directed. In peak performances a smooth flow develops that the performer often describes as feeling effortless. An opera singer in this state, might describe herself as feeling like a hollow tube through which the music surges, unimpeded. Athletes call it "being in the zone."

For speakers, the major problem with tension comes at the beginning. Nine-tenths of the

speakers who "crash and burn" are in trouble in the opening seconds of their talk. Here are some techniques to get you past those treacherous moments and start you flowing toward a peak performance. These steps assume that you have researched your audience, practiced thoroughly and set up the room with whatever you require to present your talk.

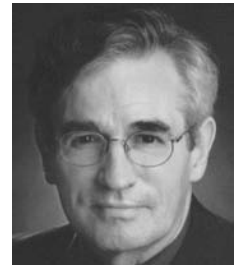
1) **Memorize the first and last couple of sentences.** No, I don't advocate memorizing the whole speech, but setting the opening and closing is a tremendous relief. Especially since these words should carry the point and purpose of the whole talk.

2) **Take time for a "pre-game warmup."** When dressing for the event, take ten minutes for a stretch, some physical and vocal exercises and a deep-breathing relaxation period. At the end of the warmup, you'll be more relaxed physically, vocally and mentally; you'll feel vigorous, alert and in the moment. As you leave, remember to "XYZ" (eXamine Your Zipper).

3) **Engage with people before your turn to speak.** Conversation and banter, where it's appropriate, can be wonderfully relaxing. Take advantage of every opportunity to laugh—laughter exists to relieve tension.

4) **Yawn.** Just before you're introduced, find a discreet way to cover a wide yawn. This is an excellent tension reliever, loosens the facial and vocal muscles and brings in a good deep breath.

5) **As you step to the lectern, stand tall, breathe deeply, smile and pause.** Take a moment to exhale your tension as you look at your audience, find someone to speak to and give them your first sentence. □



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Something To Ponder

"Why should I fear death? If I am, death is not. If death is, I am not. Why should I fear that which cannot exist when I do?"

—Epicurus, philosopher
(c.341-270 BCE)

Flexible Work Arrangements • continued from page 9

sioned in business school. Instead, my older son had been diagnosed as autistic, and I had to be there for him—to shepherd/coax/coerce him through the thousands of hours of therapy and other activities that were and still are required for him to improve his skills and ultimately, his potential for independence. The diagnosis occurred before I had finished my exams, and after making one last (unsuccessful) attempt to get within striking distance of Fellowship, I have not taken an exam since, due to lack of time, energy and I'll admit, self-confidence. Thus, the loss of professional development and income has been considerable. On a daily basis, with my roughly 25-hour workweek, I still miss meetings, calls and lunches with colleagues and have generally not been eligible for positions or projects with greater responsibility.

There are drawbacks on the home front as well. As is often the case with a child with a serious disability, there are no appropriate schools in my area, so my son attends a special education school that is out-of-state. To see him in school, do an in-person parent-teacher conference or have a playdate with a school friend, I have to take a vacation day and rent a car. Thus, these things do not happen very often, and I yearn for the community that comes from daily contact with teachers, other parents and other children.

The “half-empty” view often leads me to believe that it would have been better to pick either full-time work or full-time stay-at-home motherhood rather than attempt a balance that makes me feel as if I am underachieving in both areas.

Half-Full:

In the “half-full” view, the rewards are substantial. I still have the satisfaction of contributing and working as a professional with many bright, impressive people. I still contribute to my family's financial well-being. I am there for my sons' after-school activities

and am on top of the progress of both. I have lost count of the number of people who have told me how lucky I am to have such a great schedule.

Most of all, I have the satisfaction of knowing that I made and still make an enormous difference—that despite strong indications to the contrary when he was first diagnosed, my older son can talk, drink from a cup, dress himself, write, read, ride a bus without a tantrum and maybe, just maybe, become an independent adult one day—because of my choice to be mother-teacher-therapist and part-time actuary.

The “half-full” view also focuses on work-family balance as an achievement made over time, not necessarily required at some or all points in one's working life. So, on “half-full” days, I hold on to the possibility that at some point in the future, I can turn my attention more fully to my career.

To me, work-family balance is a complicated issue that raises difficult choices and consequences for those individuals who choose to grapple with it. In my case, I don't know whether “half-empty” or “half-full” is the more accurate assessment, but I do know that the opportunity to choose a “half-empty,” “half-full” situation has been priceless. To all those who made my choice possible, thank you. □

To me, work-family balance is a complicated issue that raises difficult choices and consequences for those individuals who choose to grapple with it.

