



Randy's Work *and You*

September Edition

Dear clients and colleagues,

Job seekers from rank-and-file workers to senior executives are preparing their résumés for what may be the strongest fall hiring season in years.

Numerous indicators suggest the job market is brightening after a long gloomy spell. The national unemployment rate, at 5%, is at the lowest level since September 2001; job searches are becoming shorter and job changes are becoming more frequent.

The "job quit" rate, which approximates the opportunities for workers to switch jobs, rose every month this year compared with year-earlier levels, according to the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics. Job searches in the second quarter took 3.1 months, down from the year-earlier quarter, when it took an average of 3.8 months to find employment, according to outplacement firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas.

There's stepped-up activity on the employer side, too, with a growing number of companies posting open positions. Heidrick & Struggles, an executive-search firm, has seen an increase this year in both employers seeking new executives as well as executives looking for new employment. Executive-recruitment firm Korn/Ferry International, meanwhile, says business rose 40% this fiscal year from the previous year. And more companies are adopting variable-pay programs, such as bonuses, that are based on performance, as new projections have executive-pay increases holding steady next year.

But while finding new employment may be getting easier, making the switch to a new employer is increasingly complicated. With changes in tax laws and a growing selection of benefits to keep track of (such as flexible spending and health-savings accounts), **it's become just as critical to have a job-exit strategy as a job-hunting plan.**

Copies of all past E-zines are archived on my website. Feel free to pass this E-zine on.

To subscribe, click on <mailto:randy@randyblock.com>

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Upcoming Events:

Tuesdays, starting 10/4 and ending 10/25, 7:00 PM - 9:00 p.m.

In Larkspur, CA. I will be giving a workshop titled: "**A New Kind of Retirement**".

Were you born between 1946 and 1964? What has changed? Nearly everything! Seeing a new kind of retirement is the first step in developing a plan that encapsulates the best part of the past with a new future! We will discuss transition into meaningful life/work arrangements as you reorganize your later years around core values and life challenges.

For details, go to <http://www.marinlearn.com/>.

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This month's topics:

1. **Optimizing Your Follow-Up Letter**
2. **Interview Skills That Attract Offers**
3. **Boomer Corner: Boomers spending online**
4. **Success Story**

5. Humor Department

6. Words that Inspire

1. Optimizing Your Follow-Up Letter

A follow-up letter seems like a last-ditch effort on the part of a jobseeker, am I right? Ah, but wait! The act of sending this kind of letter can actually sway a company in your direction.

Companies don't always make hiring decisions when expected. Sending your follow-up letter a few days or a couple weeks after the interview can actually reflect your ambition and dedication to the employer. In some cases, it will reflect you as a more viable, dedicated, and persistent option to employers.

List new and unique content, and avoid regurgitating exact details contained in your original cover letter or those spoken in the interview whenever possible. Instead, keep it fresh by expanding in directions that put new angles or views on your work history.

A follow-up letter is referred to as a reintroduction or thank-you letter — although a thank-you letter is oftentimes only a few sentences versus the typical 2-3 paragraphs used in a follow-up letter.

Keep in mind that few jobseekers actually send a thank-you or follow-up letter. Therefore, when it actually occurs, it can sway a hiring manager's decision in your direction. Remember, it's all about who looks the best in the eyes of the employer. Here are just a few reasons for sending a great follow-up letter, along with suggestions on what to include in it:

1. Thank the interviewer for his time. Everyone likes to be recognized and thanked, even if the "tree fails to bear fruit." Send a follow-up letter even on those occasions when the interview didn't go as well as expected.
2. Refresh the interviewer's memory concerning a particular topic you talked about in the interview. It helps to relate to the interviewer; and by bringing up a previously discussed topic, you can draw the interviewer's attention on to you ... even if only for a minute.
3. Forum to reinforce knowledge, skills, and abilities brought up in the interview. Don't be afraid to restate what makes you a prime candidate for the position. It doesn't hurt to mention it, because maybe the interviewer missed something relevant about your skill set.
4. Address new information that wasn't originally brought up; e.g. you may have recently learned the company plans to expand marketing efforts in France. If you speak French, noting that in your follow-up letter would definitely be a smart move.
5. Sometimes small gestures open a door to bigger rewards, such as a second interview. Receiving follow-up correspondence from a jobseeker can keep the line of communication open between the hiring company and the jobseeker.
6. Spell out transferable skills not brought up in the interview. If you sat through the entire interview and left with a less than favorable feeling about the outcome, then detailing how your current skill set is relevant to the open position can build a bridge between your current, or most recent, position and your target position. Don't overlook any opportunity you have to increase your chances for employment. The hiring process is much like a dance. Fail to dance (and dance properly) in order to woo the judges, and your chances of winning diminish. It's always best to stray from what the bulk of jobseekers are doing, so that you draw attention to yourself whenever the opportunity arises

By Teena Rose

Resume to Referral Teena Rose is a certified and published resume writer and author of "The 20-Minute Cover Letter Fixer".

