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## Session 43IF

### Corporate Downsizing—How to Keep Yourself Marketable

**Track:** Health

**Moderator:** KYLE P. BRUA

**Panelists:** MICHAEL M. BRAUNSTEIN  
STUART D. RACHLIN

**Recorder:** KYLE P. BRUA

*Summary: With all the consolidation in the health insurance business, what can an actuary do to maintain marketability of his or her skills? Gaining new skills and transferring current skills into those needed by the merged organization are key to assuring employment.*

**Mr. Kyle P. Brua:** I am with Reden & Anders in Minneapolis. We have two presenters here today with varied backgrounds. I think most of the presentation will focus on these two gentlemen and their unique experiences as they've both kept themselves marketable.

Michael Braunstein will be the first speaker today. He is an ASA and worked for 15 years as an actuary at Hartford Life. After those 15 years he started his own actuarial recruiting company. About two years ago, he was asked to recruit for the top spot at ACTEX Publications. Michael, knowing his credentials and his background, decided he was the most qualified candidate to fill that position. He was taken on as CEO and president of ACTEX Publications. So, he now runs both ACTEX Publications and an actuarial recruiting firm.

Following Michael will be Stuart Rachlin, who is a consulting actuary in the Tampa office of Milliman & Robertson. Before entering the consulting environment with M&R in 1998, he was with Choice Care Health Plans in Ohio where he acted as chief actuary. He began his career at CIGNA Corporation and throughout his corporate and chief actuary roles, as well as his consulting role, has worked on numerous managed care health issues.

In doing research for this forum, I pulled some information off the Internet. A survey conducted by National Longitudinal Surveys indicates that regardless of your age, gender, or education, it is likely you will hold multiple positions throughout your career. In this environment, through corporate downsizing, etc., there will be numerous opportunities for you to have a different position or work for a different company. So, that will be the focus of today's forum—how to keep yourself marketable.

I'm going to briefly go over the Top Ten Tips for New Millennium Workers (from *CareerLife Consulting Services*). I will not go into all the details; I will highlight the main points.

Top Ten Tips for New Millennium Workers:

- Develop a mission statement to guide your development.
- Focus on your work, not jobs.
- Keep yourself marketable. (Again, this is the focus of today's forum and we will be talking more about this.)
- Keep on learning. As actuaries, we come to SOA meetings primarily to learn and to keep on learning. Whether it's through the exam process or opportunities for training at the companies you work with, learning is obviously an important thing everyone should keep pursuing.
- Develop economic literacy. Stay current in your industry; be a trend spotter and a trendsetter.
- Develop your communication and teamwork skills. I think this is emphasized in many different ways, anywhere from presenting at various meetings to teamwork skills, which I'm sure are impressed upon everyone in their current work environments.
- Keep up with technology, the Internet, all the various ways to get new information and incorporate it into your job or your profession.
- Create financial independence. Plan for your retirement so you have the independence to do what you want when you want.
- Develop several potential income sources. I think we would all agree that having more than one income source is not a bad thing.
- Create personal balance to develop well-being. Loving relationships, diet, exercise—all are important to keep your professional life and your career active.

**Mr. Michael M. Braunstein:** What are some of the things that might happen to change our working situations?

**From the Floor:** One company gets bought by another company.

**From the Floor:** A company decides to get out of the line of business that you're in.

**From the Floor:** Expense reductions.

**From the Floor:** Regulatory changes.

**Mr. Braunstein:** The point is there are things that happen in our business lives that affect us, sometimes outside of our control, and they impact us. We don't want to have lives that are not stable. We have families, we have mouths to feed. An actuary loses his or her job and, from a pragmatic standpoint, knows that his or her chances of finding a job are not so good.

**From the Floor:** I don't think that's the case now. I mean, as you remember in the early 1990's, it was one thing when actuaries got laid off and mergers and expense reductions and what have you. But now if an actuary gets laid off, he or she is going to be able to find a position and have multiple offers. There will be many different things that they can take a look at. So I don't think it's the reality anymore. Hopefully it'll stay that way.

