

Leadership Perspectives: Striving for Excellence

By Joy Booker, President, NextGen Network



NextGen Network is the premiere Executive Leadership Council affiliate for developing African American corporate business leaders. Since the organization was founded in 1999, the NextGen Network profile has grown along with the careers of its members.

- 96% of members are aged 30 and over
- 73% of members hold Masters degrees
- 55% of members have 11+ years of experience
- 37% of members are middle managers; 51% are senior managers or executives
- 41% of members are 3-4 levels from the CEO

NextGen Network kicked off the year with the January inauguration of a new leadership team including Joy Booker, President; Kevin Hinton, Vice President; Michael Watson, Treasurer; Tamara Nall, Secretary and a talented and committed group of Committee Chairs.

NextGen Network presents a compelling case to members and companies alike. The 2008 Leadership Team is committed to further delivering value to our members and our sponsors. Our 2008 Strategic Plan identifies five key goals to ensure our success:

- **Enhance Financial Stability.** NextGen Network is committed to establishing financial transparency through annual reports and audits. In addition, the organization seeks to establish revenue streams through broader program offerings.
- **Strengthening the Member Value Proposition.** With the help of ELC, the redesign and launch of the Mentoring Program is well underway, with training and mentor matches kicking off mid-year. NextGen Network has renewed its contract with Visions + Solutions for Success to oversee the Mentoring Program as well as to provide individual assessments and professional coaching.

NextGen Network presents a compelling case to members and companies alike. The 2008 Leadership Team is committed to further delivering value to our members and our sponsors.

- **Increase Marketing and Communication.** In just the first half of 2008, we have made strides in this area including our launch of a revised website, the establishment of our members only groupsite on CollectiveX and the development of new organizational brochures.
- **Develop Infrastructure and Operations.** Given the continued growth of the organization, this has become mission critical. NextGen Network has renewed and expanded its partnership with Urbanomics Consulting Group. This partnership ensures that there is a centralized Program Office, with a dedicated staff and information and process management.
- **Advancing Community Outreach.** We will continue relationships with community organizations and educational institutions. In addition, we have just recently approved a web-based virtual platform to connect with, inspire and mentor African American high school students.

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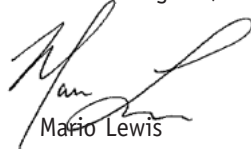
EDITOR'S NOTE

Just as leading corporations focus on managing their operations through economic cycles, we must manage our career through these cycles as well. We chose the theme "Career Building in a Downsizing Economy" for this newsletter based on our objective to provide relevant and timely content to our membership. Unfortunately, this is a topic we do not spend nearly enough time discussing, until, of course, we are going through it.

Having personally experienced a downsizing, I became quite familiar with the issues, emotions, and challenges involved in preparing to find that next career opportunity. The experience left me better prepared to manage my career and my life, but, most importantly, gave me new perspective on my priorities. Through these articles and information segments, we seek to provide guidance, counsel and direction to our members who are currently in transition, as well as those who are gainfully employed. Our goal is not just to inform, educate and hopefully entertain. We aspire to motivate, inspire and mobilize the next generation of African American leaders.

Finally, we thank our writers who unselfishly shared their career and personal advice and stories to help us meet our objectives with the hope that we help you meet yours.

Warmest regards,



Mario Lewis

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NextGen Network continues to build strategic partnerships. With thanks to Prudential, Entergy and Food Lion, in 2008, we continue programs including the Donna Jamison Lago Essay Competition, our Fall and Spring Member Meetings, our monthly conference calls and mentoring. These are programs that deliver value to members that enable them to make tremendous career moves. A perfect example: this year, we celebrate Tracey Gray-Walker, Chief Diversity Officer, AXA Equitable, as the second NextGen Network member to become a member of the Executive Leadership Council.

Our 2008 Spring Meeting is power packed around the theme of *Strategies for Career Leadership*. Highlights include sessions led by Richard Dent, COO, Pink Brands, Roderick

Hardamon, Head of Infrastructure & Integration for North America Alternative Investment Services, Citigroup, Dr. James Calvin, Professor Johns Hopkins University, Carey Business School and Keith Wyche, President – U.S. Operations, Pitney Bowes Management Services.