2. Interview Skills That Attract Offers

An interviewer's mission is to assess your qualifications compared to the other candidates interviewed. Asking you questions is their way of accomplishing that mission. Preparing meaningful responses in advance is your way of impressing the interviewer.

Be prepared to talk about your skills, competencies, qualifications and accomplishments especially as they pertain to the specific opening. Know how to state likes and dislikes, your strengths, weaknesses and goals succinctly and fluently.

Especially know how to convey the value you bring to the table – the strengths, unique gifts and marketable assets that are distinctly yours. If you want to stand out in the huge ocean of candidates that represents your competition, you must be prepared to state how you differentiate yourself from the crowd.

You must be able to respond appropriately to the question of why you left your previous position, assuming you left voluntarily. No matter how challenging your supervisor was or how grueling the workload, you must frame your response in a positive light.

Make sure you do not discuss salary. Interviewers are aware of average job salaries and want to be sure you are in the ballpark. However, their knowing your salary history or requirements can disqualify you or lock

you in to compensation that does not match your worth. If asked, you can simply state that your salary is negotiable.

While your answers will help the interviewer assess your skills for the position at hand, it's how you respond that more importantly determines your overall fit with the company. Personality is ninety percent of the battle. You may answer a question in a qualifying way, but your attitude could be telling them no.

At the outset, you must establish a rapport with your interviewer and maintain the chemistry between you throughout the meeting. You could be the most qualified candidate for the position, but the person with whom the interviewer feels the most comfortable gets the offer.

Be prepared to ask your own questions - about the position itself, the company and opportunities for your own growth. This allows you to quickly assess the viability of your pursuing the position further. An interviewer may like you, especially because of your questions, and want you to continue through subsequent interview stages; however, you may decide the job is not for you.

Come to the interview dressed appropriately, and on time. Your handshake needs to be firm but not gripping. Eye contact must be maintained throughout the interview. Sit upright in your chair and try not to shift your posture too much. Remember, you're there to sell yourself; before the interview is over, make sure you ask for the offer. Fully prepared, you will come away a success.

By David Richter

David Richter is a recognized authority on career coaching and job search support. He has spent many years in recruitment, staffing, outplacement, counseling psychology and career management. David understands the mechanisms for success. He has shown countless job seekers how to differentiate themselves and leverage their potential to the highest possible level, making a real difference in their careers. He has formulated specific strategies any job seeker can use to secure interviews and receive offers. David holds both a Bachelors and Masters in Electrical Engineering and a Master of Arts Degree in Counseling Psychology. David has authored several books and articles on the various facets of career transition and job search support. "Winning The Resume Game - Insider Secrets To Creating Powerful Resumes" is his first book which has received superlative endorsements.

3. Boomer Corner: Boomers Online

Baby boomers spend more online than other age groups, Jupiter says

Baby boomers spend more online than average online users despite comparable incomes, according to a new study from Jupiter Research.

37% of online baby boomers who bought products or services on the web said they spent more than \$250 in the prior three months. That compares with 32% of online users in all age groups, Jupiter said. 76% of baby boomers have made online purchases of products or services.

Baby boomers—those born between 1946 and 1964—account for nearly one-third of the online population, making them the largest age group on the Internet, according to Jupiter. And they are as tenured as the average online user—48% have more than five years online experience, compared with 51% of total online adults.

Jupiter also found that the online baby boomer population skews younger than does the general baby boomer population—almost one-third were between 40 and 44 years old. *About 52% of the online boomer population is female.*

Jupiter surveyed 1,562 U.S. online users ages 40 to 59 years old for the study

4. Success Story

How I Got Where I Am Today: An Independent Party Planner

There are career transitions, and there are career overhauls.

Maneesh Goyal made one of the latter. He went from a promising career in the nonprofit sector, where he saw himself as being on a track to become an executive director, to entrepreneur -- the founder of a company devoted to planning lavish parties for high-profile corporate and celebrity clients.

Mr. Goyal, 29, hasn't looked back since. After starting MKG Productions from his apartment in 2002, he now has five employees, working out of a loft-like office space in New York. His company has planned exclusive bashes for clients ranging from Diddy (formerly known as Sean "P. Diddy" Combs) to Virgin Records America Inc. and Song, Delta Air Lines Inc.'s low-cost service.

"I couldn't be happier," Mr. Goyal says.

Not that this was something he had ever imagined doing when he was a student.

At Duke University, Mr. Goyal was pre-med. "I always thought I'd probably become a doctor," he says. "In

part, that was a cultural thing, being Indian-American."

Mr. Goyal's father had been an engineer, and his parents would have been pleased to see him go into medicine.

But though he completed the pre-med coursework, Mr. Goyal gradually realized it wasn't for him. He spent time abroad, studying the AIDS epidemic in India, and gradually decided that he wanted to focus on public health.

When he graduated, he headed to Yale University for a master's degree in that subject. His plan? A career working in the nonprofit public-health sector.