In a World of Words, the Eyes Have It

by James Gray

The chief executive officer was making an impassioned point at the company's annual meeting. As he was concluding his thought, he became concerned with the next part of his presentation, so he looked down at his notes and away from the audience. Things got worse from there.

The CEO's voice, strong and certain in the early part of his statement, softened and tailed off as he lost the critical visual relationship with the crowd. Listeners grew confused—here was an important theme, everyone knew that, so why wasn't the organization's leader driving it home with eye contact?

"Why," the members of the audience were mentally asking the CEO, "aren't you looking at us?"

That's the power of eye contact—and the lack of it. An enormous and often underemphasized part of communication, it binds teachers with students, parents with children and strangers with each other. With eye contact, we feel connected. Without it, we feel disconcerted.

If we're conversing and you're speaking to me but not looking at me, I won't believe you. I can't believe you. If we're talking and you look over my shoulder to spot somebody more powerful (which is just about everyone) or more interesting (which is everyone), I'll be offended, perhaps not forever, but I'll certainly remember your rudeness for as long.

To communicate convincingly, you need to master the curriculum of eye contact.

Big-ticket U.S. speakers who make the equivalent of a middle manager's annual salary with a single address, headliners such as former president Bill Clinton, utilize visual connectivity like a marvelously tuned instrument. They know that without it, even the best oratory will go flat.

We can learn from the pros. We can learn how to direct and calibrate eye contact to engage our audiences and bring our message to life. Here's how:

Use it early. The first minute of a speech is crucial. Lose the crowd during the opening sixty seconds and you may as well screen an episode of *Will & Grace* the rest of the way. The best speakers will often have the first minute or so of their presentation nailed to memory so they can focus on establishing a strong visual rapport with the audience. They know that once it's been established, they can look down at their script or notes more often, and the crowd won't resent it. My advice to clients who need to deliver a speech on short notice and simply don't have the time to learn it as well as they'd like is (1) know the first and last minute of your material cold so you'll be able to "bookend" your presentation with terrific eye contact, (2) start and end with impact.

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To communicate convincingly, you need to master the curriculum of eye contact.

In a World of Words, the Eyes Have It • continued from prior page

Make it personal. Experienced speakers cut a large audience down to a psychologically manageable size by selecting three or four friendly, supportive faces in different parts of the room, and making visual contact with them. Speak to those people as if they're friends—individuals you like and respect. By addressing a few, you'll reach the many. In smaller groups, always ensure that one of your "friends" is the most senior person present, the ultimate decision-maker.

Make every line credible. Regardless of how well you know your stuff, you need to end each sentence with eye contact. It's your ongoing link with the audience. While it's acceptable, indeed natural to occasionally look down or away in the middle of a line, if you do it at the end (like our CEO at the annual meeting), people won't buy what you're selling. While accomplished speakers can begin a sentence without eye contact, sometimes dramatically, for others it's advisable to begin each line with it. If you don't, you run the risk of disorienting your listeners.

Be careful with PowerPoint. The ubiquitous technology almost encourages presenters to read their slides at the expense of eye contact. Don't let that happen to you. Be among those rare speakers who employ PowerPoint to enhance their presentation, not become the presentation. Once you've confirmed that the proper slide is displayed, face the audience and begin speaking. While it's certainly acceptable to turn and refer briefly to the slide during your explanation or interpretation, if you're talking to a slide rather than the crowd at the start or end of a transition, you'll undercut the strength of your narrative.

Take a break. While great eye contact is essential for a great presentation, speakers who maintain unbroken eye contact with the audience can be downright creepy. Real people involved in authentic human discourse occasionally look away from those they're addressing. It's absolutely fine. However, when you do look away, look down, which appears thoughtful, not up, which seems disingenuous.

Your best lines need it. In any speech or presentation you'll have key content that needs to be conveyed with special emphasis: your theme, a quote, an important statistic, the punch line of a joke, your call to action. To make the lines all they can be, you have to put enough "space" around them in the form of a slower delivery, or even a pause, so the audience will know something special is coming. Then you have to calibrate the volume of your voice and the inflection of your words to hammer the points home.

Having done all that, if you haven't infused your language with the authority of eye contact, you've done nothing. You see, the eyes have it. □



To Be A Consultant

by Jeffrey M. Robinson

With all the consolidation and downsizing taking place in the insurance industry, many actuaries suddenly find that the notion of a being employed by a life insurance company for their entire career is no longer a given option. These actuaries then often consider a consulting career as either a temporary alternative to being unemployed or as something that sounds exciting, rewarding and provides an opportunity to be either self-employed or work for a smaller organization that does not have the same bureaucratic constraints as working for a large insurance company.

