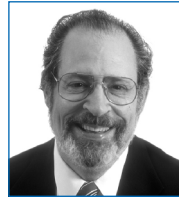


# CareerSmart Advisor™

Strategies & Solutions for Your Career Success

## A Note From Dave

When was the last time you heard, “You look like a million bucks!”? If it’s been a while, you may want to brush up on your appearance before your next job interview because image is important for executives. We often don’t take notice of the newest trends in executive-wear, particularly if we have been with the same company for a long time, and then we find ourselves digging through the closet at interview time. This issue’s cover story acts as a “style guide” with tips for what to wear, how to sound, what to bring, and how to appear.



One of the joys in my role at ExecuNet is getting the chance to meet and interact with some really wonderful people. This issue includes two examples of members that are truly special. In his Learnings from Landings story, Mike Trainor explains the unique path he took to finding his new position, exemplifying the philosophy of how “giving” is eventually reciprocal for those who are patient. Another member, Beverly Sherbondy, graciously shared her transition experiences in an article she wrote for ExecuNet, *What the Manuals Don’t Tell You About an Executive Job Search*.

Louise Kursmark, the ExecuNet facilitator in Cincinnati, has written an excellent book along with Lori Davila about behavior-based interviewing. The book contains valuable information for both interviewer and interviewee, and we’ve included both a review and Q&A with Louise. I think you’ll find the book very helpful in preparing for the interview process.

Sincerely,

*Dave*

Dave Opton  
 Founder & CEO  
 ExecuNet

## Looking and Acting the Part: Present Yourself as a Winning Executive

By Robyn Greenspan

**D**on’t bother dusting off that old hard-shelled briefcase, gold pocket watch or the power clone suit for your return to the executive marketplace. Success looks differently in today’s business environment. The three-piece suit and big shoulder-padded blazers have come and gone; pantyhose has become an endangered species; and résumés on crisp bond paper are often replaced by high-tech digital campaigns.

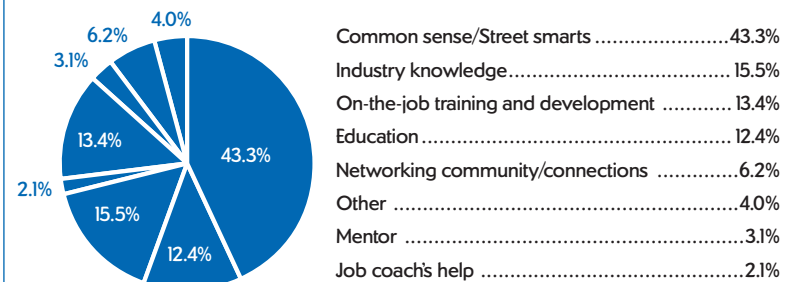
Word choices and interview styles have also evolved. To get the job you want you’ll have to be able to speak the language, understand the culture, and make a relevant impact on a hiring manager.

Are you ready?

“The high-level executive is now selling him/herself. He/she needs to follow the same 21st century selling strategies for themselves as for a product or service,” says executive coach Leslie Ungar, founder and president of Electric Impulse, Inc.

Continued on page 4

### What Factor Has Been the Most Significant Contributor to Your Professional Success?



A 2005 JA Worldwide survey found that “businessperson” topped the list of career choices among their 1,000+ teen respondents for the third consecutive year, outpacing 36 other professions by a large margin. As advice to these budding executives, ExecuNet asked 100 of its members to identify the most significant contributors to their own professional success.

If you’d like to become part of our survey group, please e-mail [Robyn.Greenspan@execunet.com](mailto:Robyn.Greenspan@execunet.com)

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## Learnings From Landings

# Give First, and Results Will Follow

Mike Trainor's job search ended with a tough choice, but for this 53-year-old ExecuNet member the journey was filled with easy decisions. Mike's strategy was to help others first, and by doing so, he was confident that he would reap the karmic benefits.

### Partnering as Networking

"My priority focus wasn't a job. I looked for potential partners in business development opportunities. I tried to tie together projects and start-ups, pro bono work and marketing projects," says Trainor.

“

'Me' is a great package but 'me plus something else' is better. Find something to align yourself with to make the package even better.”

”

Once he had connected with some solid projects, Mike used his contacts within the venture capital community and pitched ideas. "I creatively used a combination of ideas and potential projects, and then used the projects as reasons to contact people in my database."

