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Strategies & Solutions for Your Career Success

A Note From Dave

Here at ExecuNet, we just received word that we're a winner of the 2009 WEDDLE's User's Choice Award. This is an award presented by WEDDLE's, a research and consulting firm that covers career management on both the recruiter and job seeker sides, and it's given annually to 30 different websites which provide great service and value within the online employment industry — as voted by site visitors. So, yes, we have all of you to thank for the recognition.



ExecuNet has been on the list of award winners every year, and we're the only site to win for both recruiters and executives. We accomplished that during the first year the awards were given out, and I don't believe any site has done it since.

We're obviously very proud of this honor, and that pride certainly doesn't diminish with each year. We strive to provide our members with the most valuable resources that we can offer.

We are continuously seeking new ways in which to connect with you and enable you to connect with your fellow ExecuNet members. From our in-person regional networking meetings to online offerings, such as our Roundtable discussions, our goal is to help you build a network that can support your career needs, regardless of your employment status or job title.

This award just provides us with some validation that we're doing the right things. Rest assured, we'll continue to maintain our dedication to you. While you, our members, continue to recognize our achievements, we want to make sure you can count on us to help you accomplish yours.

Sincerely,

Dave

Dave Opton
ExecuNet Founder & CEO
www.execunet.com/davesblog

Building Your Personal Leadership Brand

By Marji McClure

In today's volatile economic climate, only the strongest brands will survive. This is true for businesses and for the executives who lead them. Just as major consumer packaged goods companies promote their core products to the marketplace through extensive marketing and branding campaigns, executives need to do the same to promote themselves within their company and their industry.

With increased competition in the job marketplace, it's crucial that executives create a brand for themselves. Their brand must depict their identity as leaders and position them for continued success within their current organizations and in future endeavors.

What Does a Personal Branding Campaign Entail?

"Personal branding involves knowing what your core competencies are and being able to leverage them to move your company, your department and your initiatives forward," says Rahna Barthelmess, president and chief marketing strategist for Connecticut-based Beacon Marketing. "It involves shining a spotlight on those competencies so that others recognize what you bring to the table — so that those skills can be brought to bear over and over again."

Barthelmess stresses that personal branding must be authentic. "Personal branding is not a cloak you can put on or something to mask flaws or deficiencies," she says. "Your personal brand radiates from within you and represents your core values and beliefs expressed

Marketing 101: The Benefits of a Personal Branding Plan

- Attract the right kinds of projects to you.
- Attract the right kinds of companies or clients to work with you.
- Clarify what you stand for, what your purpose is.
- Help you do things "on purpose."
- Allow the right people to find you.
- Help you attract opportunities to shine.
- Enhance your performance and experience.
- Delineate your fit within an organization.
- Increase your stature within a group.

Source: Rahna Barthelmess, Beacon Marketing

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Career-Enhancing Programs
March 2009
Hosted by Dave Opton,
founder and CEO, ExecuNet

- 3/5 — **How Bad Do You Want It?** — Pat Schuler
3/13 — **FREE PROGRAM FOR MEMBERS** —
Differentiate Yourself as a Level 5 Leader —
Maureen Metcalf