The plan seemed to be working. When he completed his master's in 1999, Mr. Goyal got a job as a program officer at the Dyson Foundation, a private grant maker in Millbrook, N.Y. Mr. Goyal was focused on children's health programs.

But in the summer of 2001, the foundation did some reorganizing and wanted to move Mr. Goyal's job from its New York office to Boston. Mr. Goyal didn't want to make the move, which meant that he was out of a job. And then Sept. 11 happened. Mr. Goyal lived in Lower Manhattan, very close to the World Trade Center.

The attack had reminded him that life is short and uncertain, and it caused him to rethink his own life. "I wanted to do something that didn't feel like work," he says.

He knew from reading the newspaper that there were companies that put together events and parties, and he was intrigued. Not only did it seem exciting and glamorous, but also something that he would be good at. "I like details, logistics and putting out fires," he says.

So while Mr. Goyal was receiving severance from the Dyson Foundation, he began to volunteer for party-planning companies. He wanted to see how the industry worked.

So he made calls and sent out resumes, and soon enough he was doing some pro bono work for companies that did major events. "I got to help on everything," he says.

Meanwhile, his parents were less than thrilled at his new interest. "They were absolutely mortified," he says.

"They were like, 'What is event planning? Is this why you went to those schools?'"

They asked other family members to call him and talk him out of it. But Mr. Goyal was determined.

And then he got a lucky break.

At one event in which he was working, he says, he struck the right person favorably. It was someone who worked for Diddy.

And a few weeks later, that person called him and asked him to plan a New Year's Party for Diddy in Miami.

Mr. Goyal had a client. He was nervous, he says, but he pulled off the event, and that's when he decided that if he was going to work in the field, he should do it on his own, rather than seek a full-time job with an event-planning company. Once he got back from Miami, he says he filed papers establishing MKG Productions.

He says he'd always had an entrepreneurial itch. "I had a feeling that somehow I'd do something independent, how cool that would be," he says.

His first year was rough. Not only was he starting a new business -- always a challenge -- but also he was doing so at a time when the economy, particularly in New York, was very slow.

He worked out of the Soho apartment he shared with roommates and did only four events. He barely made enough money to live on that year, he says.

But he never thought about giving it up. He got clients by going out and meeting people socially, always explaining his company and distributing his card. And he'd put together a small mailing list of a few hundred names.

Slowly, it seemed to be working. By 2003, his business was picking up, largely because Mr. Goyal started building successful relationships with public relations firms. "Part of any press plan is events," Mr. Goyal says.

And he'd had a knack for planning events that the media covered, he says, citing a party he did for an upscale New York retailer. Its store was tiny, he says, too small for a big party, but Mr. Goyal says he was able to and put a red carpet on the street and sidewalk. That was because in his previous dealings with the city's police and parks departments, he says, he cultivated friendly relationships with employees who were then willing to help him out. Closing off part of the street in front of the store alone got the event some press, he says.

In the summer of 2003, Mr. Goyal moved into his first office, which he shared with another lone entrepreneur, and then that fall, he hired his first employee.

"That was a huge transition," he says. "There's a steep small-business learning curve, with payroll and payroll taxes and health insurance."

But he figured it all out, and the company has kept growing.

These days, Mr. Goyal doesn't do much of the actual event planning, leaving that to his employees.

Sometimes he misses that aspect of the job, but his time is devoted to the logistics of running the company, and bringing in new clients, something that he's always had a knack for. And there's plenty for him to do.

He says he arrives at work at the office around 8 or 8:30 every morning and stays until around 7:30. "I'm the first one in," he says.

His goal is to continue to grow the company and to move beyond events to marketing plans for corporate clients, he says.
But for now he's thrilled with how things have worked out. He no longer loses sleep worrying about making payroll. In fact, the business is doing so well that Mr. Goyal has just purchased a new apartment in a fashionable downtown neighborhood.
And his parents? "Now they love it," Mr. Goyal says. "They weren't worried about what I was filling my days with, but whether I'd be successful."
-- Ms. Waldman is a free-lance writer in New York.

5. Humor Department

Top 11 Reasons to Go to Work Naked:

1. Your boss is always yelling, "I wanna see your butt in here by 8:00!"
2. Can take advantage of computer monitor radiation to work on your tan.
3. Inventive way to finally meet that hunk in Human Resources.
4. "I'd love to chip in, but I left my wallet in my pants."
5. To stop those creepy guys in Marketing from looking down your blouse.
6. You want to see if it's like the dream.
7. So that, with a little help from Muzak, you can add "Exotic Dancer" to your exaggerated resume.
8. People stop stealing your pens after they've seen where you keep them.
9. Diverts attention from the fact that you also came to work drunk.
10. Gives "bad hair day" a whole new meaning.
11. No one steals your chair.

6. Words that Inspire

"There is no good arguing with the inevitable. The only argument available with an east wind is to put on your overcoat."

James Russell Lowell, diplomat and poet.

Your comments and feedback on this E-zine are welcome!

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Career Transition Coach & Consultant

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