



Randy's Work *and You*

June Edition

Dear clients and colleagues,

Be careful, parents!!

Now is the time when college kids who haven't landed jobs yet become increasingly desperate. As they hone their résumés and cover letters, they often turn to their parents for advice.

Parents oblige, with good intentions. But they aren't always the best source of wisdom on these matters. Often, the advice parents give is outdated, irrelevant or just plain lousy.

Even parents with successful careers aren't necessarily expert job hunters. And many parents don't have much experience in hiring or recruiting. So they sometimes pass along the mistaken assumptions they have made over the course of their careers. Or they suggest things that might be appropriate for their own industry or level of seniority but that aren't right for the jobs their kids are pursuing.

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Upcoming Events:

Networking Class: June 20 and June 27. The sponsoring organization is Tamalpais District Community Education. The place is Redwood High School, Larkspur, Marin County. For details, go to www.marinlearn.com/.

This month's topics:

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1. When Young Managers Interview their Elders

By Erin White

Normally, when a seasoned executive meets with an associate young enough to be his child, the older person has the upper hand. It is natural for the older executive to assume an authoritative tone, evaluating and instructing the younger one. But what happens when the older person is interviewed for a job by someone a quarter-century his junior?

Call it the May-December interview. It is happening as older executives change jobs more frequently, and baby boomers swell the ranks of senior job seekers, recruiters say. The age gap brings additional tension to a job interview, an experience already fraught with plenty of anxiety.

Among the difficult balancing acts for the candidate: You want to come across as confident and experienced, but without seeming like a know-it-all who can't be managed. Your long work history should be an asset, but can become a liability if you dwell on early experiences so much that you seem ancient.

Etiquette Deprived

On top of that, these younger interviewers--many of whom have achieved wealth and status at an early age--sometimes lack their elders' polished manners and treat candidates rudely, recruiters say.

Hal Reiter, chairman and chief executive of New York executive search firm Herbert Mines Associates, cautions older job candidates not to expect the royal treatment from a much-younger interviewer. When you arrive for the interview, don't expect to be greeted on time, Mr. Reiter counsels. He recalls one candidate who waited an hour and a half to be seen. Finally, the interviewer's secretary came out. Her boss was on the phone and wasn't likely to get off soon. The candidate left, saying if the man needed to see him, they could schedule another meeting.

Once you actually have an interview, your young questioner may be ill prepared. Perhaps he won't even have read your résumé, Mr. Reiter cautions. Don't be surprised if he hasn't heard of a company that would be well known to someone older. Mr. Reiter recalls one candidate whose interviewer repeatedly misstated the name of the candidate's previous employer. The candidate kept correcting him, saying, "I didn't work for X, I worked for Y," Mr. Reiter says. "Finally the interviewer heard what he was saying."

No matter how lousy your interviewer's manners, stay calm and professional. Often younger interviewers aren't the ultimate decision-makers; you may eventually interview with their older boss. But the younger people are gatekeepers and have a say in the hiring process, so you can't ignore them. "Understand these people have the keys to the kingdom," Mr. Reiter says. "The candidates just need to suck it up and wait till the head guy."

Addressing Insecurity

You also need to pay attention to younger managers' insecurities. Trudi Schutz, a career coach in Bethel, Conn., says you should assure your would-be boss that you're not a threat to his job. A young manager may fear that such a talented, experienced executive couldn't possibly be satisfied with the duties of this particular job. What you are really after, the manager worries, is his own job. So address that concern directly.

Ms. Schutz did it herself when she was interviewed by someone about 15 years her junior. He ran a division at a big communications firm; Ms. Schutz would have managed a group in the division. Soon after the interview began, she said: "I'm coming here to help and do my job as well as I can, but I'm not gunning for your job," she recalls.

The interviewer hadn't mentioned that he felt threatened, but Ms. Schutz sensed he needed to be reassured because he was younger and lacked Ms. Schutz's expertise in some areas. "He needed somebody like me, so I tried to sell my qualifications in a way that he could see the benefits I would have to him and at the same time say, this particular job"--and no other--"is why I'm here." After she brought it up, "he looked a lot more comfortable," she says. Ms. Schutz was offered the job.