Networking Meetings in Your Area
March 2009
Hosted by ExecuNet Facilitators

- 3/4 — **New York City** — Judy Rosemarin
3/4 — **Philadelphia** — Ed Kelleher
3/4 — **Cincinnati** — Jennifer McClure
3/4 — **New York City Sr. Executive Roundtable** —
Judy Rosemarin
3/4 — **Philadelphia Sr. Executive Roundtable** —
Mitch Wienick & Ed Kelleher
3/5 — **Columbia, MD** — Ed Loucks
3/5 — **Southern Wisconsin** — Clara Hurd Nydam &
Tom Senge
3/6 — **San Diego/Carlsbad** — Mark James
3/9 — **Detroit** — Marge Larsen
3/9 — **Miami/Hollywood** — Jeannette Kraar
3/10 — **Orlando** — Catherine Coates & Mike Murray
3/10 — **Phoenix** — Fred Coon
3/10 — **Boulder** — Karen Armon
3/11 — **Toronto Sr. Executive Roundtable** —
Martin Buckland
3/11 — **Stamford** — Linda Van Valkenburgh
3/11 — **Cleveland Sr. Executive Roundtable** —
Rick Taylor
3/12 — **Seattle Sr. Executive Roundtable** —
Susan Stringer
3/12 — **Atlanta** — J. Patrick Haly
3/12 — **Los Angeles** — Eileen Hupp
3/16 — **Boston Sr. Executive Roundtable** —
Marg Balcom
3/17 — **Wilmington** — Rick Hays
3/17 — **Houston** — Sharon Anglin
3/17 — **Irvine (Orange County)** — Mark James
3/17 — **Seattle** — Susan Stringer
3/17 — **Cleveland** — Rick Taylor
3/18 — **Hartford/New Haven** — Paul Mathews
3/18 — **Montreal** — Martin Buckland
3/18 — **Charlotte** — Merton Marsh & Michael Hall
3/18 — **Portland, OR** — Jean Walker
3/18 — **Raleigh/Durham** — Stuart Levine
3/18 — **Palo Alto** — Bobbie LaPorte & Linda Holyroyd
3/19 — **Vienna/Tysons Corner, VA** — Peter McCarthy
3/19 — **Minneapolis** — John Wetzell & Barbara Johnson
3/19 — **Indianapolis** — Romona Camarata
3/19 — **Louisville** — Thom Crimans & Cathy Fyock
3/19 — **Pittsburgh/Cranberry Township** —
Tina Winner
3/20 — **Parsippany** — Linsey Levine
3/23 — **Boston** — Marg Balcom
3/24 — **Vienna/Tysons Corner, VA Sr. Executive**
Roundtable — Peter McCarthy
3/25 — **Toronto** — Martin Buckland
3/25 — **Denver** — Karen Armon

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Insider Insight

How to Avoid the Five Most Common Executive Interview Mistakes

By **Rachelle J. Canter, PhD**

Before my career book was published, I sent the proposal to a publishing executive for feedback. By the synopsis of the interviewing section in which I enumerated some of the crazy and common mistakes that executives make during interviews, he wrote, “Executives don’t make these mistakes!”

Did he think I made them up? I reported mistakes I’d observed in more than 20 years of interview coaching with executives. When I mentioned his comment to a prominent executive search consultant, she replied, “Executives make the *worst* mistakes in interviews.”

Here are some tips for avoiding five of the most common interview mistakes that executives make.

Keep Answers Short, Sweet and Focused

Executives tend to talk too long. Used to being listened to, they typically forget that interviews are dialogues, not monologues. Instead of offering crisp responses that demonstrate their ability to cut to the chase, they ramble on and on in response to typical questions such as “tell me about yourself” or “greatest strengths.” Remember that an interviewer can always ask follow-up questions if he or she wants to know more. First impressions count: Don’t come across as a windbag.

Demonstrate Value by Backing up Claims

Interviews afford an opportunity to show what you can do, based on what you’ve already done. But executives frequently make claims, such as referring to their “ability to inspire teams” or “track record as a maverick, challenging the status quo.” Frequently, they stop

there. These are hollow claims unless you have specific examples to back them up. Prepare specific and relevant anecdotes or examples for each interview.

Don’t Overemphasize Chemistry at the Expense of Skill

Interviews are a chance to evaluate chemistry, but executives often forget that chemistry is secondary to skill. Savvy interviewers will hire the person who is the best person for the job and a nice person to work with to boot. Great chemistry won’t make up for a poor or irrelevant track record. Times have changed. Employers need executive hires who can deliver, not people just like them. Your best approach is to focus on your performance first and chemistry second to make the best impression on prospective employers.

It’s All About Them, Not You

Too often, executives forget that the purpose of an interview is to find the best person for the job. This shows in their responses to questions such as: “Why are you interested in this opportunity?” They respond to the question and talk on and on about their personal career goals and how an opportunity can help bolster their career.

