Climbing the Corporate Ladder:
Strategies to Move Ahead During Tough Times

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JACOBSON
Career Mantra 2007

Change is mandatory;

*Progress* is optional.
Evolution Never Stops

- Manufacturers of products
  - Failures, mergers, globalization, joint ventures, start-ups
- Distribution systems
- New products
  - New issues, societal demands, tort reform
- Technology
How Do Most of Us Climb the Ladder?

Hit-or-miss!
Insurance industry labor market is expected to grow at 10 percent.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics
Mass Exodus of Baby Boomers

- Someone turns 50 every eight seconds.
- The average age of an insurance professional is 54.
- One-third of the nation’s population is included in the baby boomer generation.
- 43 percent of the labor force will be eligible for retirement within the next ten years.
- We are losing workers due to the aging workforce faster than our labor force is being re-supplied; this will result in a supply/demand gap of 10 million workers by 2010, 40 million workers by 2015.
Less Skilled Industry Workers

- Supply/Demand
  - Excess jobs
  - Lack of skilled workers
Less Skilled Industry Workers

CPCU Examinations Given

Source: American Institute for CPCU
Less Skilled Industry Workers

Estimated P&C Underwriter Hiring Requirements (2014)

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics
Estimated Claims Adjuster Hiring Requirements (2014)

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics
Most Difficult Disciplines to Recruit

Marketing/Product Development
Underwriting
Technology
Compliance
Claims
Accounting

Difficulty Rating
Significant Trends

- Strong economy = low unemployment rate, more opportunities for candidates
- Lack of qualified/skilled candidates
- Age of qualified talent pool/mass retirement
- Lack of interest in industry
- Competition for candidates = increased salaries
- Decrease in company loyalty
- Onboarding/Training
Significant Trends

• Company factors (reputation, stability, leadership)
• Location (cost of living, commute)
• Compensation/benefits (flex schedules, telecommuting options, career pathing/advancement)
• Work/life balance
• Generational expectations
Changing Landscape

- Career Security vs. Job Security
- No More Job For Life
- Strategic Contribution vs. Tactical Production
- Required Soft Skills vs. Hard Skills
- Work Life VS. Personal Life
The $24 Million Question

What Are Companies Looking For?
Climbing the Career Ladder

• It is not what it used to be—or is it?
• It can be a struggle; but with preparation and planning, you can beat out the competition.
• Today, the average person makes between five and ten job changes in their career.
Where does this leave you?

A Good Way to Climb:

• Manage what you can manage; learn how to deal with the rest.
• Continually learn.
• Be self-aware.
• Proactively manage yourself and your career.
Manage What You Can Manage

• Resilience is critical

• You must possess it to survive in a leadership role

• It is becoming more important than technical knowledge in this ever-changing industry
Manages What You Can Manage:

RAA, RAA!

Join the corporate pep club!

• Resiliency
• Agility
• Attitude

JACOBSON
re·sil·i·ence

Pronunciation: ri-'zil-y&n(t)s
Function: noun
1 : the capability of a strained body to recover its size and shape after deformation caused especially by compressive stress
2 : an ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change
Manage What You Can Manage:
Develop Personal Resilience

• Learn from those that are naturally resilient.
• Learn from your own experience.
• Understand yourself.
• Know the territory.
• Connect to those that can help.
• Take care of yourself.
Manage What You Can Manage:
Demonstrate Agility

• Be focused.
  – Proactively seek information.
  – Understand what you can control and impact.
  – Seek out those who can help.
  – Plan tasks and projects in detail to implement change.
  – Ask questions to clarify priorities, objectives and timelines.
• Be flexible.
  – Adapt to fit changing business demands.
  – Take appropriate risks and accomplish tasks.
  – Continually update skills.
  – Operate in an environment where structure is not always present.
  – Propose innovative solutions.
Manage What You Can Manage:
Demonstrate Agility

- Be facilitative.
  - Assist those who are struggling with change.
  - Help others maintain a positive attitude.
  - Collaborate to accomplish goals.
  - Focus on benefits of change—for self and organization.
  - Make suggestions to improve outdated processes and systems.
• Be fast.
  – Strive to maintain momentum and move forward.
  – Gather information efficiently to make timely decisions.
  – Promptly inform those impacted by the change.
  – Generate ideas to remove obstacles.
  – Proactively seek tools and resources needed.
Manage What You Can Manage:

Attitude Determines Altitude

• Live in the now.

• Don’t be weighed down by past failures or successes.

• Embrace the day.

• Give thanks.

• Utilize your talents.

• Be your own destiny.
• Encourage yourself.
  – Avoid “I’ll try” or “I hope to.”
  – Use “I will.”