Steve Dempsey, vice president of recruitment for Corporate Project Resources Inc., a marketing staffing firm based in Chicago, says older executives also need to show they are willing to be managed. They need to counter the fear that seasoned executives may be stubborn and refuse to submit to a boss's preferences. He suggests talking about how you've worked with past managers, emphasizing your flexibility.

Heather Shively Goldman, a partner at executive search firm Rhodes Associates, says one mistake older candidates often make is explaining their work history from the beginning. With such a long résumé, a chronological explanation makes you seem old and doesn't give you enough time to talk about more recent, relevant accomplishments. When your interviewer asks you to tell him about yourself, "stick to the highlights," she says.

2. Instant Intimacy

By Keith Ferrazzi

Here's how you can capitalize on the many brief interactions at your next conference or social gathering.

Whether your goal is to sell more widgets or make more friends, you'll be more successful the quicker you can connect with people. And of course, the more intimate the connection, the better. So let's discuss how you can capitalize on the many brief interactions at your next conference or social gathering.

Someone recently asked me if instant intimacy is really possible. Well, perhaps "instant" is too strong a word. But the point I'm trying to make is that you can definitely get quicker

results than you're used to if you'll just get out of your own way, if you'll set aside your fears, insecurities, and preconceived ideas just for a moment.

If you think the concept of instant intimacy is a paradox, consider this. Recently I was working with room of 7,000 people at a technology users conference, facilitating an opening exercise to help everyone in the room get more out of their time investment in the conference. The focus of the exercise was to get everyone to commit to making each other more successful at the conference; and in so doing, to also get everyone to lower their guard a bit (and yes, be a little vulnerable with each other so they'd be more quickly seen as real humans!).

Across the board, the feedback was phenomenal. We increased the effectiveness readings of the conference by 25%. More importantly, the anecdotal evidence was that this group of high tech engineers, who stereotypically have a difficult time embracing such intimacy, found this exercise to be immensely valuable and confidence building. Several people actually thanked us for giving them "permission" to practice these principles and take such risks in their everyday lives.

You might say, "That's great, Keith. But it's not so easy when people leave the conference and go out into the real world." Granted, in this instance, we manufactured a safe place for people to show up to new relationships in a different, better way. Then again, how "safe" do you really feel among 7,000 people?

I think all interactions are actually much safer than we imagine them to be. We've just got to take the first step forward, because it's only then we'll realize how easy and welcoming they really can be.

If you still have doubts about more quickly engaging in intimate conversations with new acquaintances, I'll offer this advice: Just approach them like you would a pool of cold water--one step at a time. Put your toe in and see if you can handle that. Then you might wade in until the water's up to your knees. At some point, you'll get sufficiently comfortable, bold, or probably both and decide, "You know what? I'm just going to dive in."

And remember: No matter how successful you are at jumpstarting relationships, the ultimate goal is to develop deep relationships, and that's going to take time. Be patient. And consistent. Though you might get people to trust you quickly--and I think you will, because they really do want to trust you--they're also wanting to see if that lasts over weeks, months, and years.

Don't Worry If You're Not an Extrovert

The question is: "What if I'm shy, if I'm not one of those extroverts running around a typical

networking event?" And the answer is: "Congratulations!" Because so many of those extroverts running around a typical networking event are actually not being very successful. They're building transactional, peripheral, unimportant contacts. They're making all kinds of introductions without ever really connecting. They're not building relationships. They're passing out business cards.

Even if you're a shy individual, you certainly have friends, and you know what it means to have intimate relationships with people. Although meeting a new acquaintance might be a more frightening context than hanging with your best friend, you can do it. Everybody can.

It's not about working a room. It's about identifying someone you find empathetic, comfortable, interesting, and perhaps valuable to you in some way. It's about approaching them as real people and greeting them in a friendly and genuine way. Then, exploring your shared interests and passions to connect a little deeper. Then, bonding through real empathy, and vulnerability. And above all, focusing on giving--using any "currency" you have to help fill their needs.

