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***"Always be a first rate version of yourself and not a second rate version of someone else."***

*~ Judy Garland*

## **FOR JOB HUNTERS, THE BIG INTERVIEW IS GETTING BIGGER**



By Joann Lublin, June 5, 2008  
From the Wall Street Journal Online  
(Reprinted with permission of WSJ)

Anxious about meeting a key hiring manager? Your job search jitters may soon intensify when you confront the ultimate stress test: a panel of interviewers.

Group grilling has long been popular among academics, government agencies and nonprofit organizations - sectors that prefer decisions by a consensus of constituencies. As the job market becomes more competitive for people at every level, this practice is spreading to law firms, management consultancies and high-tech businesses. Employers, who now have the luxury of being picky with candidates, see selection committees as an efficient way to measure applicants' mettle under fire.

Some prospects get no warning before they face several screeners simultaneously. "The first time you have one of these interviews, it will throw you off a little bit," cautions Scott Erker, a senior vice president for Development Dimensions International, a leadership consulting firm in Pittsburgh.

Until five years ago, DDI itself rarely used panel interviews for senior promotions - but does so about half the time today, Dr. Erker says. He thinks the approach identifies people who work well in a group setting, a critical skill at a business that "demands team collaboration."

*"It's appropriate to ask references to call you back and let you know how the reference check went. This will shed light on how you were perceived during the interview.*

*You may also get a sense of what the key issues the employer is interested in about the job you're applying for."*

*-George Fleming*



He won a promotion in 2004 after passing muster with a panel. "You have multiple sets of eyes and questions coming from different perspectives," he remembers.

With advance notice and extra preparation, you can impress these extra interviewers. It's a good idea to get the names, titles and pecking order of panel members. Do this by asking current and former staffers, and checking the Internet. From your sources, try to get a sense of your session's likely length, number of questions and key issues. You can then assemble a "cheat sheet" of interviewers, draft replies for their possible questions and look relaxed during the meeting.

A man vying for a vice presidency at a financial services concern last year did a thorough Internet search about its four-member screening committee. He learned one member wrote a newspaper column about martial arts. He broke the ice at his interview by declaring that he was going to "break a stack of boards over his head in the executive's honor," recalls Sanjay Sathe, a friend and head of RiseSmart, an online job search service for senior professionals and managers. "It showed the committee that this

candidate had done his homework." The man was named one of two finalists for the job, though he ultimately didn't get it.

An executive recruiter might have offered him additional insights - as Gwen L. Feder recently did. The partner-placement director for PeterSan Group, a New York legal search firm, counseled a prospect before his joint interview with three law firm partners she knows well. She described each partner's interaction with colleagues and their expectations of lieutenants. The candidate "made a great impression" and remains in the running, she recalls.

To defuse the stiff formality that tends to come with panel interviews, "show how friendly and important you are," recommends Ruth Haag, a management consultant and CEO of Haag Environmental, a hazardous-waste cleanup business in Sandusky, Ohio. "Shake everybody's hand. Look everybody in the eye. And sell yourself really hard."

You should intersperse colorful anecdotes about your experience with perceptive queries about the vacancy. The tactic "puts you on conversational terms with your interviewers, and also gives you a much-needed breather between the questions thrown your way," Mr. Sathe suggests. Sit where you can maintain eye contact throughout the room without staring toward a bright window. Otherwise, "you will be squinting and will look angry," notes Marilyn Machlowitz, a New York recruiter.

You also should closely monitor the group dynamics. How screeners introduce themselves, their initial banter and

the seating arrangement speak volumes about who wields the most clout.

Body language offers further clues. MBA student Kara Dyer landed a 2006 summer internship in the Chicago office of management consultancy ZS Associates after a panel interview. Three senior officials grilled her about a hypothetical thorny problem for a corporate client.

One manager never smiled, said little and sat "with his arms crossed," she remembers. "I took extra care answering his questions and looked at him a little more" than the rest. Ms. Dyer was ready for that screener's tough queries. She had practiced case-study presentations before groups of fellow students at MIT's Sloan School of Management. She says the rehearsals made her less nervous during the interview. She joined the Evanston, Ill., firm full time last year.

As Ms. Dyer discovered, "you're not always going to be on the same page with everyone in the room," observes Frederick Shack, executive director of Urban Pathways, a New York nonprofit that offers transition housing for the homeless.

But "you can disagree without being offensive." That's what Mr. Shack did after he donned a suit for his Urban Pathways interview with its board's seven-person search panel. "You're dressed better than I have ever dressed in my life," complained one member, a retiree attired in jeans and tattered T-shirt. "This is how I dress," Mr. Shack replied. Everyone laughed.