"I turned it around from me asking for something to me offering something. The only thing I asked for was a list of people who would find this new idea interesting."

Through creatively connecting and presenting projects to the venture capital community, Mike created three job offers for himself. The situations were less than ideal, so Mike passed on the offers and continued his outreach to investors.

"I'm essentially a salesperson. 'Me' is a great package but 'me plus something else' is better. Find something to align yourself with to make the package even better."

### One Good Turn Leads to Another

Enthusiasm for his start-up projects eventually led Trainor to volunteer with a local college, where he helped them develop a curriculum plan. "From there, I found a partner, and we developed an idea for a Fortune 50 company." The timing wasn't right for Trainor, so he persevered with his networking to find a more immediate full-time opportunity.

"I talked to the dean about some of the business ideas and solicited some of the students to work on the marketing plan. The kids worked with us and learned a lot — we traded experience for their time. It was a good combination of their smarts and our business experience."

Trainor's efforts left lasting impressions on the students and the dean as

well. "The dean of the university knew the president of the company where I work now. My involvement with the university led the dean to put me in touch with the company."

### Patience with the Process

"I needed to learn lessons and find a place that was a good corporate fit," notes Trainor, as he reflected on some of the obstacles he encountered along the way.

"I was surprised that online ads got so few responses. With the exception of ExecuNet, it was like a black hole. I know from experience that ExecuNet is real jobs with real opportunities. I responded to all sorts of positions on job boards, and the only resource that turned up actual jobs was ExecuNet. I had half a dozen interviews and two offers. I didn't take them, because I found something better suited for me."

Trainor's disappointment was not limited to online ads, as he experienced a recruiter "black hole" too. "If you're not of interest to a recruiter, they drop you. I got to a certain level with one, and then he wouldn't return my phone calls. When you're hot you're hot; when you're not, you're not. You're valuable to a recruiter, when you're valuable to a recruiter."

Even Trainor's current employer took their time before making him an offer.

"Don't underestimate the fact that even if

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## FastTrack Programs – Mar/Apr 2005

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- 3/22 — **Running Under the Radar** — Karen Armon
- 3/22 — **Winning Interviews: Convincing Conversations** — Judy Rosemarin
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- 3/24 — **Hot Landings** — George Bradt
- 4/6 — **Running Under the Radar** — Karen Armon
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- 4/12 — **Winning Interviews: Convincing Conversations** — Judy Rosemarin

Register today to guarantee your participation in the programs of your choice! Call ExecuNet's Member Services at 1-800-637-3126 or visit [www.execunet.com/fasttrack.cfm](http://www.execunet.com/fasttrack.cfm)

# What the Manuals Don't Tell You About an Executive Job Search

*This article comes from an ExecuNet member who recently landed a position as senior vice president of human resources for The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society after a 13-month search. Beverly skillfully applied her 27 years in the human resources management field to her own transition, and expertly wrote about her experience.*

By **Beverly V. Sherbondy**

Okay, you're a senior-level executive, and you have just resigned, quit, or have been any of the following: job eliminated, downsized, outplaced, right sized, terminated, discharged, performance managed, fired, transitioned out or given a package.

Are you ready for what lies ahead while you are "in transition" and until you land your next position? You're a smart, seasoned professional with a great background, and you've got some outplacement services and a severance package, so this transition should be no problem. You're confident that you can develop a powerful résumé, plan an effective job search and interview well. But are you confident you can truly market yourself and network effectively?

There are countless sources for learning the mechanics and processes of a job search, but there are some things you need to know that aren't in the manuals.

## The Emotional Component

- At first, there may be anger, depression, anxiety, relief, sadness or fear. It's important to acknowledge and allow these feelings for a time, you need to work through them before you can move in a positive direction.
- You'll also experience a culture shock of sorts. You're accustomed to being in a position of power, being the person who had the answers, and called the shots. Now, your world has no meetings to run or reports to read, and no one asks for your input, or needs you to make a decision.
- You may also be shocked by the lack of professionalism you experience. Today's intensely electronic communication

methods often substitute for a personal conversation, or a return phone call.

This reflects a shift in relationships, with some people feeling uncomfortable and not knowing how to relate to those who are out of work. Regardless of the reason, you'll likely feel a loss of self esteem, and may begin to question your own value.