• Engage in optimistic behaviors.
  – Each day identify three achievements, personal or business-related.
  – Determine why it was an achievement and how you can make further progress.
Manage What You Can Manage:
Overcome Obstacles

• Stop blaming — blaming costs organizations millions in productivity, customer service and job satisfaction each year.

• Blaming suffocates creativity and teamwork.

• Blaming keeps employees from taking risks.
Manage What You Can Manage:
Overcome Obstacles

- Stop asking the wrong questions.
  - Why do we have to make changes?
  - When will someone train me?
  - Why is so-and-so making so many mistakes?

- Begin asking better questions.
  - What is the problem?
  - How can we fix the problem and avoid it in the future?

- Create, instead of complain.
  - Utilize your sense of vision to create goals.
  - Identify obstacles between you and the achievement of your goals.
  - Transform obstacles into solutions.
Activity

Understanding/Managing Change
The past is history; your future is still to be written!
Manage Your Brand

• Your brand should:
  – Distinguish you from others
  – Make others aware of your character, strengths and personality
  – Become the message that is conjured up when someone thinks of you.
  – Influence the decisions, attitudes and actions of others
  – Increase confidence, presence and visibility
Manage What You Can Manage: Personal Brand

• Know yourself.
• Express yourself.
• Know your competition.
• Know your target.
• Give your brand context.
• Evaluate and evolve.
• Recruit a band of “brand cheerleaders.”
Manage What You Can Manage:

Personal Integrity

- Deemed one of the most important traits in today’s business world
- May be impossible to recover if you step over the line
- Value of a “personal integrity statement”
Activity

Personal Integrity Statement
• Breadth versus depth
• Mixture of staff and line
• Ability to transition into new roles
• Challenging assignments outside of “comfort zone”
• Failures and successes
• Gaining new skills — not overusing old ones
• On-going education
• Know the business
Continual Learning:
Key Core Competencies

- Leadership
- Analytical Ability
- Technical Ability
- Communication
- Business Knowledge
- Strategic Thinking
Continual Learning: Consider Mentoring Relationships

- Connect with leaders who are not your managers.
- Gain further insight on what it takes to be a leader, thrive in the position/industry.
- Gain additional company perspectives.
- Obtain guidance and suggestions.
- Reverse the roles and learn something new.
- Build relationships and networks.
What is your goal in a mentorship?

Is there a formal program or do you need to create your own?

Who do you know and respect that can provide you with critical information and honest feedback?

How will you structure the relationship?

What structure will you put in place to make it happen?

How do you know when there is no longer value in the activity?
Continual Learning:
Being Talented Isn’t Everything

• Many times, it is not what you know, but whom you know.
• They need to know what you know—You need to know what they know!
“Invisibility is Worse than Failure.”

- Keith Ferrazzi, author, Never Eat Alone
Continual Learning:
Expand Your Network

- Professional organizations
- Associations
- Private businesses
- Individuals
Passive Networking: what you are already doing each and every day at meetings, in the lunchroom, in the hallway

VS.

Active Networking: when you go out of your way to set up meetings to meet with leaders to learn more about your organization - proves you are interested and motivated
Networking is not complicated...

– Observe.
– Ask questions.
– Listen well.
– Accurately articulate who you are.

…it just takes focus and action!
Continual Learning:
Why Network?

• Stay current on what is happening in the business world.

• Learn the organization’s needs.

• Determine if your transferable skills are a fit for other positions.

• Create your own new position.

• Be seen as a mover and a shaker.

• Set yourself apart.
Continual Learning:
Who Do You Network With?

- People you know inside of your organization — your boss, co-workers and clients.
- People you know inside other organizations that you admire.
- Individuals that are members of target professional organizations.
- Anyone else that can provide you with fresh points of view and ideas.
Continual Learning: Prepare

- Develop questions and scripts.
- Know what to ask.
- Ask questions that will provide answers to lead you closer to your goal.
Continual Learning: Identify Networking Strategies

- Personal Introductions
  - In person
  - Over voicemail
  - On the phone

- Pre-Letters
  - People you know
  - People you’ve been introduced to
  - People you don’t know

- Direct Phone Conversations
Continual Learning:
Give Your Meeting Impact

- Face-to-face meetings are better than on the phone.
- Treat them like a business meeting — begin and end on time.
- Give your meetings purpose and structure.
- Make sure they are well planned-out and organized.
Continual Learning:
Successfully Conduct Your Meeting

• Build rapport.
  – Mention mutual contacts.
  – Ask personal questions.
  – Be aware of your body language.