**Mr. Braunstein:** OK, spoken like a true recruiter.

**Mr. Stuart D. Rachlin:** That's true, but still it's the people who have better skills, and are better able to market themselves that will have the choice of the better jobs.

**From the Floor:** Stu, I've started to hear things from presidents of insurance companies, etc., where they start saying things like, "Well you know, there's a chair for every one of them". There's no way we would have been hearing that five, six, or seven years ago. So, absolutely everybody wants the best, of course, and to get the best talent, but you don't have to necessarily be the best to now find another position. Companies are having to hire people that they wouldn't have in a different market.

**Mr. Braunstein:** She's absolutely right. The market right now is very good. But you know what the truth is? Several years ago the market was not very good and several years from now the market may not be very good again. You may find yourself needing a job when the market's not very good. Marketing yourself and always being prepared are crucial.

We need to network. When you're marketing yourself today, look around the room, see who the other faces are. When you leave here, make some friends, get to know some people, so when the time comes when you need to connect with someone, you can. That's networking.

I serve on the Management and Personal Development Section, and back when we were a committee we put together something called the Actuary's Career Planner. The Career Planner starts with a vision. We do some self-assessment; we talk about culture, fit, and the road to success. Section 2 of the Actuary's Career Planner is about me, myself, and I. It's a self-assessment of your actuarial competencies. We actually have two chapters on self-assessment. The first chapter deals with the technical side. Actuaries tend to do pretty well here.

What I'd like you to do is take a minute. You all know what area you work in, maybe it's product development, pricing, maybe you're in the valuation area, maybe you're a systems person or perhaps you're doing something in the regulatory environment or financial reporting, or maybe you are in investments. We assign numbers corresponding to knowledge. We then assign letters corresponding to your skill levels. Maybe you're exceptional at that, maybe you're an A; maybe you're good at it, that's a B. Maybe you're a C, meaning that developmental need exists in an area that's very important. Or maybe there's an

area that is not as important in your job. Maybe you have limited applicability for your job. Then the question is, how do you compare to the knowledge required for the job? If you want to do it all, go to the Actuary's Career Planner session which is given periodically, although not at this meeting. Just consider how you stand. What is your skill level relative to the knowledge required for your job? Does everybody understand that? Have you all done it? Do we have any 1A's? In other words, something very important that you're good at? Really good at it? Exceptional at it? Any 1A's? Any 2B's? Any 1C's?

**Mr. Braunstein:** Now let's talk about developmental needs. Many actuaries are willing to admit that there is a developmental need on formal presentations, and in communication skills in general. Oral communication. Any other volunteers? Does anybody see an area where they can improve?

**From the Floor:** Team building. You never work alone these days. You have cross-functional teams.

**Mr. Braunstein:** Team building. That's right, you can't work alone.

Let's say you're shy on the technical side. I need to know how you might improve those skills. Any ideas?

**From the Floor:** Get a hold of a Society syllabus and see if there's an article or something on that topic and maybe read that as a starter.

**Ms. Tottle:** Talk to people who are experienced in that area and see if you can pick their brain.

**Mr. Norm E. Hill:** You can always try things like the Toastmasters Club, get some outside experience when you're really called on and when you have to give impromptu presentations.

**Mr. Braunstein:** That is a great answer. I was looking for something on the technical side, but let's do both technical and business skills at the same time. Toastmasters is an absolutely great way to get better at communications. Anybody else? Either the technical or communications side.

**From the Floor:** Take an outside training course either in software or communications or whatever.

**From the Floor:** Do the job. Practical experience, jump in.

**From the Floor:** For the communication, get involved in some outside activity where you're on a committee or something so you're improving your communication but with something that's fun instead of work related.

**Mr. Braunstein:** That's right, do something outside of actuarial science. Good. The truth is that if you do things outside of work, especially things that you enjoy, that can only enhance what you do on the job. Okay, that's great.

Here are some tips on technical competencies - ways to gain knowledge.

- Seek out and take on an assignment that will force you to learn a practice.
- Prepare a presentation.
- Teach somebody else. What better way to learn than to teach?
- Prepare a report for your boss.
- Talk with colleagues.
- Take on a new job responsibility.
- Run a task force.