- Days will go by without any return calls or e-mails. *If* you get a response from a job application, it will be months in coming. Even when you get an interview, the process can stretch for months. (Many of us found that weather and certain days of the week also affect search activity!)
- Some days you'll be energized and ready to attack your "to do" list with gusto. On other days, you'll feel defeated and unable to make even one phone call.
- On the positive side, you may be delightfully surprised at the generosity and willingness to help that many people will exhibit. Total strangers, fellow job seekers, former colleagues, and friends of friends will often reach out to share their experiences, knowledge and advice, inside information and contacts. These positive contacts are invaluable for uplifting your spirits, reenergizing you and validating your worth.

## The Truth about Networking

- If networking hasn't been a regular part of your professional life, you're in for a difficult time. If you have been very internally focused on your company, its people and its challenges, and haven't kept in touch with a variety of people outside your company and your industry, you'll have to start from scratch to begin your networking activity.

- Like it or not, networking still remains the most effective method for landing your next opportunity. Some say it's five times more effective than using Internet postings.
- Networking may come naturally to some; for others, it is a struggle. It feels awkward, and it's difficult making those cold calls. (Some confessed to making calls at 7 AM, hoping to go straight to voicemail, where they could just leave a prescribed message!)
- You must really be ready to network. You need to be crystal clear about what you want and what value you bring, *as well* as what you want to ask and what you want to learn from your contact. (Some devised their own "value proposition" and had a scripted cheat sheet to use!)
- Talk to anyone and everyone; show interest in their backgrounds and experiences; ask what challenges they're facing; ask who else they know that you can speak with.
- Although you will be frustrated by the percentage of people who will not respond to your networking requests (for one senior executive it was 32%), you will most likely be pleasantly surprised by the helpfulness and kindness of those you do connect with.
- Be diligent about keeping records of all contacts and discussions. (It's embarrassing to get a return phone call when you don't remember who they are, or who referred you to the person!) Be sure to follow up with a thank you.
- Networking to find a job resembles a numbers game. You need to continually fill the funnel with a large number of new contacts, which will lead to a smaller percentage of face-to-face meetings, interviews, and ultimately a job offer. In one case, 245 contacts led to 41 face-to-face meetings (17%), 2 company interviews (.8%), and 1 job offer.

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# Looking and Acting the Part

Continued from page 1

The packaging will get noticed before the contents, and evidence of how image impacts impression was recently seen on *The Apprentice* this season. Contestant Danny Kastner was already a successful businessman behind a computer monitor, but his offbeat look and demeanor didn't translate well to the TV screen, resulting in an early firing.

"Your appearance is as important as your verbal presentation. You are being judged from the moment they are laying eyes on you. Make sure it's a good impression," warns executive search consultant Cathleen Faerber of The Wellesley Group, Inc.

## Documents that Differentiate and Open Doors

Your first appearance to a hiring manager may come in the form of paper, such as a résumé, business card or one-page profile/bio. Not only should it convey your professionalism, skills and experience, it should set you apart from other candidates.

"Ultimately, the résumé is nothing more than a marketing tool," says Faerber. "How the document looks and is presented is equally important. Well written, printed clearly and professionally presented."

Faerber recommends a maximum 1½ page résumé of clear descriptions, devoid of typos and poorly constructed sentences. Also, the résumé may only be one component in your executive portfolio, as some positions require additional materials that showcase specific talents and abilities.

"The presentations of executives are much more than résumés. You should include video clips, audio testimonials, articles which you've written, and articles which feature your success. The package should be covering all aspects of the communication modalities — visual, auditory and kinesthetic," recommends Dr. Ted Sun, president and organizational designer, Creative Innovations Enterprises.

An increasing number of senior executives are demonstrating their technological relevance with online résumés and portfolios; however, Tony Lee, editor-in-chief and general manager of CareerJournal.com, says, "Even if applicants create wonderfully creative websites, it may not help them land a job. Many hiring managers don't have the time to visit candidates' websites.

Lee issues some guidelines for keeping the online page professional. "If you're going to link your personal website to an electronic résumé, don't post baby pictures, political rants, and song samples from your favorite bands on the site. Flagrantly personal items, such as vacation photos or diaries detailing your love life, are inappropriate on an applicant's website."