• State your purpose.
  – Information seeking.
  – Not looking for a job.
  – Do not bring a resume.
Continual Learning:
Successfully Conduct Your Meeting

• Present your situation.
  – Background
    • Work history
    • Education
    • Specific skills
  – Opportunities/ideas you are interested in exploring

• Ask questions.
  – Be prepared.
  – Take notes.
Continual Learning: Successfully Conduct Your Meeting

- Ask for referrals/introductions.
  - Name, company, title, phone, email
  - Reason to contact, areas of expertise
  - Best approach for contacting (personal introduction?)
  - Relationship
  - Additional background

- Close.
  - Keep to prearranged time unless you are given permission to go longer.
  - Wrap-up and pull to conclusion.
  - Thank them!
Continual Learning: Follow Up

• Write thank you notes.
  – Handwrite, if possible.
  – Cover the things you learned.
  – What can you do for them?
  – Thank them again.
  – Stay in touch!

• Update your records.
  – Maintain records of when you spoke to someone and the detail of the conversation.
  – Schedule a follow-up on your calendar, if appropriate.
  – Create strategies to meet new contacts — let the referrer know the results.
Continual Learning: Get Started Now!

- Overcome your networking phobias.
- Make it a part of your routine.
- Be organized.
- Make commitments in advance to attend events or functions.
- Stop procrastinating!
Continual Learning: Create a 30-Second Introduction

- Script your 30-Second Introduction.
- Tailor it for every audience you may encounter.
- Have you prepared an introduction for yourself that leaves your contact with the right message?
Activity

Create Your 30-Second Commercial
Be Self Aware: Know Yourself

- What are you good at?
- What are your passions?
- What do you hate?
- What have you actually accomplished?
- What are your personal considerations at this point in time?
Be Self Aware:
Align Yourself with a Position/Company that Matches Your Goals

- Is your current role/company a good fit?
- Know when it is time to move on.
- Are you “done with it?”
- Are there other roles inside the company that are more appropriate for you?
- Are you in sync with the company philosophy and approach?
- Do you utilize your strengths and passions?
- Is your position/company toxic?
Be Self Aware:
Is Your Job in Danger?

- You are losing credibility.
- It seems like you are no longer in the loop.
- Your every move is being scrutinized.
- You and your boss are not seeing eye-to-eye.
- Praise turns into criticism.
- Responsibilities are being taken away.
Skill Review
Actively Manage Your Career
Actively Manage Your Career:
Personal Inventory

• Activities/Skills you like/dislike

• Personal priorities

• Dreams

• Work environments

• Preferred locations
Actively Manage Your Career: Establishing Direction

- Use the knowledge gained in your personal inventory to find the match.
- Research your options and establish your path.
- Continually update your direction.
Actively Manage Your Career: Active Search

- Always have a resume ready.
- Be prepared to “interview” on the spot.
- Conduct informal job searches.
- Schedule regular check-ups.
  - Monthly
  - Annually
Actively Manage Your Career:
Establish Personal Career Goals

- Make them SMART.
  - Specific
  - Measurable goals
  - Achievable
  - Realistic
  - Timely

- Support with well thought-out action plans.
Activity

Creating Written Goals and Action Plans
Actively Manage Your Career: Monthly Checklist

• Update your resume.
  – Have your current job responsibilities broadened?
  – Have you attended a new class or seminar?
  – Have you received an honor or award?
  – Have you joined a new association or group?
Actively Manage Your Career: Monthly Checklist

• Re-evaluate your goals.
  – Have you accomplished any goals since last month? If so, check them off your list and add a new goal in its place.
  – Have any of your goals changed due to new requirements or developments in your field?
  – Has anything happened at work or in your personal life that may cause you to rethink your career direction?
• Add new accomplishments to your success stories journal.
  – Writing down your achievements will allow you to describe them in more detail.
  – This record will jog your memory before an interview, allowing you to more clearly demonstrate how you can add value.
• Review your networking list.
  – Have you made new contacts since last month?
  – Did a contact share some interesting news with you?
  – Is there anyone on your networking list that you haven’t had contact within the past 90 days?
  – Be cautious when networking with clients and peers. Establish yourself as a talented individual, not a job-seeker.
Actively Manage Your Career:
Monthly Checklist

• Conduct a quick job search.
  – Scan the help-wanted ads to get a complete picture of the marketplace and the current salary for your role.
  – Visit your ideal organization’s website and review their job ads.
  – Is there a new reason to set up some networking meetings?
Actively Manage Your Career:
Annual Checklist

• Do a full-fledged personal assessment.

• Realign personal goals as appropriate.
So, How Do You Climb the Ladder?

- Accept and embrace the changes that are occurring around you.
- Learn new skills and approaches.
- Understand who you really are and recognize what you bring to the table.
- Proactively manage your career and your life to create your story — not someone else’s!