However, there are a particular set of skills and personality traits that are required to be a successful consultant. These skill sets are not necessarily the same as those required of an insurance company actuary and often are quite a bit different.

Desire

To succeed as a consulting actuary, particularly in a small firm, requires first and foremost the desire to be your own person, set your own rules, retain the fruits of your labor and to do different things in different settings for different people.

Courage

Courage is extremely important in order to withstand the tumultuous ebbs and flows in activity and cash flow that is endemic in consulting. It is truly almost always a case of "feast or famine." You need courage to ask for and get the work, to do it, to explain it, to stand-up for it when it is questioned, to bill for it, then request payment again when it is not immediately forthcoming and to wait for the next assignment. All of these components of consulting are tinged with a good deal of trepidation and require a certain amount of internal fortitude.

What is it about consulting that brings about this trepidation and how is it different than any other type of actuarial employment? Most assignments are new—are being done for new people in new settings with new requirements. There is very little "old hat" in consulting because staid, standard, repetitive type jobs can generally be done by the in-house staff. Companies want to give consultants the latest, dirtiest, most intensive and politically charged projects. Their own staffs are usually too bogged down with day-to-day activities and bureaucracy to have the time, energy and ability to concentrate on the really tough new jobs that require extensive research and focused action. Therefore, even though you may have proven yourself to old clients, most often you are now on a different playing field with new teammates and facing unfamiliar antagonists.

Billing is an Art and a Science

There is also the all-important question of getting paid. Billing is an art and a science and a major requirement to be able to succeed as a consultant. You never really know how your work product will be valued and therefore how readily it will be compensated. I have never met an assignment that was as it was originally projected. If all of the assignment's nuances were known up-front, it would probably not be a consulting assignment. Therefore these assignments are fraught with the risk of being much more extensive than originally considered and therefore under-quoted.

"Oh how sweet it is!"

Getting a new client to realize this at the beginning of the job is never easy. It seems to be even harder at the end, when it comes time to bill. "You spent HOW MANY hours to do this "SIMPLE" task?" is a typical question when you deliver the bill. Projects always seem simple to the client at their beginning and end. They seem



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to always forget the requirements and specifications added after the estimates and quotes have been submitted and the hassles involved in the heart of doing the job. There are ways to minimize this reaction and that is where the art and science of consulting come into play, but it takes many hard lessons. Bottom line—you are always a bit nervous until the check for the billed amount is received in a reasonable time frame. But then, “Oh how sweet it is!” For a consultant, the check in hand is their review and report card all in one.

Optimism is a Relative of Courage

Optimism is a relative of courage. You need to always feel that new work will come. The question most consultants ask is “from where will that new work come?” My wife asks me that question almost daily, even when I am up to my eyeballs in an assignment. The answer to that question is not always obvious. However, you have to have the optimism that new business will come. From where? It comes from various sources, such as old clients and their recommendations, from an extensive network that has to be created and from newly seized opportunities.

Innovation and Flexibility

Innovation and flexibility are requirements necessary to obtain work. The industry does not stand still and neither can a consultant. You have to continually reinvent yourself in order to capture the latest opportunities. Some of the best of these arise out of new laws and regulations from state insurance departments, the IRS or even the federal government. New types of products, new mortality or morbidity tables also serve as fertile sources of additional work. New industry challenges are ripe for exploiting since often they require what consultants can do best—focus, research, analyze, and use their extensive contacts and other client experiences.

The key is to pick those new areas that are most related to your existing experience, proven unique abilities and those where there is either not going to be significant competition or where there may be niche opportunities. For example,

the bigger consulting firms are more likely to get the choice 2001 CSO product development work. But since the format of the new table is quite different from those of previous tables, I plan to utilize my broad system development and testing experience to help companies implement the new table and products.

Become an “Expert”

Once a new area of interest is chosen, you have to spend the time, effort and sometimes money to become an “expert” in that area. The problem with this is that it is not immediately billable and consumes time, the major resource of a consultant. However, if the effort is not expended, the chance of getting future work and billings is limited. Often the new area is not the one that necessarily results in significant new billing, but what it reaps is new contacts and clients, and once in the door, it is easier to more readily market your old services and experience.

An example of this is that when the 1984 Tax Act came out, I studied it very intently and went to every seminar given on the subject. An actuarial software vendor that I was close to (I had also attended one of their seminars on the subject) was wooing a client in my geographical area (that I previously did not even know existed) to use their new tax valuation software. Although the client wanted to use their new system, the vendor recognized that this client was going to be difficult to handle from a distance and the client lacked the internal resources to do the job without a considerable amount of handholding.