## The Sounds of Professionalism

A phone screening or interview is likely during your job searching process, and the opportunity will serve as an arena for you to demonstrate your confidence and executive voice. Let your word choices, tone and delivery be an extension of your printed materials, which project professionalism.

Professional development consultant ArLyne Diamond, Ph.D., Diamond Associates, offers talking tips:

- Be clear and concise
- Do not be apologetic in tone or words
- Do not demean yourself or others
- Be careful not to use word fillers such as "like," "you know," "he goes," etc.
- Sound educated but not stuffy or pedantic
- Use simple words and don't show off
- Remember, when you are on the phone, they do not have benefit of your nonverbal communication. Be sure to keep your voice positive, friendly (not overly jovial) and firm. Smiling helps.

## Power Dressing

While the details differ for men and women, the overall message continues to be the old cliché "dress for success." Experts

recommend that clothing style be current, without being trendy fashion statements, as well as clean and neatly pressed.

"The rule of thumb for dress is to always dress better than you need to. Even if a company is casual, the higher the level, the less casually people dress. Anyone dressed too casually or too differently from those he or she is interviewing with is at a disadvantage," says executive career and image consultant Sue Morem.

A good suit is more than a good investment — it is a statement about your value and how you want others to perceive you. Executive coach Alicia M. Rodriguez, Sophia Associates, recounts a scenario where image sent a negative message. "I know of one CEO who did not hire a very competent executive because his suit was wrinkled, his shoes were old and he slouched in his chair. Her assessment was that he appeared lazy; and if he didn't care about himself, he would not care about his peers, customers or company."

Robin Wolaner, founder of *Parenting Magazine*, and author of the upcoming book, *Naked in the Boardroom: A CEO Bares Her Secrets So You Can Transform Your Career*, finds that clothing can have a positive impact on a woman's confidence.

"Success in business comes from feeling comfortable and self-confident, so within the norms of your industry or company, you need to be true to yourself," says Wolaner. "Although it is key to fit in with the industry or company environment where you are an executive — my dress as a media executive could be more cutting-edge than if I were in banking — that does not mean slavish adherence to a look that would make you uncomfortable."

Wolaner cites an example where "power dressing" became literal. "When an executive and I went nose-to-nose, my elegant Italian suit was not preppy, but formidable — just the way I wanted to feel."

Tim Augustine, cofounder and managing partner for the Herman Draack Company, says that the dress code for executives depends on the situation. "If the job is found through networking — according to my research, 70% of business executives find their jobs through

Continued on page 5

networking — wearing business casual to an interview is completely appropriate.”

“For meetings at restaurants, as well as work-related social events, business casual is also appropriate for executives unless more formal attire is specified. The reasoning behind this is that senior executives have earned the right to dress casually. For candidates who are new or inexperienced, it is critical to wear a suit to an interview in the company’s office.”

Augustine defines “business casual” for men as a blazer, either with a sport/golf shirt or dress shirt without the tie, and khakis or similarly casual pants.

Accessories can be used as finishing touches, without becoming a focal point or distraction. Shined shoes, clean nails and understated jewelry will exude professionalism and let the interviewer know that you pay attention to details.

“Instead of a plastic folder consider a leather portfolio. A nice handbag, not a beach bag, complements any suit or creative dress as well,” says Rodriguez. “You can be creative and professional, while still expressing yourself within the parameters of what the corporate culture may be.”

### Neatness Counts

“Every component is essential and an integral aspect of the overall image we project,” says Morem, and the package isn’t complete without some polish.

**Hair:** “Make certain the hair never looks unkempt. If it looks like it was washed and then dried in the car on the way to work, it will give an amateurish and unprofessional look. A dated hairstyle suggests dated products or services,” says Sandy Dumont, The Image Architect.

**Make-up:** Rodriguez advises women clients to seek the assistance of an image consultant to assess styles and colors, and how to use makeup to play up one’s best features while maintaining a subtle look of professionalism.

For men, a recent shave is important, “The ‘rock star 5 o’clock shadow’ does nothing to convey intelligence and only goes so far in the ‘hip’ department!”

**Personal hygiene:** “You’re better off with no cologne, just in case someone claims to be hyperallergenic,” cautions

Alan Weiss, Ph.D., president, Summit Consulting Group, Inc.