These are all ways to improve your technical skills. Let's talk about some of the ways to improve your business management competencies.

- Use in-house training at your company.
- Look for seminars.
- Hit your favorite bookstore and look in the business section for titles devoted to development of your skills.
- For oral communication skills, there's Toastmasters.
- When you have something to say, direct it to a single person. It's easier to talk to one person than to talk to a whole group of people.

Let's talk about written communication. How many of you feel comfortable writing letters? I remember my very first week on the job, more than 25+ years ago, when I was asked to put together a report on my findings. I took about a week to write a half-page letter. Years later, when I went into recruiting and had to present candidates and had to write a one-page cover letter, I could whip those things off in a matter of seconds. It was just a matter of doing it and getting better at it over time. Many actuaries need help and practice in writing letters or technical things in particular. Begin your document with a topic sentence—be precise and stay focused. Good grammar and perfect spelling are essential. It's a real interesting point that people think they can do things that are inaccurate and then expect to have credibility. So be very clear. If you're going to market yourself and write a cover letter to present yourself, don't spell your name wrong.

Effective listening skills are also important. Listen with more than just your ears—observe body language, what's the real message, listen for key phrases, and listen by being responsive.

Here's more on teamwork. Establish a common goal, use all your listening and communicating skills, share ideas, maintain respect for your team members, and spread the glory around. All of these things are going to be important to enhance your communication skills, and those communication skills are going to keep you marketable because who gets the jobs? The actuaries who have all the technical knowledge or the actuaries who have all the technical knowledge and can communicate that technical knowledge?

**From the Floor:** The latter.

**Mr. Braunstein:** The latter, exactly. So that's what we need to do.

To be successful, what does it take? Tell me things necessary to be successful today in marketing yourself, or in marketing your products, in marketing anything. What does it take?

**From the Floor:** Set goals.

**From the Floor:** Perseverance.

**Ms. Tottle:** Take a risk.

**Mr. Braunstein:** I took a risk. I was working as an actuary and was a little frustrated in my job. I took a risk and started a business. I was about to get married, and my father-in-law said, "Let me see if I understand this. You want to marry my daughter and you don't have a job. You're starting your own company. How are you going to pay the bills?" I said, "I'm just taking a risk, not to worry." I took a risk. In 12 years it worked. It's still working. Okay. Anybody else?

**From the Floor:** If you think about it, we are always selling something. When you need some help on a project, you're selling your ideas. You're going to your boss when you need some help. Again, you're selling your ideas; you're recruiting support for what you're doing. Finally, when you're going for that interview or something, you're selling yourself. So constantly you are getting others to buy into what you're saying, and if you get good at it it's going to be very easy to sell what your strengths are.

**Mr. Braunstein:** That's right. You get used to marketing all the time. Everything you do becomes marketing. You believe in your product, or hopefully you believe in yourself. You show people who you are, and you like who you are, and that comes across, and people hire you. They give you promotions and you move up the ladder. It happens. Self-confidence is important.

Here's my answer to being successful. We need to be smart. We need to have a brain. We need to do research, we need to know the facts. We need to know what we need to know. We need to improve our technical skills. We also need to commit. We have to want it. If you don't care about it it's not going to happen. Finally, we can't be afraid. Everybody's afraid. Who wants change here? None of you? Yes, you do. We need to have courage, we can't be afraid. We can't be afraid to take a risk, and we can't be afraid of change. Because you know what? Fear is the thing that gets in the way. Didn't Franklin D. Roosevelt say something like that? Be smart, commit, put your heart into it, and don't be afraid.

**Mr. Rachlin:** I'm going to talk about one man's experience and try to relate some of the things that we've heard earlier. I'm going to give a little real-world experience in terms of where I've been and the things I've tried to do.