Instead, remember to focus on how you are interested in the opportunity because it requires the kind of skill or track record that you have developed over the years. Keeping your focus on your audience (prospective employers) will keep your answers appropriately focused.

Prepare Carefully to Build Your Strongest Case

By far, the biggest mistake that executives make in interviews is a failure to

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Books Worth Your Time: Q&A with Author David D'Alessandro

Executive Warfare

What's more difficult than reaching the top? Staying there. In his most recent book, *Executive Warfare: 10 Rules of Engagement for Winning Your War for Success* [McGraw-Hill, 2008], David D'Alessandro, former chairman and CEO of John Hancock Financial Services, provides suggestions and real-life stories from his rise to the top and what it took to stay there. Demonstrating directness and wit, the pages of his book are laden with insight on how to cultivate and manage relationships with peers, the board of directors, the CEO, direct reports, rivals and more.

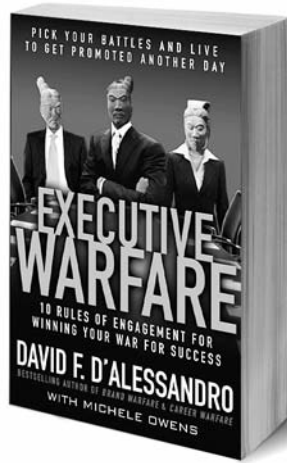
In this exclusive interview with ExecuNet Editor Will Flammé, D'Alessandro discusses elements from his book, providing essential and timely advice to senior leaders.

Q. With the economic volatility that exists in the United States, what suggestions do you have for the C-level executive seeking career stability?

A. This is a time to prove how critical you are to the organization. Finding ways to save money, gain quick new revenues are of the first order. Joining any groups that are changing the organization is almost a guarantee you will not be targeted. Remember, these days your boss is not worried about your job — he is worried about his. Your value to your superiors must be clear and sustainable. Keep your ear to the ground about the company's future. If it looks really unstable or you might be sold, be certain to keep up your outside contacts and jump ship if you can before the company is sold or cycles downward. Only you can take control of your career. Expecting the organization to take care of you is a bit like a deer hoping the hunter won't shoot.

Q. How do you suggest an executive find balance between conformity and individuality in the workplace?

A. Conformity is not a prerequisite for power. Every ambitious person is going



to take some knocks, so you might as well be yourself and get points for having the courage of your own style. When I started at John Hancock, the uniform was an off-the-rack suit from Brooks Brothers, a blue Oxford shirt and the same striped tie. I would have felt like I was wearing a costume in those clothes, so I wore Italian suits and bright ties. As I sat with the CEO in the boardroom, surrounded by oil paintings of the company's founding fathers with their sharp profiles, swept-back hair and impressive cravats, I couldn't help but say to him, "I have no illusions that my picture is ever going to hang on that wall." He replied, "Don't be so sure about that."

If you're going to stand out, have the personality to back it up. In my case, since I was much more aggressive and direct than my peers and wore ties with so much more wattage, I think it was extraordinarily important for me to maintain a sense of humor. If you'd have taken away my sense of humor, then there would have been no question that I was just an ambitious jerk. I advise you to be yourself, but also to disarm potential critics where you can by being self-deprecating.

Q. What are the key components to successful relationships with peers?

A. Peers can be your most valuable of allies or your most dangerous of enemies.

Take notice of the people who are already at the top of their careers. They're not clawing towards their next promotion; they're perfectly content, and thus, able to offer the most realistic judgments of the business. These are the individuals who can saunter into your boss's office at their leisure. Surely, these are the people whose opinions your boss can trust; so when your boss one day asks them, "What do you think of so-and-so?" you want to know that they'll have nothing but positive things to say. Keep these people close; go to them with your ideas and share with them your excitement and enthusiasm.