So, they suggested that I offer them my services and I got the assignment to utilize the software for them and do their new tax valuation. This turned out to be a very rewarding assignment, but more importantly, I recognized that they also had a desperate need for help on the conversion of an administration system that they

You need to always feel that new work will come. The question most consultants ask is “from where will that new work come?”



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were attempting to install and that I was very familiar with, so I got that assignment as well. They also needed statutory valuation help, etc., etc. The tax valuation work turned into four years of other extensive consulting for this client and a sister company until they were ultimately sold. The challenge of the new tax law got me in and the additional assignments flowed from it. You need something to talk about to get a new client's attention.

Another example is when I approached a prospective client to look at a new administration system. It turned out they did not need one, but they did need help in developing a product and I got that assignment.

Good Judgment

There are several dangers in seizing opportunities other than what you are originally brought in to do. One is not getting the original job completed on time. Another is the phenomenon of what can be called the consultant's natural billing curve. Often, there is so much that you can do for a client and they are so eager to have these tasks done, that the billing starts to climb in proportion with all the work that is being performed. Sooner or later the bills get to be so high, that someone notices and begins to ask why this work cannot be done in-house instead of by a consultant. There is no easy way to answer that question without revealing internal staffing problems. It is at this point that the apogee of the billing curve is reached and begins to go downwards with the ultimate result of reaching zero or close, i.e., no more current work. The lesson to be learned is to focus on the original project, complete it in a timely manner and try not to be greedy, even when additional work is essentially being foisted upon you. The latter does conflict with another concept—to take all the work you can when you can get it, because it is not always there to get. Good judgment is necessary to arbitrate between these conflicts.

Confidence

Confidence is another important trait. You get a new assignment which is the good news. But getting a new assignment is also the bad news,

because now you have to do it and within the time frame promised and estimate/quote given. Often, these are assignments that you have never done before in areas without precedent or established procedures. Confidence is critical at this point. Confidence that you can get the job done, whatever it takes to do it and confidence that all of your previous experience will provide the clues as to how to start and how to proceed even in these uncharted waters.

Getting Started

A very helpful step in getting started is to determine what information and data you need and to ascertain their source. These will change as you proceed and learn more, but you have to start somewhere. Gather all the information about the project that you can, inventory it, paying particular attention and noting from whom and when you received it as this will also help in the documentation phase of the job, but possibly more important is that it may fend off challenges to your recitation and use of the information as well clarify conflicting data caused by changes in it over time. If you are resourceful, you will probably get more material than is needed and then it is necessary to organize it in such a way that you can readily go back and study it in detail when you have the time and the capacity to absorb and analyze it. The inventory provides a means of keeping track of the material and organizing it so that it is readily accessible and is there to be considered in the future.

Once you begin reviewing the information, the next immediate steps generally will become obvious as to what else is needed, what has to be analyzed, who can you go to for additional insight and hopefully you may even be able to draw some of the preliminary conclusions. The objective is to have a track to begin and run on, one that has worked for you in the past. The confidence comes from knowing that there is a method and that it will work in almost any project. Of course, where that track goes is another story. Planning and frequent communication with the client helps keep you going in the direction necessary to finish in a manner satis-

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factory to the client, but satisfactory does not necessarily mean reaching the client's preordained conclusions. It means reaching an agreed-upon closure to the assignment that is satisfactory to the client. In this regard, communication is the key.

Communication

This leads to another extremely important consulting skill, the ability to communicate in person (orally) and in writing. Communication in this context also means the ability to listen. In order to obtain an assignment and market you have to be able to communicate that you have the knowledge, intelligence, experience and confidence to do the job and that you can do it in an efficient, cost effective and timely manner.

Ability to Determine/Interpret the Client's True Needs

You also need the ability to determine/interpret the client's true needs, because often they cannot readily communicate those. This requires the ability to listen, question and restate. It is helpful to be good at asking questions and to be able to probe deeply and it is crucial that you fully understand what the client's objectives are, what is actually needed, the resources available, the desired time frames, the acceptable budget/costs and the points of closure. It is very dangerous to assume any of these things, so therefore there is a need to always clarify, restate and continually validate. This will lead to a persuasive quote and hopefully an eventual engagement letter. Without these items the chances of completing the assignment effectively and getting properly compensated for it are greatly diminished. It usually takes tact, confidence, good communication and being aggressive enough to obtain these critical answers.

Continually Communicate With the Client

It is also essential to continually communicate with the client as to the status of your work in terms of progress and billing. You cannot wait until the client asks you for these, because it is then usually too late. It is helpful if mutually agreed-upon checkpoints are set up in the beginning of the project and then faithfully observed.