I'm going to talk about acquisitions and consolidations. There's redundancy potential, even for us as actuaries. When companies merge, they may truly have too many actuaries. I think in the old days we might not have thought that. It sounds as if right now that may not be the case as much, but there's still that redundancy potential even for actuaries, which comes as a surprise. Growing up in the environment that I grew up in as an actuarial student, the sky was the limit and there was incredible job security. What I want to talk about is my experiences from both sides of the fence. When I was with CIGNA I was involved on the acquirer side, taking on a smaller company. When I was with Choice Care, an HMO, we got acquired. So I want to share some experiences from both sides and how I think it's important to keep yourself marketable.

If you started your career in a multiline insurer, you had the opportunity to rotate, and in that rotation opportunity you may have had pricing rotations, financial reporting, and perhaps less traditional roles. I had an opportunity to work as an assistant controller for one of the regions of the health plan, which was kind of a nontraditional opportunity. That's where I actually got the experience of working on an acquisition and I'll relate some of that. The key in that kind of environment is to pick up skills at each stop. Keep yourself marketable within the company by sharing with people who make decisions what your knowledge is and what your desires are. You want to develop skills at every opportunity that you're given. For any job you're given, there are at least three things, I guarantee you, that you're going to be able to get out of that job. Even if it's a rotation or a particular job in a company that's terrible, I'm sure you could pick three or four things out of there that you could then spin to your advantage and use in the future. Guaranteed.

What I did working as an acquirer was bring in this company that had health plans in similar markets as CIGNA. Obviously, we weren't going to maintain both markets and we weren't going to need another pricing actuary for Texas because we already had a Texas pricing actuary. So there was obviously redundancy. Something I took away from that was the need to be respectful. I think you have to respect the people whom you're working with. You have to understand the situation that they're in. There's a lot of fear of the unknown. You don't know what your future is; you want to be respectful of that. I think you need to take the time to understand what it is that you're getting. You don't want to lose anything valuable. If you're taking on another company you really want to take the time to get to know those people and their skill sets and make sure you use that to your advantage, because everybody has something to offer and you really want to make those decisions carefully.

I want to talk about my experience working for the regional HMO. I started there as a one-man shop—I was the chief actuary. Let me talk about a little bit about what I did in terms of getting that job. I did a self-assessment of myself and I realized that I wanted to be a chief actuary. I wanted to be in more of a senior leadership position than I was able to do at CIGNA, and this opportunity came up and it fit right in with my plan. I don't know if it was a 12- or a 36-month plan, but certainly my more short- to medium-term plan was to be a higher level executive and get more involved with some serious managed care issues. HMO work always

appealed to me; this was the chance to be the chief actuary at a pretty successful regional HMO. So things were going along very nicely. I was there for a few years and then the rumors started about a national player taking us over. So it was at that point that I started sharpening my skills and doing other assessments of what I wanted to do. It was at this point where I said, "Well, whatever happens, happens. *Qué sera, sera.*" If something gets acquired, if it doesn't work out for me, I've always had this desire to be a consultant. I know that will be the next path for me, so that will be the path I choose later.

When we were acquired by a national health-care organization, I looked at what I had done when I worked at CIGNA doing the acquiring; now being on the other side, I just hoped I was respected and that they were sensitive to our needs. So it was definitely scary to be on the other side of the coin. And I think the way that I survived was by letting the people know what I had to offer. I put my hand up and said, "Hey, I can do that." I wound up being involved with the transition management in integrating the two companies. I don't think they really needed an actuary to do that, but I showed an interest. I talked with the right people and they realized I had some skills that they could use, and I was able to help. From the other side of the coin, I was able to help integrate the two companies and I think in the end it was a very successful story. I was given the opportunity to stay with that company. Unfortunately I would have had to relocate to an area that I really didn't want to relocate to, so then it was decision time for me. But I was given the opportunity—they realized what I could do, and I put my hand up and said, "Yeah, I could do this." They knew that, and that I think helped me. So again, keep yourself marketable. Let them know what it is that you can do, how you can help. You have to make the best of the situation. Clearly it's not rosy and it's scary, but change is going to happen.

Based on a show of hands, almost half of the people in the room have had four or more jobs. That just gives you an indication. I want to get a little interactive at this point and talk about some of the skill sets we used when we made a job change. How did you make that decision that it was time for the change and how did you market yourself? That is what I'm looking for some feedback on. Anyone want to comment on that? How did you market yourself in getting that second job or that third job or that fourth job?