Remember, We're All the Same

I recently met a friend of my assistant. Fred wanted to drive the whole way up from San Diego to Los Angeles to meet with me; so the least I could do was find time before my workout to sit down for a cup of coffee. (By the way, given my schedule these days, only mission critical items are in my focus. If it was not for "managing the gatekeeper," Fred would have never got a bit of my time.) Anyway, Fred is quite interesting. A dedicated student of human behavior and communication, he has a practice and passion for helping individuals sort through difficult times in their relationships. In the course of our conversation, Fred said something that I really enjoyed: "People want to be understood." In fact, he said that one of the deepest desires we all have is to be understood on the deepest levels.

If he is right, the path to creating "instant intimacy" is not about "getting" people to go deep into themselves. It's about "allowing" people to go deep. So how do you do that? I think you start by setting a safe place, one without judgment. Perhaps the best way to lay that ground is to just say it or show it in your actions. The other is to share a little of yourself first. Tell them what really drives you and invite them to share their interests and passions as well. Find out what they really love in life when they're not at the conference. Is it their children, their golf game, or their community service?

The deeper you go, the more permission you give others to do deep as well. Then, listen, listen, listen, and enjoy. That last piece is crucial. People know if you don't care what they are saying. But you need to care. You need to focus and enjoy the humanity that is in everyone around us.

Your objective is not to dump all your issues on someone else. You just want to share enough of yourself so that other people can feel comfortable sharing some of themselves. And ultimately, you win when someone feels like they've been deeply understood and when they discover you're human just like them.

Your Challenge: Skip the Small Talk

With all this in mind, next time you're at a conference or a social gathering and you have only a few minutes to meet someone, I challenge you to skip the small talk as quickly as you can. Don't let the recap of the day's weather last very long! Quickly direct the conversation to stuff that really matters--your and their passions and interests, personal or professional. Yeah, there's always the temptation to make idle chitchat about whatever happens to be in front of you--the appetizers, the table centerpiece, etc. But it's just as easy to say something like the following to someone at a conference: "Hey, what do you think of this conference? Frankly, I struggled in deciding to come. I've been traveling so much lately and my spouse is giving me a hard time and I miss the kids. That said, I'm really finding talks like the last one to be pretty valuable...." With lines like that, you can share a ton in a totally appropriate manner and open up the door for your conversation partner to do the same. Then take care to be understanding of their thoughts and feelings, and you'll be well on your way to quicker, if not instant, intimacy.

3. Boomers Corner: Phased Retirement: Having Your Cake and Eating It Too

By Laura Bruce, Bankrate.com

If you had the opportunity to ease into retirement by working part time while drawing part of your pension, would you do it? Current federal rules say workers who are covered by traditional pensions, or defined benefit plans, must retire completely from that company to collect benefits. But that may soon change.

The Internal Revenue Service is proposing to allow phased retirement, a change that could ease the transition from employee to retiree for millions of workers and help alleviate the upcoming worker shortage.

The Social Security problem that's been front page news for quite some time centers on a future imbalance that has too many retirees siphoning money from a pot that will have too few workers plunking money into it. That same inverted-pyramid scenario may portend too few employees to fill all the jobs needed to keep the American economy rumbling along.

"Our research suggests that if we expect to continue experiencing the domestic product growth that we've seen historically, we don't have the workforce to sustain that growth," says Valerie Paganelli, senior retirement consultant at Watson Wyatt, a Washington, D.C., consulting firm.

"Even with immigration, more women in the workforce, off-shoring, the impact of technology, and extending the working lifetime all layered together, there still may not be

enough people to get us there."

Some of the key aspects in the IRS-proposed phased-retirement program are that participation by employees is voluntary, employees must reach age 59 1/2 to participate and employees must reduce their work hours by 20 percent or more. In addition, employees would still be entitled to the same benefits upon full retirement as an employee who doesn't opt for phased retirement.

"If they lose those protections it would be like, why bother," says AARP senior attorney Mary Ellen Signorille. "But no matter what the situation, people need to sit down with paper and pencil and figure out the numbers."