Don't shun people simply because they are not your boss's biggest fans. In business, everyone is working toward a single, unified goal — money. So making enemies of your peers out of excess loyalty to your boss is the equivalent of buying your own six-chamber revolver and playing Russian roulette — only with the proportions reversed: five bullets and one empty chamber; you survive only if your boss rises. Keep your counterparts all over the organization close. If the power structure changes against you — at least the people who end up rising remember that you were a good person.

Beware of the social gatherings outside of the office. Become familiar with the broad strokes of your peers — Do they have children? What are their hobbies? However, don't let colleagues pour their hearts out to you over dinner. Giving employees and peers the opportunity to tell you something personal will only come back to haunt you. Be the one who sets the tone for the social event.

Q. How do you suggest one handle a boss who is meddling in your area of responsibility, thinking he knows more than he really does?

A. You can expect to run into incompetent bosses as you rise, and they may fail to fully appreciate how talented you are. However, it's up to you to remedy the

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Leadership Brand

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outwardly by your actions. Putting up a ‘fake persona’ is a surefire way to be discovered as a phony.”

Branding experts agree that executives need to take ownership of their plan because it’s such a personal concept, one that can make immense impact on an executive’s career management strategy. Because individuals are responsible for creating their own opportunities, everyone needs a personal career marketing plan, says Judit Price of Massachusetts-based Berke and Price Associates. Companies no longer look out for an executive’s best interests — executives must do this themselves, she adds.

Yet, at the same time, executives must be able to manage the process in a way that’s not overly promotional. It’s important that executives are clear with their personal marketing objectives and don’t alienate others along the way. “The executive must strike a balance between his or her personal needs (personal brand) and corporate needs (corporate brand),” says Dan Schawbel, a personal branding expert and author of the upcoming book, *Me 2.0: Build a Powerful Brand to Achieve Career Success*.

“Building a brand is an intentional communication effort,” adds Karen Armon, creator and founder of Colorado-based MarketOne Executive. “The best way to protect one’s brand is to have a very tight theme, with very specific execution plans, and then measurements that provide feedback on that plan. I believe building your career as a business and launching your product (you are the labor service/product that you are offering) is what is required.”

Developing Your Brand Plan

Barthelmess says that the process of developing a personal branding plan is similar to writing a marketing plan. Three necessary components to consider when crafting the plan are: strengths of the individual, target audience and communication methods.

Sometimes it’s challenging for executives to recognize their true assets.

Kathy McAfee, president of Connecticut-based Kmc Brand Innovation LLC, advises requesting feedback from individuals who can provide an objective view of your capabilities (from clients to colleagues).

McAfee suggests asking the following questions:

- What value did/do I create for you?
- Why is that so important to you?
- What do you think I do best?
- If you have to describe me to another person in four words or phrases, what would they be?

“

Overall, the goal is to take personal observations along with those of colleagues and friends and determine the kind of brand desired and then perform activities to emulate that brand.

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Ira Blumenthal, co-author of *Managing Brand You: 7 Steps to Creating Your Most Successful Self*, advises individuals to separate brand identity (what you believe you are or what you want to be) from brand image (what others believe you are). He suggests making a list of words describing what you believe you are and then asking friends and associates to list the words they feel best describe you. If the lists aren’t close, Blumenthal suggests repairing your brand. He notes that such repairs can be as simple as staying at the office later if people think that you’re not dedicated. If they think you’re not a team player, volunteer for an extra assignment. “We believe that if executives take a look at themselves and use others’ visions, they will find what their flaws are,” explains Blumenthal.

Overall, the goal is to take personal observations along with those of colleagues and friends and determine the kind of brand desired and then perform activities to emulate that brand.

Such branding is most effective when it encompasses an executive’s internal and external presence. “Building your brand within the company means communication and aligning, both through your position and your influence, a brand that will help you meet and exceed business strategies and goals,” says Armon, author of *Market Your Potential, Not Your Past*. “Building your brand within the industry is about positioning yourself as a thought leader and using your position and influence to change the course the industry is headed.”

The strategies necessary to build an executive’s internal brand differ greatly from those used to build an external brand. But together, they should create an image that will help an executive be successful regardless of the venue.