It is not wise to submit a sizeable bill to a client without their anticipating that it is coming and also understanding and agreeing upon what services were rendered in connection with it. The definition of sizeable is often in the eyes of the person receiving the bill. This is not always as easy to do as it sounds, particularly in the early stages of a project, when you have accrued a good deal of billing time doing initial research but have not yet reached any firm conclusions or developed tangible progress. Fortitude and honesty are needed and usually suffice.

Communicate with all the Staff

Additionally, you also have to be able to communicate with all the staff that are involved with the intermediate steps of the project and who often do not necessarily share the client's or your priorities. Tact and persuasiveness combined with a great deal of perseverance are frequently necessary to get what you want and desperately need.

Good Documentation and Work papers

Good documentation and work papers and a clear explanation as to what you did, as well as how and why you reached your conclusions are the true hallmarks of a really professional consultant and are also required by standards of practice. This will help get your bill paid quickly and more importantly leave a permanent record of your efforts, decisions and conclusions. Future managements removed from the original reasons for and rationale of the assignment may then better assess why it was done and how you arrived at your results. It is a given that new management and new consultants will second guess the cost and results of a previous consulting project. Without adequate, comprehensive documentation it is often difficult to defend what has

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You also need the ability to determine/interpret the client's true needs, because often they cannot readily communicate those.



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been done. The old management that requested it will either be gone, unable to explain it or unwilling to defend it. Even when you cannot get properly compensated for the documentation, make every effort to do it, distribute it and keep a record of it for yourself. This will always eventually pay off. Additionally, it will help in the next similar assignment and to establish yourself as an expert on the subject.

Compassion, Empathy, Understanding and Patience

For small clients and those with limited insurance expertise, such as fraternalists, traits in a consultant such as compassion, empathy, understanding and patience go a long way to cement good relationships. These types of clients usually require a great deal of handholding, induce much frustration, and often their limited financial resources dictate reduced billing rates or retainers. However, in return, they offer loyalty, repetitive assignments, and a perspective of the entire insurance company operation from beginning to end as well as a good measure of satisfaction when they succeed under difficult circumstances due to your efforts. These traits are also necessary when dealing with departments of larger companies that have the same limitations. Helping younger and less experienced client staff and developing good relationships with them often produces significant dividends when these people attain higher management levels.

Professional Quality Work

There is no more important requirement for a consultant than to do professional quality work under any and all circumstances. Having a good name means almost everything in getting future recommendations. You never know who will be in a position to put in a good word for you, so you have to assume it might be anybody: client, reinsurer, regulator, software vendor and even competitors. Deal with them all at the same high level of professionalism; not to do so chances significant risk of gaining a deserved or an undeserved bad reputation.

Honesty and Straightforwardness in Billing

Part and parcel of doing a good job is honesty and straightforwardness in billing. The first invoice that you submit is usually the most important for it is here that you lay the foundation for client trust. Once that is achieved, then subsequent invoices are usually accepted much more readily. It is critical to establish in advance of submission the format and level of detail needed on an invoice and expense report as each client has their own requirements. Part of the art of billing is in knowing just the amount of detail to provide. This also means understanding when you begin a project what details to keep and how to track your time by project categories. Clients want to get a good sense of what they are paying for and whether it is what they authorized.

Ethics and Integrity

It should go without saying that high ethics and integrity are necessary. Sometimes it becomes difficult to understand whom you really serve in a consulting assignment, the current client management, the board of directors, the company, the insureds or the regulators. In reality it may be all of these. Therefore, it is incumbent upon you to recognize your full responsibilities and to consider the possible ramifications of your findings and conclusions. Current client management often changes, so your conclusions have to be appropriate to the constant realities and make sense to whoever is ultimately reviewing them.

More than Just Hanging out Your Shingle

To be a consultant requires a great deal more than just hanging out your shingle, printing business cards and stationary and proclaiming that you are one. □

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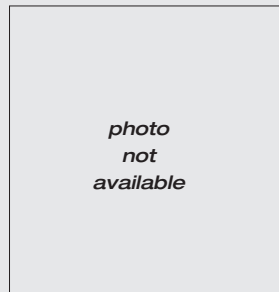
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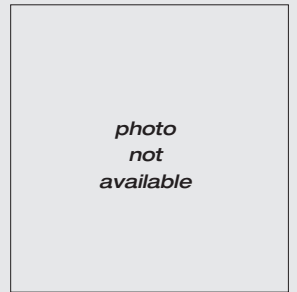
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