**Mr. Tom P. Kennedy:** At my last position I got laid off because they sold our health insurance company, and I had the same opportunity to move to North Carolina with the company, but decided I didn't want to. I have networked over the years and known enough people in the area to call people and interview with several companies and got three different job offers and accepted one of them.

**From the Floor:** I actually talked to as many actuarial recruiters as I could, which was quite a few at the time.

**Mr. Rachlin:** Use that resource of people who have the knowledge of the market and what they can do to help.

**From the Floor:** Sometimes if your business unit or department gets eliminated for strategic reasons in your own company, if you have developed strong relationships with other people in other areas of the company, they know about you and they can place you in their department.

**Mr. Rachlin:** I think that touched on something that I said as well. You have got to get yourself out there and, get some exposure. Make sure people know who you are, what you can do, and what you have the potential to do. Even if you don't know how to do it now, if they know you're willing to learn and jump in and help them out, I think flexibility is a key trait.

What I want to share about my last move was that I wanted to have the opportunity to be in a more well-rounded job. I wanted more exposure to different types of work. I wanted to do what I was doing, but I wanted to do it for a lot of different parts of the country and a lot of different types of products. I decided I'd have some greater exposure if I made the move to consulting, so, for me it was also a geographic change. I didn't want to stay in the Midwest, I wanted to get in the Southeast. So my next step in my career planning was to get into consulting, something I've always had the desire to do. The takeover of my plan by a national carrier gave me that opportunity. I actually, at the time, had three different opportunities: I could have stayed with the company, I could have gone to another company, or I could have gone to M&R. It was a terrific situation to be in where I had my choice of jobs and I was able to direct my own future, and that was very relaxed. Well, it wasn't that relaxed, I guess it was a bit scary, but it was a nice situation to be in because I was in the driver's seat and I think that's the key. The key is keep yourself in the loop; you have to know what's going on. You have to know the pulse of the company and the people around you. Don't be a roadblock you know, be connected. Don't be afraid to speak up. A lot of actuaries have problems with communication skills. If you just stay in a corner with your head down and crank your numbers, they might not even know you're there and, well, I guess you could keep your job because they wouldn't know enough to fire you. But they are probably going to forget about you and you're not going to be in the mix when decisions are being made. Look for opportunities.

You may want to be a little aggressive if it's appropriate. That's a sensitive one. You don't want to tick off senior management, but when there's a merger and acquisition, make sure they know you're out there. Make sure they know that you know what you're doing. Be flexible because you just never know what the future is going to hold. That's the key message.

**Mr. Brua:** Well at this point it's been very interactive and I'd like to keep it that way. What I would like to do is hear personal experiences. We all have them, we can all share them. Everyone has a story to tell.

**Ms. Comisky:** My first job was right out of college. They actually had recruiting on my campus. For my second and third jobs I was contacted at my current position by a recruiter who had an exclusive, so it was very easy. I'm a health actuary. My fourth position was going to a property and casualty company working in a brand-

new, start-up area called Accident and Health for that company. So that was a big risk because they told me on day one when I went to interview they did not know how long this department was going to be around. It was just a new venture they were trying. I was not thrilled in my current position so I thought, what do I have to lose? I've never been in the position where I've been laid off because of a merger or whatever. However, my current company is now merging with our sister company and there are many layoffs. I don't know if I'll be affected, but I thought it would be smart to start planning just in case.

**Mr. Braunstein:** You said that taking your current job was the one that included some risk because the company said it don't know if this is going to work. Obviously some of that risk is coming to fruition. But along the way, have you been glad you took that risk? Has it worked out for you? Yes. Is the lesson that the risk worked out and that as you take your next step, if there needs to be a next step, you're not going to be necessarily so risk-averse that you figure, hey, a risk isn't so terrible? What's the worst-case scenario? I have to go through this again. Is the risk good? Do you see it as a positive or as a negative?

**Ms. Comisky:** I'm a little apprehensive right now because from what I'm hearing, unless I want to go into consulting, the market in New York is not that great. But yes, I would take a risk. I guess once I have kids, if I have kids, I may think differently, but my husband's also an actuary so there's a little bit less risk involved in that situation.