Your Internal Branding Plan

The main concept of an executive’s internal branding campaign involves ensuring that individuals at all levels within that executive’s organization are aware of and value the executive’s contributions. “Visibility is paramount for any leader who wishes to have people following him or her,” says McAfee. “If you only spend time with the same people all the time (or project team or the C-suite), then you are limiting your reach and exposure. By practicing ‘internal networking,’ you will reap the benefits of establishing more connections — many of which can evolve into mutually beneficial relationships. You want to establish this before you need it.”

Your External Branding Plan

Creating and building an external brand requires executives to position themselves as thought leaders and experts within their industry. Illustrating to all that they are a true authority in their field is vital to an executive’s external brand.

“Thought leadership is the act of sharpening your knowledge on a certain narrow subject that you are passionate about and sharing your insights about it to a larger audience (including inside and outside your company and immediate world),” says McAfee. “Thought leadership is not the act of selling and marketing

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Leadership Brand

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your company's product; it's about standing for something larger (concept, cause or problem) and increasing the awareness and advocating for it."

Ways executives can demonstrate thought leadership include writing articles for newspapers and magazines, being quoted as an expert in those publications, and presenting at industry-related events and conferences.

"The benefits of doing all of this work are that you are adding equity in both the short-term and long-term," says McAfee. "You are enhancing your reputation, your visibility and your value to more people. You are building your brand, and that will go with you your entire career."

The Social Media Component

References to executives online are lasting impressions, and executives need to understand the importance of creating (and then monitoring) an online brand that effectively promotes their capabilities. Social media is becoming an increasingly important component in personal branding, especially as recruiters and hiring managers use such sites as LinkedIn as a resource to find and research potential job candidates.

According to 2008 ExecuNet data, 86 percent of recruiters surveyed said they have used search engines to uncover information about executive candidates. "If you're not there, you may not be found by the people you most need to position yourself in front of," says Meg Guiseppi, a New Jersey-based personal branding strategist and master résumé writer. She warns, "You could be missing out on golden opportunities."

Peer interaction that occurs in platforms such as ExecuNet's Roundtables also serves as a venue in which executives can demonstrate expertise in a particular subject while also becoming valued resources for solving business problems.

Twitter — a service in which users post short comments ("tweets") — might not be the best venue for executives to communicate their thought leadership.

Expert Resources:

- Dan Schawbel, Personal Branding Magazine (PersonalBrandingMag.com)
- Rahna Barthelmeß, Beacon Marketing (Beacon-Marketing.com)
- Kathy McAfee, Kmc Brand Innovation LLC (MarketingMotivator.net)
- Karen Armon, MarketOne Executive (MarketOneExecutive.com)
- Meg Guiseppi, Executive Resume Branding (ExecutiveResumeBranding.com)
- Ira Blumenthal, Co-OPPORTUNITIES (Iraspeak.com)
- Judit Price, Berke and Price Associates (CareerCampaign.com)

"I can't recommend that every executive has a Twitter profile because, much like blogging, you'll have to send multiple tweets a day for anyone to care," says Schawbel. "Most executives aren't on Twitter and instead cling to LinkedIn because of how professional it is."

Most importantly, executives must know their target audience and pick social media platforms those individuals are most likely to frequent. "You must think about those whom you are trying to influence," adds Barthelmeß. "If they are the type of people who would never follow you on Twitter, then Twitter should not be part of your personal branding plan."

At the same time, when executives identify the most effective online platforms for their branding campaign, it's crucial that what's revealed about them online doesn't prevent them from making viable connections and securing new opportunities.

Since not all Web references are positive, executives need to closely manage what is being said about them online and counter with positive content. Forty-four percent of executive recruiters surveyed by ExecuNet in 2008 said they have eliminated a senior-level candidate because of information found on the Internet. [ExecuNet offers a career guide, *Dealing with Your Digital Dirt*, with recommendations on how executives can positively enhance their online reputation. A downloadable copy of the full report is accessible via the ExecuNet website Career Center tab.]