“Scent is a powerful element in how we relate to one another. Something that is subtle and pleasant will be unconsciously taken in as calming or refreshing. Smelling like a nightclub does not work!” says Rodriguez.

### Business Etiquette

Senior-level executives, particularly those who are seeking positions where they will represent their company in public, are advised to brush up on their manners.

“A person may feel he has mastered his grooming, and he may look really good; but if he offends someone in his conversation or smacks on chewing gum as he speaks, it will overshadow even the most dashing and expensive suit he is wearing,” says Morem.

The problem, says Joseph Sommerville, Ph.D. and president of Peak Communication Performance, is that many executive job seekers simply haven’t had any training in business etiquette. “They’re making mistakes they don’t even realize during interviews and networking and losing jobs because of it.”

“It’s not enough to have an MBA, lots of experience and a great track record. You’re competing with people who have an equally impressive résumé. You need something that will set you apart. Demonstrating appropriate business etiquette lets potential employers know you

won’t embarrass them. It gives you a competitive edge,” says Sommerville.

Weiss notes that some basic manners are often overlooked. “Understand the best posture for sitting and make sure you have a firm handshake. Always rise when you are introduced to someone or you greet someone. Keep your jacket buttoned.”

### The Role of Character

Character is often assessed within moments of a first meeting, and Dianna Booher, CEO, Booher Consultants, Inc. finds that typically, character is conveyed through consistency between words and actions.

“What does inconsistency tell you about intentions and trustworthiness? Is their intention to be truthful or to obscure facts? These are the things that cause us to size up someone’s integrity/character within seconds,” says Booher.

Character can be conveyed during responses to interview questions. Disowning opinions or avoiding unpopular positions can indicate that you are not willing to stand your ground or lend support to unconventional ideas.

Booher gives a couple of examples:

- Many interviewers will ask a neutral question, and the candidate responds with a true opinion. Then the interviewer “signals” the answer he/she had expected. The candidate starts backpedaling on the first response:

[Continued on page 8](#)

## Sommerville’s 7 Deadly Sins of Business Etiquette

1. Talking too much. An executive will never “listen” him or herself out of a job. Answer questions with examples, but be brief and to the point. Use questions strategically. Never talk for more than a couple of minutes without giving someone else an opportunity to speak.
2. Using the phrase “no problem” when being thanked for information or a favor. Although meant well, it sends the message, “you didn’t bother me.” A much better response is “glad to help” or simply “you’re welcome.”
3. Confusing business etiquette with social etiquette. Business etiquette is gender neutral.
4. Not rising to greet someone when you’re introduced.
5. Glancing around the room while you’re speaking to someone in a crowd. It sends the message that you’re looking for something better to do.
6. Poor grooming habits. Top trouble areas: applying lipstick or combing hair in public, leaving a suit jacket unbuttoned while standing, talking with food in the mouth.
7. Taking a call on a cell phone during a meeting or interview. Cell phones should never be answered while in a meeting unless it’s a true emergency.

## Ask the Expert

# Set the Stage to Negotiate the Position, Not the Salary

**Q.** I was downsized a couple of months ago. I was a Controller (more like a Senior Director of Finance) for a \$300 million company, and I had a broad range of responsibilities. My total compensation matched my responsibilities. The company provided decent severance and covered me on retiree medical. I am 55. Financially, we are comfortable, and I do not have to work. However, I really enjoy working and feel that I have a lot to contribute. I would like to work at least for 10 more years. How do I convince an employer that my financial needs are flexible, and I would be comfortable in taking a 20% to 30% compensation reduction?

**A.** I think the key here is to control the interview as best you can to

avert any talk of specific salary until the very last.

Use a “let’s wait” statement such as Jack Chapman suggests in his book, *Negotiating Your Salary: How to Make \$1000 a Minute*. For example, you could say, “When we discuss money up front, I get worried I’ll be screened out or boxed in, so could we ...?”

Build your value as much as possible. You are the “perfect match” to solving the company’s pain. Convince them that you are THE solution to their problems — before specific salary discussions ever commence.

Consider managing the interview as much as possible (realize that your success in this endeavor might depend on the demeanor of the interviewer), so that he/she is compelled by your value message and not so driven by his/her line of questioning and agenda.

If possible, write a value proposal and 90-day plan prior to the interview and

present it to the decision-maker at the time of the interview. Be profusely proactive and determined that you are THE right candidate to reduce their pain and solve their problems.

