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Career Advice

By Richard Lowe

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I often get asked questions about careers in IT (Information Technology). After all, I've been a Vice President of Consulting (twice for two different companies), Vice President of Development, Senior Technical specialist many times and now I am a Director Of Technical Services. I've been working with computers for 23 years as of 2001 and plan on continuing my education and career in a positive direction until the day that I die.

So what would I recommend to anyone seeking or currently holding a career in IT? What are the qualities that make an IT person invaluable to a company?

I think one of the most valuable traits that anyone in any career can foster is simple communication. This is especially true of IT people, as many of us tended to get into the field in the first place because we are introverts. I don't know about you, but when I started with computers over 23 years ago, I didn't want to talk with anyone. Computers I could understand, but people? That was a different question.

In college I had a professor named Fredrick. He taught a class in assembly language – which was very advanced for the school. I excelled in this class and spent a great deal of time talking to the teacher. When Fredrick started a new consulting company he needed to get someone on board who could program but was also very inexpensive. Because I had been communicating with the man during his class, he offered me a job as a programmer in his new company. I stayed there for six years, and by the time the company was purchased by a British conglomerate I was the Vice President of Development.

As I matured I began to open up to people, and after a few years I found that the more I communicated, the better my career progressed. Don't get me wrong, communication is not always fun and definitely isn't easy sometimes,

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but it is absolutely vital to any kind of career movement.

To advance in your career it is necessary to make sure people understand your intentions. More importantly, it is critical that they understand that you understand. You want people (those you supervise as well as your supervisors) to know your capabilities and how those can aid them and the company that you all work for.

What you do is talk to your boss regularly. Ensure that he or she fully understands what you can do and what you want to do (thus greasing the skids for additional training and promotions). Discuss how your talents can help the company achieve its goals and how you can help your boss achieve those

goals. Do the same with people who work for you, customers, vendors, and other co-workers.

Use email to your advantage. Email is just another form of communication, and it's best used to ensure that others are on the same page as you. For example, it's usually a good idea to send an email after a meeting to those who were in attendance, briefly explaining what was discussed and what you've committed to produce. As you meet those commitments, you can also use email to make it known.

If you are a supervisor, you need to let the people who work for you know not only exactly what is expected of them, but also other details such as how they fit into the organization, how their efforts contribute to the bottom line and the goals and objectives of the company, department, sub-department and group. This allows your people to be more effective, which in turn allows you to be more effective.

Use performance reviews as a method of letting your people know where they are doing well and where they need to improve. This is a very legal, highly controlled method of communicating with your people (or your boss) and must be done correctly to be effective. One golden rule of reviews is nothing should ever be a surprise to the employee. If a person is not doing well, he must know about it long before the review so he has a chance to correct his mistakes.

Another rule of mine is that all critical comments must be done in private, one on one (unless there are legal reasons, such as a reprimand for sexual harassment, for witnesses). Never give reprimands, no matter how minor, in a public location. Conversely, it's great to give positive remarks and reinforcement in public – in fact, generally the more public the better.

Remember that communication is very powerful, and used properly it, combined

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with your knowledge, talents and abilities, can propel you up the corporate ladder.

On the other hand, when used improperly you will certainly succeed in stalling your career. Use communication very poorly and you may find yourself jobless in short order.

If you use your emails to cover your behind, you will soon find it is exposed and ready to be kicked. If you try and sling mud at others around you, it's very possible you will find yourself not only covered in mud, but even tarred and feathered.

For example, I had a boss a number of years ago who thought the main purpose of email was to ensure that everyone understood whatever had gone wrong was someone else's fault. I remember on several occasions our department had failed to provide service to the users, and our boss had us write emails that went on for pages, patiently explaining how these failures were the

fault of someone else. My god, we all got so tired of protecting our bosses behind. In fact, when he finally left the company, we felt such a feeling of relief that it was amusing.

This same man is a great example at how a lack of communication can doom a person. He tried to build a wall between our department and the rest of the company. All communications between our group and the outside world had to be approved by him, and he often insisted on performing the communication himself. Thus, it became impossible for any of us to do our job – and it became very difficult for anyone in the department to understand how they fit into the overall company business.

So to sum it all up, what's my advice? Use communication to your advantage. Ensure your boss knows that you want to contribute to the success of the group and, more importantly, that he completely understands how valuable you can be. Use communication to give positive feedback and to let everyone know your commitments and understandings, as well as other areas in which you could be helpful.

Equally important, don't abuse communications. This is a very powerful tool, and if you've ever been on the wrong end of a public reprimand or the subject of water-cooler gossip you understand exactly what I mean.

The managers who excel in their career have learned these lessons and apply daily to their jobs without even thinking. That's the main tool of the trade. Simple communication.

Richard Lowe Jr. is the webmaster of Internet Tips And Secrets at <http://www.internet-tips.net> – Visit our website any time to read over 1,000 complete FREE articles about how to improve your internet profits, enjoyment and knowledge.

Career Builder: Using Job Boards For More Than Jobs

By Alesia Benedict, CPRW, JCTC

If you are like most job seekers, you have registered your resume on the major online job boards such as Career Builder, Monster, TheLadders.com, Headhunter, etc. But are you aware of the plethora of good information and job search tools that are available on these sites in addition to job listings?

Take CareerBuilder.com for example. The main navigation pages at Career Builder are "Home", "Find Jobs", "Post Resumes", "Job Alerts", "My Career Builder", "Advice and Resources", and "Career Fairs". Most online job hunters typically will use the Find Jobs and Post Resumes pages. About half might sign up for Job Alerts. Career Builder offers two sections that could be the most valuable sections to job seekers but not all visitors will read them. Those sections on Career Builder are "Advice and Resources" and "Career Fairs".

Of particular interest on CareerBuilder.com is the "Advice and Resources" section. In this section, Career Builder has ten different sections on various subjects from continuing education to resume services to financial advice. At the top of the page, Career Builder highlights four articles of special interest to job seekers. These articles rotate on a regular basis so the visitor should check back often to see new articles and to read past articles that are listed in their appropriate headings by Career Builder.

At the very bottom of the Career Builder Advice page, there are seven different sections that are collections of articles on job hunting, business opportunities, and education that have been written by experts. In the career advice section at the bottom of the page, there is an option to watch various videos of career experts talking about different aspects of job search. This option also appears on Career Builders' home page. This is a new feature by Career Builder that actually allows the job seeker to watch a short instructional video on various topics.

All total, Career Builder.com has more than 200 articles covering various job search and employment topics on these pages. Career Builder has built a wonderful resource area of which many job seekers do not take advantage. The next time you visit the site, read more than just the job listings. Take time to read the excellent information that Career Builder has gathered in one place for your benefit!

Published in 25 career books, Alesia has been cited by Jist Publications as one of the "best resume writers in North America" and quoted as a Career Expert in the Wall Street Journal. Serving as the Resume Expert for over 50+ organizations, she has numerous media appearances to her credit and is a frequent keynote speaker.



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