The large majority (79 percent) of executives reported to ExecuNet that they had searched for their own names online but not as frequently as Schawbel suggests. Just 11 percent conducted this activity more than once per month, while 29 percent searched just once per year or even less frequently.

Branding as a Differentiator

Experts agree that the demonstration of your personal brand can also help improve the productivity of your job search activities and make you a more appealing candidate. "When executives build their brand, the exercise requires clear definition of what the executives have to offer, what they do best, and who they are," says Price. "Armed with this information, communication with the intended audience is clear and confident. The executive can prepare for the job search better because the candidate has already thought through and defined his or her vision, values, passions, purpose and goals."

Price adds that it is equally important to understand the competition for positions, to know what skill sets other executives who are seeking the same jobs possess. This can help you further pinpoint how you should position your brand to help you stand out among that competition. "Armed with that information, the executive should be able to create some unique differentiators that separate the competition from the executive. It is also vitally important to know who the target audience is in order to be confident that the skill set is relevant to the target organization's needs," says Price.

When organizations seek new talent, they will be more attracted to those with a strong brand, those able to effectively demonstrate their thought leadership. Armon notes, "Branding builds your thought leadership gravitas, which is exciting for recruiters and hiring leaders alike. Thought leadership is the key that positions you as a top talent and puts you in the sights of CEOs who want to build the best team around him or her as possible." ■

Leadership Briefing

The Strength and Growth of BRIC

By Robyn Greenspan

Against a backdrop of a melting financial sector in the United States, Antoine van Agtmael, founder and president of Emerging Markets Management and widely considered the coiner of the phrase “emerging markets,” explained that this time the crisis is coming *to* emerging markets, not *from* them as they did in 1994 with Mexico, and in 1998 with Asia. “This is changing very rapidly, and we are in the midst of the biggest shift in the global economy and global power since the industrial revolution. The US was the role model for financial systems, and there is worldwide worry.”

The power shift brings with it three new realities, van Agtmael said:

- The US is no longer the unquestioned superpower.
- The US is no longer unquestioned about credit.
- The American consumer is no longer king; there will be one billion new consumers in emerging markets in the next decade.

“The root of this financial crisis is the fact that for decades the US and the whole developed world have been over-consuming, over-borrowing, under-investing and under-saving.” Van Agtmael also noted that at the same time the West was building wealth, the emerging markets were developing infrastructure to support growth.

Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRIC) currently have a combined GDP of \$9 trillion, compared to the US’s \$14 trillion, representing a massive economic force poised to become the new champions. Van Agtmael says it is a myth that the West will continue to dominate the world; three-quarters of companies now come from emerging markets with the potential for many to become world-class.

Fabio Barbosa, finance director of global diversified mining company Vale, says that Brazil is now one of the best examples of economic development.

“I believe it is a result in this case of stabilization of the economy that took place in 1994, that ensured we would grow on a sustainable basis,” said Barbosa. “It is easier today for Brazilian companies to borrow than years ago.”

Vale’s diversification and globalization is a consequence of growth supported by risk management and discipline in capital allocation.

Barbosa credited a strong global expansion program that brought new growth options; reduction of the cost of capital due to a better risk perception; ownership of world’s nickel reserves; and entry into the coal business, among other benefits.

But with global growth brings challenges. “We are facing a structural transformation driven by emerging market economies,” said Barbosa, and the company struggles with human capital, cultural integration and political risk management issues.

On a parallel path, Russia is seeing its own economic gains, and in 10 years Moscow-based industrial investment company Basic Element has matured from an aluminum smelter to a conglomerate of 100 companies on five continents with 300,000 employees. Konstantin Panin, deputy CEO of Basic Element, says the company strategically partnered with Russia on its march toward modernization by investing resources and demonstrating management expertise.

Russia’s burgeoning economic strength is already having positive global implications: Half of American companies doing business in Russia are reporting sales increases of more than 200 percent since 2001, and US investments in Russia are steadily rising 50 percent annually since 2004.