Mr. Shack politely differed with another panelist's praise of stability at Urban pathways, where many staffers

enjoyed long tenure. "I said, 'Not necessarily. It may be there's a real [turnover] need for the organization to grow and move forward.'" The board member "reacted well," according to Mr. Shack. He became executive director in January 2005 - and still wears a suit to work every day.



## EMPLOYERS TAP EXECUTIVES FOR TEMPORARY JOBS

Workers Gain Flexibility While Firms Fill Gaps

By Sarah E. Needleman, May 13, 2008  
From the Wall Street Journal Online  
(Reprinted with permission of WSJ)

John Delaney spent five years as a temporary executive for a myriad of companies. He recently accepted a full-time job so he could spend more time closer to home.

Over the past five years, John Delaney has worked at four hospitals across the U.S. But the human-resources executive isn't a job hopper -- at least not in the traditional sense. Rather, Mr. Delaney is among a small but growing number of executives who are lending their expertise to employers in need of temporary, highly experienced talent.

While some professions -- like nursing and accounting -- have workers who are commonly tapped by employers for limited stints, in recent years companies have begun recruiting interim help at the executive level. Now as workforce demographics and economic conditions shift, more employers are warming up to the practice.

Temporary executive jobs differ from consulting positions in that they require more than just strategic input. "These are situations where companies need someone who knows how to execute and operate and not just analyze," says Jody Miller, co-founder of Business Talent Group, a Los Angeles-based firm that specializes in temporary executive placements.

Interim executives also typically work closely with a company's top managers and their reports, just like a full-time employee would. "You're viewed as a member of the team," says Sharon Slade, who is in the midst of a five-month stint at a global pharmaceutical company helping to redesign its packaging process.

Firms that help find executive temps say that while demand for these hired guns is strongest in health care, private-equity firms are also heavily tapping high-level interim support to manage their portfolio companies. Financial services firms, banks and insurance companies are also increasingly looking for temps in the executive suite.

Recruiters say these days there is less of a stigma attached to candidates with interim experience on their résumés. "People are doing it more proactively versus reactively," says Linda Stewart, president and chief executive officer of Epoch, a Boston-based firm that recruits interim

executives. "People are feeling a lot less loyal to any one company." In Europe, employers have long accepted the practice partly because terminating an employee is expensive and difficult, making "the cost of getting a full-time employee wrong is way too high," says Ms. Stewart.

Nielsen Healthcare Group placed 150 interim executives at health-care organizations last year, a 30% increase from 2006, reports Bruce Nielsen, president of the St. Louis-based recruiter. And CMF Associates LLC, a financial services consulting company in Philadelphia, has seen searches for temporary chief financial officers grow to about a dozen or more a month from 10 or less a year ago, says Tom Bonney, managing director.

Demand is growing at such a brisk pace that at least two firms recently launched to recruit temporary executive talent in a range of industries. Eighteen-month-old Business Talent Group has 35 corporate and nonprofit clients and about 500 executives on tap for temporary assignments. And 16-month-old Epoch is working with 12 employers and roughly 600 executives.

Both firms charge clients fees that include the salaries for the candidates they place. By contrast, traditional executive search firms generally recruit senior talent for permanent positions and don't facilitate the payment process for hired candidates. However, a growing number of these firms say they are increasingly taking on searches for temporary assignments.

Some companies are hiring interim executive talent to fill gaps created by retiring baby boomers while they search for permanent replacements. Others are turning

*"He who knows others is wise. He who knows himself is enlightened."*

*- Lao Tzu Tao Te Ching*



to temporary help to sustain a business following a sudden departure. And, they say, the strategy has become particularly valuable in recent months because faraway recruits are taking longer to relocate due to the depressed housing market.

A day after ISA Consulting's chief financial officer departed in December 2007, the Blue Bell, Pa., firm brought a temporary replacement on board found by CMF Associates. The company had just a few weeks' notice to fill the gap, and its auditor recommended the strategy. Finding an ideal permanent recruit would likely have taken several months, says Lou Polisano, chief executive officer of the consulting firm, which specializes in financial reporting and analytics. This "bought me time."

Carolyn Hunt, a nursing executive, is currently on an assignment in California. She spends her summers at home in Florida and works temporary executive the rest of the year.

