



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

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The "It" Actuary

by Jennifer L. Gillespie

As one of our key areas of focus this year, the Management and Personal Development Section Council has been working with the staff of the Society of Actuaries on the image campaign. As was mentioned in the "Turn Risk Into Opportunity" video, we each own a little piece of the image. To some circle of people, whether within my department, my division or my company, I = ACTUARY. Within these circles it is realistic for me to tackle my image and hence the image of actuaries.

With image on my mind recently, I read an article written by Paula Froelich, author of the book *It! Nine Secrets of the Rich and Famous That'll Take You to the Top* and a columnist for the New York Post's gossip page. She comments that there is a lot of room outside the tabloids to be "It." This caused me to think about what it might mean to be an "It" actuary. I've taken the liberty of considering what Paula's six rules might mean for actuaries.

Rule #1: Find whatever it is you're good at, and do it.

None of us is equally good at all parts of our job. If we could each build a job around the parts we're best at, think how successful we could be! As we imagine what that job might look like, we can't limit the possibilities to jobs as they exist today. There may be chances to rearrange roles and responsibilities in the future. Have a conversation with the boss about what this ideal job would look like. If we both know what we really want and why, we improve our odds of getting it.

Rule #2: Don't try to fake a talent you don't have.

While building a future around strengths, we need to avoid our weaknesses. There is usually an opportunity to ask for help or to build a partnership with a colleague if we're willing to admit that the outcome of a project will be better for it.

Rule #3: Ask friends what you're good at.

If we can get honest input from friends at work, we may be able to identify what we do better than anybody else. There is a good chance that doing what each of us does better than anybody else is also doing something that makes us very happy.

Rule #4: Plan on success.

As actuarial students, it is easy to get lulled in to thinking we have a plan for our success. It seems to be all about passing exams. However, we also need to plan for success beside and beyond exams. Projects and meetings are opportunities to learn and to shine. There could also be the chance to volunteer for a project that helps make contacts in a different area of the company where we might wish to work some day.

Rule #5: Learn to attract the spotlight.

This is probably the scariest rule for many actuaries. It doesn't have to mean getting up in front and doing stand-up comedy. It does mean speaking up strongly and confidently if we have ideas to contribute. This also means being aware of physical presence - attire, posture and eye contact!

Rule #6: Be nice to waiters.

None of us can get all of our work done without assistance from others. They help on a project, provide information or give us honest feedback. It is important that when we interact with people they feel respected and not belittled. Consider that we are building potential "fan clubs."

The Society of Actuaries will be prompting each of us to work on our image and to work on the image of actuaries within our companies. Please watch for the assistance that will come in the form of a "tool kit," filled with hints and challenges. □



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