

Will Our Luck Change this Year?

You don't have to follow the business news in either electronic or print form for very long to catch the optimism that the economy is improving and that 2004 should be a very good year, that is until the subject of hiring comes up. The jury is still out on that topic and we won't know the final outcome until sometime later this year. To someone who has been unemployed from anywhere from one to three years, this is still not welcome news, but at least the vital signs of the economy are looking healthier.

Each of our members finds a way to cope with their individual circumstance. Some land new positions, others become consultants and face the two-prong dilemma of seeking both contract and permanent work, some have chosen alternative careers and others have retired. In some members, I hear the hope of new horizons and opportunities and in others who have been unemployed for long periods, the sound of defeat and despair that their luck has seemingly run out.

Whichever path you choose, senior IT executive, retirement, self-employment or some other venue, you can't wait for the world to find you to offer the opportunity of your dreams. The odds of that happening, while possibly better than winning a lottery, are still heavily stacked against you. At some point in time, you have to get out there and work at making your own good luck. This is much easier said than done. When you have been pursuing a career for ten, twenty or thirty years, it's not easy to find a new one that will feed your passions and pay the bills.

We are and will remain in a state of tremendous change and upheaval in our business and economic world. Things will never go back to what they were and much of our present uncertainty is driven by the fact that even the wisest among us can't accurately predict the future outcome. Every day, people wonder about what kind of jobs will remain, who will fill them, what will the future employment picture look like. Parents ask, "How do I advise my children to choose a career?" People with previously high expectations for early retirement now wonder if they will ever retire.

How do we cope with these uncertain stressful times? I have no easy answers, other than to urge you to stay vigilant, work your network and be ready. This is an election year, which would suggest that the incumbent administration will do everything possible to improve the hiring picture. Whether it will succeed remains to be seen, but since jobs and outsourcing are becoming political platform issues, incumbent government officials will have to deal with them. Even though we don't know the identity of the sole Democratic presidential candidate and if he wins, the influence his new administration will have on hiring, it is somewhat safe at least to hope that the Bush administration would encourage business leaders to increase hiring. During the campaign, the Democratic contenders will do everything possible to leverage public outcry against the dramatic loss of jobs we have experienced. It would seem that those members of Congress who are campaigning for re-election will do whatever they can as well to encourage hiring.

Take advantage of the momentum. The time to act is now. Keep building your network and keep pushing. Don't wait until the optimism of a New Year fades or is shattered by some yet unknown event.

Recent conversations I've had with companies indicate that they expect senior IT executive hiring to increase this year. To be ahead of the crowd you must network with a sense of urgency, maintain a positive attitude and help as many other colleagues as possible because they may hire or help you in return. Don't wait for the phone to ring or for your next Email to download. Start building your own luck, refresh your network and keep building it. Your next contact may have your next job.
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