To operate and succeed on a global level is to have broad vision and big goals, and Narayana Murthy, founder of customized software application provider Infosys, said they are building toward becoming the most respected company in the world. “We will not shortchange customers to work well with partners, to

not violate laws of the land and live in harmony with society. Our company is built on the principle of globalization, sourcing capital, talent, producing where it is most efficient and selling to where it is most applicable,” Murthy said.

The company’s roughly 4,000 projects executed in about 70 different countries are segmented by customer interaction. Projects with less customer involvement are often delegated to countries where the labor is cheaper.

People — both customers and employees — are at the heart of Infosys’ success. The first Indian company to be listed on NASDAQ, every project is focused on quality and deliverability, and Murthy said they ensure that their employees are enthusiastic and customer-focused. “The trick,” said Murthy, “is reaping the soul, the energy and enthusiasm of a small company in the body of a large company.”

Localizing the management has been a steady theme at ASIMCO Technologies in China, and CEO Jack Perkowski, author of *Managing the Dragon*, said companies who compete in that part of the world need people who they can trust and can become loyal. “Do a good analysis of your company with its strengths and weaknesses and then put it aside,” Perkowski recommended.

To compete on a global stage, you have to be in China, in some way, noted Perkowski, but foreign investment companies cannot get to a price point to be competitive in China. “To be successful in China, your manager must have the same cost perspective as your customers and competitors,” said Perkowski.

As an example, Perkowski pointed out the different perspectives on currency. “The US sees RMB\$100 as US\$12.50 but the Chinese see US\$100 and RMB\$100 the same way.”

There are unifying issues in BRIC that also extend to the rest of the world. Van Agtmael outlined a national competitive campaign that will create a strong

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foundation to further economic growth:

1. Get rid of current account deficit.
2. Clean up the financial mess.
3. Fix legacy issues.
4. Give infrastructure a facelift.
5. Out-innovate and support basic research.
6. Set big goals, like a “green” economy.

To avoid missing out on most of the growth, van Agtmael urged corporate leaders to quickly develop a broad range of relationships with emerging multinationals, as that speed will enable competitive advantage. “Emerging multinationals will eat your lunch unless you make theirs — but better,” he said. ■

ExecuNet was invited by global executive education organization HSM to create a

series of articles based on the presentations at their World Business Forum in New York City in September 2008. HSM delivered the articles to the senior business leaders who attended the two-day Forum of innovative thinking, and ExecuNet’s Executive Editor Lauryn Franzoni and Editor-in-Chief Robyn Greenspan will continue to share the insights from this exclusive event in upcoming member programs and reports.

Your Career Advisor

The “Yes Factor”: How to Negotiate to Get What You Want Out of Life

By John McKee

Everything is fair game; whether you covet a new job, a raise, a business deal, a new car, some new bling or need to rectify a problem with a loved one, the “art of negotiation” is your secret weapon to achieving the result you want. Indeed, among the greatest strengths of very successful business people is their ability to out-negotiate others to achieve their desired result.

Negotiating need not be back and forth, point/counterpoint banter. Rather, the most proficient negotiators manage these conversations in such a way that the other party likely does not even know he or she is engaged in a bargaining process. The bottom line is simple: If there is something you want that is in someone else’s control, knowing how to negotiate will stack the odds in your favor.

With this in mind, here are my top seven tips for turning business negotiation skills into a life skill:

Be Prepared to Walk Away

If you aren’t prepared to say, “No” and mean it, then you are likely to end up settling for a lesser outcome. Before entering into the negotiation, know in advance exactly what you are and are not willing to concede, so that you do not need to process this information on-the-fly without adequate time to weigh the pros and cons of each.

Know When to Forego All Together

A good deal comes together quickly. A bad deal takes way too long. Take a clue from the amount of time it’s taking to get what you want and, if exceedingly long, don’t waste valuable time and effort with the misguided notion that “just one more” give or take will make the deal work.