Let them know that other compensation package items or benefits would offset the difference in salary, if you think that will help quell their concerns. ■

*The moderator of the ExecuNet General Management Special Interest Network Forum, Jacqui Barrett is one of only 11 people in the world to have earned the elite certified Master Résumé Writer distinction from Career Masters Institute. She also is a distinguished Certified Professional Résumé Writer (CPRW) and Certified Employment Interview Professional (CEIP). She has over 18 years corporate experience that contributes to her Wall Street Journal-style writing and knowledge of the corporate environment. More information can be found at <http://www.careertrend.net/>.*

## Books Worth Your Time

# How to Choose the Right Person for the Right Job Every Time

**W**e often cannot judge what we can’t see, and unfortunately résumés only offer a partial view of the candidate. A complete assessment often comes after the person is hired, which could be too late — and quite costly — in some cases.

In *How to Choose the Right Person for the Right Job Every Time*, the authors, Lori Davila and Louise Kursmark, pit the traditional interview against the behavior-based interview, and the comparisons clearly illustrate the value of asking the right behavioral questions.

Beginners will find 401 behavior-based sample interview questions included

in the book, efficiently categorized into 50 competency areas, allowing hiring managers to formulate a more complete picture of the candidate.

The book also guides hiring decision-makers through the legalities of asking certain questions, along with a blueprint for implementing company-wide behavior-based interview programs. Worksheets and forms are also provided, which allows human resource departments to standardize their hiring procedures.

The book demonstrates how both the company and the candidate benefit from behavior-based interviews. Companies using these techniques gain a competitive

edge by hiring the most qualified individuals, while candidates are judged according to the same measurements.

Louise Kursmark took some time to offer additional insight into the book.

**Q. What are the three most important items that you hope hiring managers learn from this book?**

**A.** First, bad hiring is expensive. It costs a lot of money in the long and short term, and there is a better method than unstructured or instinctive interviewing.

Second, studies have shown that behavior-based interviewing is a proven

**Continued on page 7**

## Learnings From Landings Continued from page 2

you are a perfect fit for a position it may take some time. I started talking to my current company in spring, and I didn't get an offer until December."

### The Road Not Chosen

Trainor's efforts ultimately yielded two highly attractive offers: one that would offer a high salary, title, and relocation to a stressful metropolis, while the other offered a lower salary and a higher quality of life.

Initially, Trainor wrestled with the decision; but during his 10-month journey he had the opportunity to evaluate the things in his life that were important, resulting in some reprioritizing and simplifying. In the end, he chose the executive vice president position with a Virginia Beach company that embodied his personal philosophy, beliefs and values over the high-powered Washington, DC offer.

"Some people live to work, and this time I wanted to work to live. I loved my home in Virginia Beach and didn't want to leave. Quality of life was more important."

Mike cites his faith in God and the

“

“Some people live to work, and this time I wanted to work to live. I loved my home in Virginia Beach and didn't want to leave. Quality of life was more important.”

”

love of his wife and family as the guiding forces behind his decision, along with his need for personal fulfillment. “Some people would perceive this job as a step down from CEO or COO to executive vice president. At this point in my life, doing what I did well and what I liked made me happy.”

The job search was a valuable learning experience for Mike. “I was no longer driven by ego, I am now driven by humility. Being out of work humbles you. I have an impressive résumé, but being out of work can happen to everyone. If your ego gets in the way, you can't go forward.”

### Lessons to Live By

Mike began his search by giving, and

that same spirit is still a powerful driver in his life. He continues to apply the philosophies he learned along the way to keep himself grounded and connected to others who find themselves in transition. “I try to help everyone I can who is out of work. I have skills for interviews, meetings, phone calls, business proposals and networking, so I can help people learn.”

The most important thing, Mike says, is to remember where you came from. “When you get your job, remember that others don't have one. There is a way to be shaped through this experience so that you can be a better person and better manager. It really allows you to understand other people's plights.” ■

## Books Worth Your Time Continued from page 6

method for hiring the right person for the right job. One company profiled in our book reduced its managerial turnover from more than 60% to less than 10%, reaping \$3 million savings in the first three years of implementing behavior-based interviewing.