**From The Floor:** I'm actually in the opposite position. I've been with the same company for 13 years and I'm going to be out of a job eventually because our Group Life and Health Division was bought by Great West. It's very strange to know that you're going to be out of job, but it's so far away that you don't know what the market's going to be like in two years. I feel like I had a good reputation at my company even in, nontraditional areas. I work in financial reporting, so the accounting area would take me. But I feel like it's time to go somewhere else, but it's almost as if you're starting over again to build up your reputation somewhere else. I know, it's a strange situation.

**Mr. Brua:** Yes, and I think based on what we've heard today, the comfortable thing to do—not necessarily the right or wrong thing to do—is if you could stick around for the next two years, that'd probably be worthwhile. On the other hand, the two years may come and go and obviously it's a logical time to polish up the résumé and be a little bit aggressive. Then you have time working on your side where, if you find out later versus sooner, then you're going to have to pursue another opportunity.

**Ms. Tottle:** My company, Prudential Health Care got bought out by Aetna and we knew about nine months ago that they were going to transition our work out. So we again had the time frame and it was a little shorter so it was reasonable to stay, and at this point we're looking at just a few weeks to get transitioned out. One of the things I would like to stress is that respect that you were talking about. In the actuarial area we've been treated with a great amount of respect and sensitivity.

What we found in other areas is they're not, and it makes a lot of difference in the mood in the office. We're sharing our experiences with our co-workers to help them along, but it just makes it the best in the world to have respect from your peers.

**Mr. Rachlin:** One more comment about that. The thing is, especially in this profession, it's not that large of a profession, so you never know who you're going to run into down the road, so you do want to treat people with respect and network as much as you can and let people know what you can do.

**From the Floor:** My story has been different. I dropped in and out of the workforce because my son entered my life at that point and I had the luxury, so there have been different reasons. When I went back I had three job offers. I took one of them, I learned a lot and then I went back to one of the previous offers. So my story was different. But one thing that I did learn is you learn a lot from adversity and from overcoming it, which I'm sure everybody can relate to. It not only gives you flexibility, it also, looking back, makes you into a much stronger person. The thing that you learn, and I hope this is everybody's experience, is really there's nothing that we as actuaries cannot do if we put our mind to it. Don't be hedged in by a traditional role of what you see an actuary is. Essentially what you're doing is you're applying your intelligence, your logical thinking, everything that you learn on the job to solve difficult business problems. As long as you're open and flexible, I think there will be a challenging job out there for you and as we all hear it, a good person will never go wanting for a job. I think that's the key thing to keep to in mind.

**From the Floor:** I haven't really spoken because I think I'm still too close to it or my situation is now difficult to really understand. But the one thing that I think I would want to know, and I think you would want to know, we've already seen presented, but that's to know what you want to do. I don't even know exactly for sure what I want to do. I think one of the things some of you take for granted, is that you seem to know what you want to do. But is it going to be right for the next ten years? I don't know.

**Mr. Braunstein:** Yes, I need to comment on that one. I mentioned the Actuary's Career Planner, and I think for someone like yourself and for many other people in this room and around this whole hotel, whether they realize it or not, they might want to take a look at the Actuary's Career Planner. It's available through the SOA. There are four parts to it. In fact, it's available online, if I'm not mistaken Kyle.

**Mr. Brua:** Yes, on the Society Web site in the Virtual Campus there is the Actuarial Career Assessment. So for a nominal fee you can go do something online. I found it very beneficial. I did go through it prior to preparing for this.

**Mr. Braunstein:** Yes, and if you want to do the hard copy, you can buy the book from the SOA or you can attend the session. I think in October at the annual meeting our section will be presenting the Actuary's Career Planner again. We try to do it fairly regularly. Anyway, the first part of it is about vision, and it's kind of

funny because in the very first chapter it says, “What do you want to do with your life?” It gives you 15 minutes to fill out this little block of space. I’ve done this thing many times and in preparation for the session, and a lot of people I’ve worked with have had done this 15-minute block. I don’t think there’s anybody on the planet who can do it in 15 minutes. Nobody seems to know what he or she wants, and when you know what you want, when you can zero in on something that’s pretty definitive, then you can start to make progress toward it.