By recruiting interim executive help, employers may also be able to avoid an unnecessary, high cost investment. Case in point: In 2007, Minneapolis-based Thrivent Financial hired a marketing executive for six months to help test a new business idea targeting a previously untapped demographic. "It wouldn't have made economic sense to bring someone on full time with her experience and expertise," says Bill McKinney, vice president, member and market development

for the nonprofit financial-services group. "We had no idea if this thing would work anyway." Indeed, the idea didn't materialize as anticipated.

Executives say working on a temporary basis means they have more control over their schedules. Consider Carolyn Hunt's preference for working only between January and June. "I like the ability to have my time off," says Ms. Hunt, 64, a Florida resident who is working in Victorville, Calif., as a chief nursing officer at Victor Valley Community Hospital. "It refreshes me."

Another upside: Some interim stints don't require executives to work a full week or entirely on site. For her current assignment, Ms. Slade, 49, works two to three days a week from home. She says she became a free agent in February to spend more time with her family. "This morning I had a meeting with my son's math teacher," she says. "That wouldn't have been possible" when she was global vice president of marketing and strategy at St. Regis Resorts & Hotels.

Carol Vahey is currently working a temporary executive assignment in Dalian, China. She'll take a few months off before starting her next assignment in the fall. When it comes to compensation, short-term jobs generally lack benefits like medical coverage and stock options. But they do commonly pay base salaries commensurate with their full-time counterparts, and many employers cover housing expenses for executives stationed far from home.

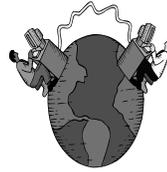
"At the end of the day, it comes out to be, quite similar," says Carol Vahey, a retiree who is working in Dalian, China, on a two year project for a former employer, an

international investment firm based in Dalian. Ms. Vahey is assembling a business plan, recruiting up to 300 employees and guiding senior-level managers, she says. Once she's done, a permanent placement will take over to serve as chief operating officer and she'll take a few months off before her next assignment.

Some executive temps, like CB Bowman of North Plainfield, N.J., say securing a permanent job is their true goal and that short-term stints offer a way for them -- and employers -- to get a sense of fit. "This allows me to look at the culture of the company and see if I'm interested in a long-time engagement," says Ms. Bowman, a former executive coach who's currently doing organizational development work on a temporary basis for a financial-services firm.

Indeed, some temporary jobs do convert into permanent positions. For example, approximately 25% of Business Talent Group's placements make this transition, says Ms. Miller. For some executives, a downside to temp work can be moving on a regular basis to faraway places. "You're away from family for long periods of time," says Mr. Delaney, who lives with his wife in Tampa, Fla.

That can lead executive-suite nomads to give up the wandering life. Mr. Delaney, for one, recently accepted a permanent senior vice president job at Workforce Prescriptions Inc., a human resources consulting firm in Hudson, Fla. "It's just an opportunity to spend more time here and less time traveling," he says.



*"It is all about people. It's about networking and being nice to people and not burning any bridges."*

- Mike Davidson

## **“NOTWORKING” TO NETWORKING ONLINE**

Published by Weddles, May 13, 2008  
(Reprinted with Permission from Weddles)

Using the Web to build up a huge address book of contacts is all the rage these days as a growing number of people worry about their employment security or actually find themselves out on the pavement looking for work. And why not, it's quick, easy to do and very technically correct. In fact, many people now consider it the 21st Century equivalent of networking. Make a contact online, pop them in your trusty address book, and boom! you're done. Whether you're new to the workforce or a grizzled veteran, online networking is an absolute dream.

That view is correct, but not as most people understand it. Using the Web to make contacts is a dream. Unfortunately, however, it isn't networking. If the purpose of the activity is to forge professional connections that can help you navigate your career successfully, then what's being done today is better described as "notworking."

Here's the hard truth: there is no free lunch in networking. The word says exactly what it means. It's network, not net-

get-around-to-it-whenever-it's-convenient. Networking works because it establishes a relationship-familiarity and trust-between two or more people. It's that relationship-not some connection twelve people removed from you-that enables you to acquire the assistance of others when you're looking for a new or better job.

So why bother? If networking is so hard to do, why invest the time and effort? The answer is simple: many of the best jobs are filled that way. Most employers will tell you that their most effective recruiting tool is their Employee Referral Program. That's networking. The organization relies on the relationships of its employees to find the talent it needs for its open positions. In other cases, recruiters do their own networking. You'll find them at association meetings and alumni group events looking for prospects who are qualified for the jobs they're trying to fill. The best of these recruiters don't run around and collect as many business cards as they can; they focus instead on specific individuals and work on getting to know them.

