



Randy's Work *and You*

March Edition

Dear clients and colleagues,

There is a difference between networking and broadcasting when using social networks. Robin Dunbar, an anthropologist who now works at Oxford University, concluded that the cognitive power of the brain limits the size of the social network that an individual of any given species can develop. Extrapolating from the brain sizes and social networks of apes, Dr Dunbar suggested that the size of the human brain allows stable networks of about 150.

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This month's topics:

1. **Featured Article: In My View**
2. **Interview Tips: Best Days of the week to interview.**
3. **Boomer Corner: You're Addicted to Success**
4. **Success Story: Successful industry change**
5. **Humor Department: A Tale of Two Companies**
6. **Words that Inspire**

1. In My View:

A potpourri of opinion, thoughts and insight on various job search topics.

By
Randy Block

On the needs of most organizations in today's economy:

There are only two basic "pain points that any organization has today: revenue and productivity. What are your relevant strengths and experience, which will help them out?

Most organizations want to know how you can help them survive the next 6 months. Long-term strategic thinkers need not apply. It is mostly tactical now.

On job seekers over 50:

Stop spending most your time looking for a full time job! Start looking for "work".

Layoffs are happening but a lot of the work remains. 30 somethings don't want to hire their mother or father. Be open to short-term solutions (especially those that involve mentoring). You will get a lot more traction that way.

On changing industries:

Be prepared to take a serious pay cut. In most situations your past experience is not relevant. You have to lead with your motivational/transferable skills. One more point: you *must* be introduced to a target company through networking. The company cannot relate to your experience. BUT, everyone can relate to metrics. You need to get away from those achievements where you cannot give at least an educated estimate. Otherwise, you will get: "so what?"

On networking:

The definition: It is exchanging information. It is not asking for a job or selling.

It's building key and strategic relationships. It takes time. If you don't have the time or the inclination to network, then look for a "survival job" until the economy comes out of the doldrums.

The world spins on relationships. This is especially true now.

On Interviewing:

- You cannot blow an interview when you never a good fit in the first place.
- The only wrong answer in an interview is a dishonest one.
- Your first priority in an interview is *not to get the offer*. Rather you priority is to determine if there is a fit.
- Keep in mind that at least half the hire is "chemistry." In my view a large part of what makes up chemistry is shared values. Do you know what yours are?
- Always go to where you think the hiring manager is at the present. Don't go to where you think they should be and offer a solution. This takes great listening skills. When they know they have been heard and understood, they are much more open to building a solution *with you*. The days of the cavalry rescue are over. Build the bridge first.

On what's the most relevant in your background now?

Anyone who could fog a mirror in the 80's and 90's was successful. What organizations want to know in today's economy is about your success since 2001. You must demonstrate how you can be successful in today's difficult market place (revenue and productivity).

On working with recruiters

If a company has a search out, the specs are extremely rigid (and many). The candidates they present must fit 99% of the requirements. If the company wanted an unemployed person, they would run an ad or network.

In a recent article found in *BusinessWeek*, Kevin Kelly, the CEO of Heidrick and

Struggles said that the 55-year-old business model of retained search has to be streamlined. LinkedIn and other social networks and technologies are eroding their business.

More and more companies are using contingency firms for high-level positions.

In other words, if the perfect candidate comes along we will hire them and pay a fee. Jobs paying \$250K have been seen listed recently with employment agencies. The sense of urgency and the fear of hiring the wrong person have slowed down the hiring process to a crawl in many situations.

A recruiter won't place you. They are too busy trying to get assignments.

Your comments and reaction are most welcome.

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Randy brings expertise in executive search as a certified career coach. He has guided all levels of professionals in the areas of career transition: changing careers, choosing a career direction, evaluating/negotiating offers, executive career marketing, finding jobs, getting organized, as well as finding opportunities for self-employment, freelancing and consulting. He holds an IJCTC certificate from the Career Planning and Adult Development, a CCMC (Certified Career Management Coach) from Career Coach Academy.

2. Interview Tips—Best days of the week to Interview

In this market, your answer might be “any day as long as I get an interview!” I would agree in the spirit of pragmatism.

However, if given a choice of “when would you like to come in?” keep in mind the following:

Fridays are usually the worst days of the week with Mondays coming in a close second. Why you may ask? Mondays for most hiring managers are devoted to getting oriented after the weekend. Fridays are Fridays. Email me if you'd like more information.

Wednesday is usually ideal followed by Tuesday or Thursday.

You can request alternate dates. They are not thinking of you and your need to maximize the interview.

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Management Coach) from Career Coach Academy.

3. Boomer Corner-- You're Addicted to Success

The WSJ

2/10/09

Forced to take a buyout from the Kansas City Star last summer, Paul Wenske lost his sense of identity. "I'd been an investigative reporter all my life, and then boom," says Mr. Wenske, an award-winning journalist of 30 years. "Suddenly you're not the same person you used to be. You look in the mirror. Who are you?"

The deepening recession is exacting punishment for a psychological vice that masquerades as virtue for many working people: the unmitigated identification of self with occupation, accomplishment and professional status. This tendency can induce outright panic as more and more people fear loss of employment.