The government has long allowed employees who are covered by a 401(k), or defined contribution plan, to draw benefits after age 59 1/2 while working.

When Doreen Bellino, benefits supervisor at Mitre Corporation in Bedford, Mass., went on phased retirement, it let her see whether it suited her, and it allowed Mitre to hold on to a key employee.

"Being in the benefits office for 20 years I was familiar with all the plans and could answer all the questions regarding medical plans, dental, life insurance and the like," says Bellino, who is now fully retired. "I was in phased retirement for eight months because I wanted to see how it would work being home an extra day. I worked four days a week, 32 hours. It allowed me to keep medical and dental at the regular employee rate."

Mitre officials estimate that only six to 12 employees take advantage of the phased retirement program each year. The company employees 5,700 scientists and support personnel, says Bill Albright, director of quality work life and benefits, who expects the program to become much more popular as the bulging baby boomer generation marches toward retirement.

"Last year we ran some pre-retirement workshops and we started talking much more about phased retirement. We're finding it puts us ahead of the curve. It adds a flexible work option and a mechanism for holding on to intellectual capital, which is all we have. We don't manufacture anything."

Watson Wyatt surveyed 1,000 employees and found that one out of three would continue working longer than otherwise planned if phased retirement was an option. But some employers aren't quite as enthusiastic about all of the proposed elements, says Paganelli.

"It's really been targeted for certain groups--people with critical skills. It's not necessarily for the broad population. IRS rules require nondiscriminatory standards, but phased retirement demands a level of flexibility as to who might be deemed eligible.

"Also, the IRS proposal sets 59 1/2 as the age for phased retirement. It ties in with [the 401(k)] so it's a legitimate age from the IRS standpoint, but many employers find it

restrictive. They're losing key employees who are retiring at 55, so the regulation won't help as much as it could."

On the other end of the spectrum, AARP, the advocacy group for people 50 and over, wants to see phased retirement kick in at age 62.

"If you make it too young, some will leave the workforce at an earlier age," says AARP attorney Signorille. "The benefit of it is keeping people engaged in the workforce. People live longer. Staying employed is positive. They contribute to Social Security and to Medicare. Some say 62 is not young enough. We don't know, no one knows. IRS can scale back at a later time. If they use 59 1/2 and there's too much uptake, they can't put the horse back in the barn."

As Signorille mentioned, everyone considering phased retirement needs to crunch the numbers and make sure their financial needs will be met. The IRS points out that while phased retirement can give employees additional time to save for retirement, it can also reduce retirement payments because the employee is receiving money before normal retirement age.

Phased retirement for defined benefit plans won't take place until final rules are published. There's no word yet as to when that might happen.

4. Success Story

Aaron Rosenthal, age 30

Aaron lost his high tech marketing job in January of 2002. He knew it was only a matter of time before the ax would fall. With his wife working, he decided he would concentrate on jobs in the non-profit sector, even though he had never held a full time position at a non-profit. He performed part time consulting jobs while he looked at non-profit opportunities. He found a position for marketing and outreach for the Jewish Community Center of San Francisco on an Internet job site directed at non-profits (www.opportunitynoc.org). The job pays \$20,000 less than his old job. He convinced them that he was going to be committed and dedicated,

They hired him. Persistence (not being a pest) paid off.

5. Humor Department

Actual events from various interviews:

- "He wouldn't get out of the chair until I made him an offer."
- "Pulled out a Polaroid camera and snapped a picture of me. Said he collected photos of everyone who interviewed him."
- "Candidate asked me if I would put on a suit jacket to ensure that the offer was formal."
- "Brought his mother into the room for the interview."

- "Said he wasn't interested in the position because it paid too much."
- "When I refused to make a job offer, he tried to hit me."
- "I'm not actually overqualified. My resume is full of lies."

6. Words that Inspire

"I'm always telling people prayer, of course, is good, but through prayer, we can't change reality. Change reality through heart, through action."

-- Dalai Lama, spiritual and temporal head of Tibet.

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