And there's the rub. Old fashioned networking is not only hard work; it takes a lot of time. You have to attend meetings, connect with people over lunch or after work and carve precious minutes out to talk to them on the phone or email them one at a time. That's why most of us talk about networking and never get around to it. There are just too many other demands on our time during the day.

But, what if we could acquire the advantages of networking and eliminate or at least dramatically diminish the time it requires? What if we could make our efforts

at building relationships highly efficient and thus much more productive? Well, that's the power and promise of real online networking.

Online networking is not electronic contact management. It is an activity that connects you with others in the world of work and facilitates your developing the familiarity and trust of solid professional relationships with them, all at warp speed. If you accomplish only one of those objectives, you're "notworking." If you accomplish both, you're networking and your investment of time and effort is much more likely to pay off.

How can you engage in real online networking? My suggestion is that you follow a simple three-step process.

Step 1: Pick the right site. Online networking occurs at sites which provide discussion forums, bulletin boards, listservers or chat areas. Not all sites offer such networking platforms, of course, but many do, so the first step involves finding the site or sites that will best connect you with your professional peers. They might be:

A professional association or society Web-site;

A commercial career portal (a job board with career as well as job search information);

A site operated by your undergraduate or graduate alumni organization;

An affinity group Web-site (e.g., women in technology; African-Americans in finance); or a newsgroup (Google.com is the gateway to the Web's 2+ million

in technology; African-Americans in finance); or a newsgroup (Google.com is the gateway to the Web's 2 + million newsgroups).

Step 2: Learn the rules of the road. The people who participate at each of these discussion areas are a self-formed community. They may number fewer than a dozen or more than a thousand people in the U.S. and around the world. To ensure that you will be welcomed into the community, therefore, you must make sure you understand and then participate according to its (almost always unwritten) standards. How can you know what they are?

Once you've enjoyed the group, lurk before you launch off. Look over the shoulder of the participants and see how they interact with one another. Are they formal or informal in their messaging? How do they handle disagreements or opposing points of view? What kind of vocabulary is the norm and do they tolerate profanity: You needn't conform to a particular point of view at most of these sites, but you do need to conform to their rules of behavior.

Step 3: Practice the Golden Rule of Networking. The rule is as simple as it is profound: You have to give, if you want to get. In other words, if you want others to share their insights, expertise and relationships with you, you must do the same for them. That's why networking is work. You have to do it regularly in order to build up a reservoir of good will, a rainy day fund of familiarity and trust that you can tap into as your career requires. For that reason, I recommend that you network online twice a week for no less than

30 and no more than 60 minutes per session. Thirty minutes is the minimum necessary to establish relationships online, while the 60 minute cutoff ensures that you don't get seduced into spending too much time at this one activity. Then, be the best professional colleague you can be in each and every networking session in which you participate.

Finally, as helpful as online networking can be, it is a supplement to, not a replacement for traditional networking. Despite what technophiles and Internet enthusiasts will tell you, landing a dream job still requires human interaction. That interaction can begin on the Web and even be enriched there, but it cannot occur exclusively online for one simple reason: real people, not virtual ones, fill jobs.

## EDITOR'S NOTES

The tradition continues! For the July newsletter, we will once again be publishing a collection of jokes and funny quotations. If you have a joke about any of the following topics, please send them to hayesp@state.gov by June 25, 2008:

- Change
- Transitions
- Job searching (resumes, interviews, negotiating salary and benefits, etc.)
- Aging
- Retirement
- Other pertinent topics?

## JOB LEADS

Here are some local and national web-

sites to help you in your job search:

**Fairfax County Economic Development Authority**

**<http://www.fairfaxcountyeda.org>**

This website has a “living and Working” page with “Career Information” and more hyperlinks to local companies and job search resources, including:

**Northern Virginia Technology council**

**<http://www.nvtc.org>**

This website has a “Regional Job Center” on their website.

**Northern Virginia Workforce Investment Board**

**<http://www.myskillsource.org>**

This website has information on jobs, on starting a small business, on training, and more.

**Virginia's Electronic Labor Market Access [http://](http://www.careerconnect.stte.va.us)**

**[www.careerconnect.stte.va.us](http://www.careerconnect.stte.va.us)**

This website has “job seeker connections” plus other helpful info and hyperlinks to other job search resources.

Chamber of commerce websites are also excellent resources to obtain job search information. We encourage job seekers to checkout their local and state chambers. You can find their sites on the site of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce:

**[www.uschamber.com/careers/](http://www.uschamber.com/careers/)**



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