When you set your goals, be smart. It's an acronym, S-M-A-R-T. We want to be specific (S), what is it we want? Whatever you decide, you want to be able to measure it (M). Has to be achievable (A); don't tackle things that really are not doable. It has to be relevant (R). And finally, it needs to be timed (T).

One of the examples we have in the Actuary’s Career Planner is a character by the name of Steve Strategist, who says, “I want to be Governor of Colorado by the time I’m 55.” OK. So how did he do? Is it specific? Is it measurable? Is it achievable? Yes, someone’s going to be Governor of Colorado. Is it relevant? It certainly is to him. And is it timed? Yes. So my advice to you is that preparing your vision requires a lot of thought and the Planner will help you get there too because it will give you an opportunity to do some self-assessment on your educational background, your experiences, your schooling, your family life—the things that are important to you, the things that you like, and the things you don’t like. It’ll help you formulate your vision. In fact, you formulate your vision in the beginning and later on you revisit it after looking at some other factors, and then you come back around. You really are a candidate for the Career Planner if you say “I’m not sure what I want”, and I think many people are. The bottom line, is to be SMART.

**Mr. Brua:** Yes, one of the things I’ve gathered from this is that people are nervous about change. They’re looking at change and they’re apprehensive about it, and they don’t really understand what opportunities exist.

**From the Floor:** I'd like to add to some of the things that Mike, Stu, and Kyle have been saying. One thing that I've noticed in my recruiting, and I don't know Mike if you'd had the same experience, is that about 95% of the actuaries that I talk to really can't tell me what it is that they're looking for. And the actuaries that can tell me, as soon as I get that search, they're the first people you think of. So it really behooves you to take some time and do that. Now having said that, being a recruiter of course, you're still going to systematically contact everybody who makes sense. But if you can do that, you'll get to those positions much more quickly. Also sometimes we also hear as recruiters, “Well I’m not interested in making a move right now.” Of course, my comment to that is, “Well, I understand that and most of the actuaries I talk to aren't interested in making a move right now, but if I do know a little bit about you, then I can run things by you as I become aware of them.” For some actuaries that eases them and they'll talk about what they're interested in. Other people still feel like everything's good now so I don't have to worry about the future. Really when it comes down to it, we all do. So in terms of your networking, unless the recruiter is being really offensive to

you, it's good to be open to those conversations because on the other side we have clients asking us our opinions of how that person speaks and how he or she conducts himself or herself because there are different levels of recruiting other than your contingent types of things. That's one thing to keep in mind in terms of your own networking, of talking to many recruiters or establishing relationships with certain recruiters or however you decide that you want to handle it. But I think that that will help everybody a lot too.

**Mr. Brua:** Everyone probably agrees in principle that it's important to keep yourself marketable. That's great; you can do a good job of it yourself if you're proactive and good at doing that. I think we all probably enjoy our jobs, but there is a vision that everyone has as their perfect job. In this profession I think we're fairly uniquely positioned. We have some people out there who will do the marketing for us if we spend time putting together what our perfect position is. We may be happy with what we're doing now, but we also have a small army of people who are willing to market you and look for those positions. So, that's my own philosophy.

**Mr. Braunstein:** Yes, I just want to say I don't want this session to become a recruiting issue; that's certainly not the intent. When you talk about marketing yourself, what we're talking about is marketing yourself within your own company and department, with the people you know. Certainly these other outside possibilities exist, and, naturally, I like that sort of thing. But, the more important thing here is that you put yourself in a position where you're smart, you care about what you're doing, you stop being afraid, you define what you want, and you plan your goals and strategies to get to where you want to go. And all of these things are going to work out fine. You will improve your communication skills, and your technical skills. Zero in on what you want, get the skills to do it and every company in the world will want you. It's as simple as that. And you'll be able to find the job that makes you happy and have a wonderful life. So that's really the best advice that we can give you here today.