Deal at the Right Level

Nothing is more frustrating than trying to do a deal with an individual who can’t make the final decision. It’s like negotiating against yourself — you address an issue and try to come to a conclusion and then the other person takes that to someone else “behind the scenes” only to come back and say it can’t be done on those terms. It’s far more efficient and effective to find the right person to negotiate with directly.

Conduct Due Diligence

The more information you have surrounding the circumstances of your endeavor, the “marketplace,” for example, the more likely you are to not only prevail, but also get the best deal possible. While you may actually prevail by shooting in the dark, not knowing the extent of the opportunity could result in your leaving a lot on the table.

Don’t Take Anything Personally

To maintain objectivity, treat every negotiation as if you are doing a deal for someone else who has hired you as

the professional “closer.” When you allow yourself to get emotionally involved, rational thought often goes by the wayside, and you’re far more likely to concede to your later regret. Cool heads get the best, and most, out of what they are seeking.

Anticipate Objections

Prior to the negotiation, brainstorm all the reasons or objections that may prevent you from getting what you want — and prepare a thoughtful counterpoint for each, one at a time. Until you know the valid sticking point, you are just spinning your wheels.

Don’t Underestimate Karma

The best deal is one where both parties walk away feeling positive about the result of the negotiation. The worst deal is when one side leaves the table feeling slighted with the short end of the stick. If you’re the kind of person who “has” to win and is prepared to humiliate or otherwise make someone feel bad as a result, sooner or later the gain is likely to come back to haunt you. ■

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situation and get your boss and your career back on track. First, be blunt, say, “I want to handle this” or “I want to present this.” Chances are good that your boss won’t even realize that he’s being ambushed, and he’ll probably reply along the lines of, “I’ve been thinking. You should be handling that.” It’s imperative that you be the one handling and presenting your projects; if you’re going to grow, *you* have to be the one preparing and carrying your presentations into meetings with the higher-ups, not your boss. Leading up to the presentation of the project, be sure to study, study, study. Prove that you are a resource. Really knowing your stuff is what will get you invited back, and it’s the only thing that will diminish your boss’s control over you.

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prepare for them. Most executives don’t prepare for interviews, except for a cursory glance at the job spec and the company’s website. Used to being good on their feet, they wing the job interview — and it shows.

Preparation is the key to the poised and focused self-presentation that characterizes a strong interview. Careful preparation for an interview involves defining your competitive edge for the opportunity and preparing specific examples that are relevant to the employer and demonstrate your competitive edge.

Q. In senior management, what elements of culture must one consider for success?

A. Let’s talk about culture within your team first. As you climb your way higher and higher into senior management, it is inevitable that you will eventually have people reporting to you from areas of your organization that are completely unfamiliar to you. Don’t try to pretend to immediately understand what these people have spent half a lifetime doing. My advice: Don’t insult the experts. Listen really carefully to your people. Create an environment where your direct reports actually look forward to having meetings with you — even if the topic of the meeting is unpleasant. Create a culture based on trust. Don’t keep secrets from your people, and your people won’t keep secrets from you. A team that shares all information, whether good or bad, is a team that will

Creating bulleted answers to common questions like “greatest success” or “an example of a time you led through influence, not control” gives you the chance to practice answers without memorizing them. Preparation and practice allow you to give well-organized and succinct answers and to provide examples to build your case, instead of falling into the common trap of providing answers that are too long-winded and short on important information. Focusing on relevant examples and how you are best suited to fill an employer’s need puts your focus where it needs to be and helps you deliver a winning and blooper-free interview. ■

act on it together and come out on top.

“Culture” is one of the more overused words in American business. People are constantly making stuff up and calling it a culture. It’s true that all organizations, like it or not, have a culture. It’s also true that the actual culture of a place only rarely corresponds to the things the CEO and top management say about it.

Whether the culture of your organization is a real way of behaving and thinking that brings out the best in people or nothing more than organized hypocrisy, you really have no choice but to pay attention to it when you move into management. Again, it’s easy to create a culture of fear; what’s really hard is creating a culture of openness where people give you their best efforts and their best ideas. Make transparency and honesty your basis of corporate culture, and the rest will surely follow. ■

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