"It's like having your entire investment in one stock, and that stock is your job," says Robert Leahy, director of the American Institute for Cognitive Therapy in New York. "You're going to be extremely anxious about losing that job, and depressed if you do."

Over-identification with work is one of many culprits in the epidemic of recession-related anxiety and depression that mental-health providers are reporting. Fear of losing one's house or failing to find another job are likely bigger contributors. But unlike those problems, the identity dilemma is within the individual's power to address, requiring no lender mercy or stroke of job-hunting fortune. One approach can require mental exercises, lifestyle alterations and a new set of acquaintances. But the science behind cognitive behavioral therapy, a psychotherapeutic approach that aims to change self-destructive thinking and behavior, suggests that that work can bring long-lasting rewards.

Like a drug, professional success can induce a feeling of ecstasy that quickly feels essential. Recapturing that feeling can require greater and greater feats, a phenomenon that -- more than simple greed -- explains the drive for ever-larger bonuses and conquests. "With riches, success and fame ... you find that greater and greater doses of your 'upper' are needed to become 'high,'" David Burns, a Stanford University psychiatrist and pioneer of cognitive behavioral therapy, writes in his 1980 book "Feeling Good."

One recommended exercise for people caught in that trap is to evoke

memories of earlier times that were free of things deemed essential today. "I've published a lot of books, but when I look back, I'm no happier than in graduate school sleeping on a mattress on the floor," says Dr. Leahy.

Often reinforcing the achievement cycle are colleagues who share the view that large bonuses, medical breakthroughs or great works of journalism are the only important measures of worth. One solution -- simpler in theory than execution -- is to broaden one's circle of friends and colleagues.

One of the biggest fears for holders of respected positions is the potential loss of public esteem. Therapists say the high achiever often holds self-defeating double standards, feeling sympathetic toward the unemployed while assuming that unemployment would bring him only shame.

For Michael Precker, that loss of status wasn't as grim as the fear of it. A veteran foreign correspondent and editor for the Dallas Morning News, Mr. Precker took a buyout in 2006 and now manages a high-end strip club. "I really wondered how it would feel to sever that link -- Michael Precker of the Dallas Morning News," he says. "But it has been easier than I thought. I feel lucky." Likewise, Mr. Wenske is working happily as a senior community-affairs adviser for the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City.

To disassociate identity from professional status, therapists recommend taking pride in characteristics that can't be stripped away -- virtue, integrity, honesty, generosity. They also recommend investing more time and pride in relationships with family, friends and community. Of course, obsessive attention to work can breed success. But therapists say that adding some balance tends to help rather than hurt performance, in part by reducing pressure.

For 18 years, Steve Roman was the public-relations director of the largest bank in Arizona; his forced buyout in 2000 made news in the local papers. "That separation was unsettling. Everybody knew me as Steven Roman of Bank One," he says.

His new career at a Phoenix communications firm is less visible, but gratifying because he is a founder and owner. More gratifying yet, he says, is the status his two children have granted him. "I love saying, 'I'm Kyle Roman's dad. I'm Katie Roman's dad.' "

4. Success Story

Michael- 50's

Success was always with him from the very beginning—undergraduate engineering degree from University of Michigan and an MBA from Stanford University.

He cut his teeth in materials, supply chain and manufacturing management. His leadership and management skills developed and excelled. After joining a major computer systems manufacturer, he extended his portfolio through successive promotions to include software and hardware product development, eventually becoming VP of enterprise IT services and later VP of OEM sales.

He took an early retirement in 2006 and unfortunately had an accident requiring an extended medical leave. When he fully recovered, began his search for his next opportunity.

In 2008, Michael decided that now was the time to change industries. He chose Green Tech. After 8 months of diligent networking and perseverance, he is now the VP of Sales and Services at a green tech startup.

His success will continue.

5. Humor Department: A Tale of Two Companies

An American automobile company and a Japanese auto company decided to have a competitive boat race on the Detroit River. Both teams practiced hard and long to reach their peak performance. On the big day, they were as ready as they could be. The Japanese team won by a mile.

Afterwards, the American team became discouraged by the loss and their morale sagged. Corporate management decided that the reason for the crushing defeat had to be found. A Continuous Measurable Improvement Team of "Executives" was set up to investigate the problem and to recommend appropriate corrective action. Their conclusion: The problem was that the Japanese team had 8 people rowing and 1 person steering, whereas the American team had 1 person rowing and 8 people steering.

The American Corporate Steering Committee immediately hired a consulting firm to do a study on the management structure. After some time and billions of dollars, the consulting firm concluded that "too many people were steering and not enough rowing." To prevent losing to the Japanese again next year, the management structure was changed to "4 Steering Managers, 3 Area Steering Managers, and 1 Staff Steering Manager" and a new performance system for the person rowing the boat to give more incentive to work harder and become a six sigma performer. "We must give him empowerment and enrichment." That ought to do it.

The next year the Japanese team won by two miles. The American Corporation laid off the rower for poor performance, sold all of the paddles, cancelled all capital investments for new equipment, halted development of a new canoe, awarded high performance awards to the consulting firm, and distributed the money saved as bonuses to the senior executives.

7. Words that Inspire

“The problem is not whether business will survive in competition with business, but whether business will survive at all in the face of social change”.

-- Laurence J. McGinley, educator

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