And third, behavior-based interviewing is a proven and easy-to-implement method, but it does require a champion in the organization and must be properly implemented to be effective. But even if behavior-based interviewing is not adopted company-wide, the techniques can be used by individuals to improve their hiring success.

**Q. What has been the primary roadblock that prevents more companies from implementing these interviewing techniques?**

A. That would be either lack of a champion — not having one person who firmly believes and has the authority and the influence — or a lack of executive support. It has to come from the top, and it has to be a priority. There have to be leaders in the organization who are committed to it. It needs someone from the top and someone in human resources who believes.

**Q. While the book is geared toward those doing the interviewing, there seems to be great benefit for job-seekers to read it too. What would be the first indication to a candidate that they are going to have a behavior-based interview? How would the preparation for a behavior-based interview differ from a traditional interview?**

A. The candidate might be told in advance but might not. You can easily tell you are experiencing a behavior-based

interview when you are asked questions that begin, ‘Tell me about a time when...’ or ‘Give me an example of...’ As a career consultant, I use behavior-based questions when coaching executives for interviews, because the questions are deep and help you prepare for any kind of interview, behavior-based or not.

The only way that preparation for a behavior-based interview might differ is that you have to be more conscious of telling a complete SAR story — the Situation, the Actions you took, and the specific Results. Think about the competencies that are called for in the job and prepare SAR stories that demonstrate financial or technical skills or leadership, management, attention to detail, inclusiveness, diversity, influencing skills. Stories should convey your strengths, but negative stories should be practiced too, such as examples when you weren't successful and what you learned from that experience. ■

# Looking and Acting the Part

Continued from page 5

“Well, what I really meant to say was...” to convey a more pleasing response on the second time around. The character trait on display: I’ll do what is necessary to win.

- Character also comes across in being upfront about opinion questions — even when the opinion may be unpopular and may cast the responder in a negative light. For an example on listeners responding with skepticism, you have to look no further than the recent political debates. When a response is going to be unpopular, candidates typically become fuzzier and fuzzier — vague and general in their answers to questions. They fear stating anything clearly that might offend a special-interest group.

To maintain integrity, Booher recommends a multi-pronged approach to answering opinion questions with consistency:

- **Summary:** Give a one-sentence statement of your point/message/answer
- **Elaboration:** Elaborate on the significant, supporting reasons/facts behind your answer/position
- **Example:** Give a concrete, specific example to take your opinion from the theoretical to the practical, understandable situation
- **Restatement:** Restate or phrase your one-sentence statement of your point/message/answer.

“How does this technique/format convey character? Listeners may not

agree with your position/answer, but they sure respect the fact that they got one. Your willingness to take clear stand confirms character, integrity and trustworthiness.”

## The Total Package

The same attention to detail used to prepare a presentation of skills, strengths, experience and talent should be devoted to image, grooming and personal aesthetics. While it may not be your *looks* that land you the job, your *look* is an important component in your executive role.

“You’ll hear a lot of minor advice about these interactions, but here is the absolute essential at that level: People want to be around successful people. Never dumb down your dress, vocabulary or demeanor. Do not be deferential. Challenge and push back. And for goodness sake, wear a \$2,000 suit,” says Weiss. ■

## What the Manuals Don’t Tell You

Continued from page 3

- Despite the hard work, you’ll be rewarded with a number of good contacts that you’ll want to stay in touch with on a regular basis — both business contacts and good executive search people.
- Networking is likely to change the way you approach your professional life. Realizing its power and effectiveness, you’re more likely to make it standard operating procedure, and “give back” by offering to help others who are in transition.

## How to Survive the Transition

- Pay attention to your family and remember that they, too, are affected by your job loss. Work at your job hunting a solid 20-30 hours per week, but take your weekends off, and take your vacations as planned.
- Try to think of yourself as a consultant. You’re a senior-level problem-solver, so ask and listen to what the problems are, and show how you can help. Explain how your skills, talents and accomplishments will add value to the organization.
- Some senior-level networking teams

are good — focused on sharing leads, advice and best practices. However, some can be lethal if focused on griping about the situation, former companies, the market, etc. Don’t stay in the company of negative, depressed people!

So there you have it — the good, the bad and the ugly realities of executive job hunting — many of which you won’t find in the manuals. Since we all know that we will experience several more job changes in our careers, hopefully these tips will help make the next transition a smooth one. ■

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