NextGen Network continues to strive towards excellence in all aspects. As a member since 2002, I believe in the premise of the organization. I acknowledge the need for the organization as a resource for African Americans in corporate America. As President, I am both committed to and excited about NextGen Network's continued success and growth. Continue to look out for members on the move this year – in corporate America, in the community and in the ELC Focus! ■

Guidance on Tactical Career Management In a Downsizing Economy

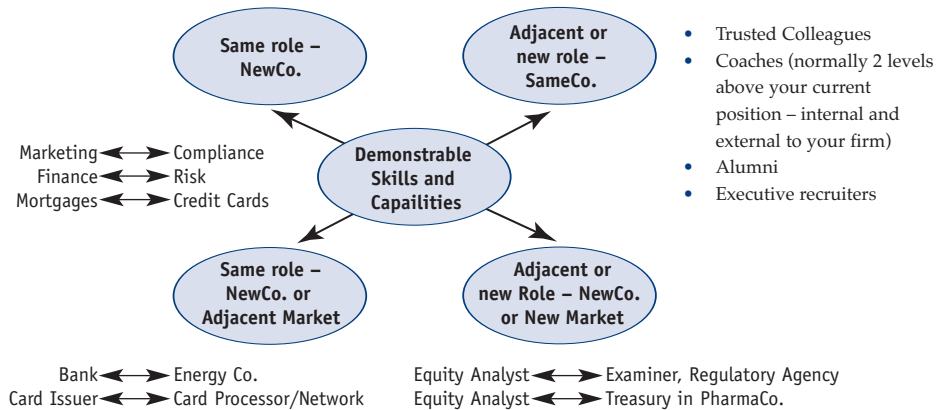
By Ralph E. Jardine

There is no doubt the U.S. economy is currently challenged. Is this a short blip on the business radar screen, a change in the fundamental fabric of the market structure, or a moderate market correction to get us back on course? The answer to that question is not as important as the answer to how should you manage your career now, and through the inevitable market cycles of the future.

During economic downturns you may find yourself displaced, formally or practically demoted, without a champion, or out of favor with the existing influencers of the corporation. To address these situations, this article provides an abridged tactical career management guide using the current market conditions as the back-drop of the discussion.

First-thing-First: State of Mind

- **Get spiritually and mentally ready.** For me this starts with prayer. Take a moment to come to grips with your situation. Recognize this will pass and everything will be alright. Focus on your joy and appreciation for family and friends. Realize how blessed you are to be given your talents, and to live in a country where opportunities are abundant. Be humble, yet confident in who you are and what you have to offer.
- **Understand a career is not defined by one company or one position.** A career is a journey with lots of twists and turns in the road. Take the ride with an end target in mind. Think long-term and allow yourself to move to where your core talents can most naturally progress.
- **Shed the fallacy that careers just go upward.** If you decide to take another career path or broaden your experience, it may require a step back or a lateral move in order for you to move forward.



What You Need To Know

- **Nobody is safe. We are in a free agent economy.** Companies must view people as assets on the field used to deliver value to their shareholders. As the corporate playbook changes so does the mix, location, and value of assets. It is not about you specifically, it is about the playbook. Focus your talents to deliver on the greatest needs of your firm.
- **There is no shame in being laid-off or demoted.** Talk about it freely and openly. Do not let the situation swell inside of you. Your job does not define who you are. It is a means to a greater purpose. You are blessed and talented with so much to offer. Your opportunities are limitless.

What You Need To Do

- **Get started now.** Do not let pride get in the way.
- **Write a career plan and search strategy.** Everyone should have a career plan to take stock of their skills, and determine how best to lever-

age them. Review your plan with one or multiple trusted advisors or coaches. We can not succeed alone. Use the chart below to help you consider your possibilities. Focus on core skills (e.g., analytical, communication, project management, etc.) and identify where they can be of value. Do not limit yourself to your current industry, unless that is truly where your passion lies.

- **Focus on excellence.** If you are looking for a new career opportunity, then approach your search as if it was a paying job. If you are employed and unhappy continue to perform with excellence. However, make time to establish and work your career plan. This is the same if you are employed, happy and doing well.
- **Evaluate your lifestyle.** Live below your means. Save a rainy day fund (six months to one year of your take home salary and benefits).
- **Be a cheerful giver.** It always seems to come back to you. ■

NextGen Network Welcomes 21 New Professional Class Members

By Penny Allen and Kimberly Watson, Membership Co-Chairpersons

This year, NextGen Network welcomes another large, diverse group of Professional Class members. This group, our largest class in the network's history, represents a diverse group of industries including: advertising, communications, consulting, education, energy, financial services (including insurance, investment banking and commercial banking), pharmaceutical, real estate and retail. Their responsibilities span across a wide variety of corporate duties, such as, accounting, corporate governance, general management, global sourcing, information technology, process management, project management, product development, operations, sales and strategic planning. Consistent with NextGen Network's current profile, these new members range in age from

mid-twenties to early forties. They are geographically located in the northeast, southeast and mid-west. The majority of the new members hold advanced degrees in fields that include business administration, education, engineering, law and public relations.

The selection process is competitive and rigorous, and the candidates must demonstrate key characteristics such as the promise for professional growth in their careers, excellence and commitment to academics and community service.

NextGen Network looks forward to the great contributions our new members will make to the organization. We are confident that they will continue to excel in their careers.

1. **Sean Armstrong**, Manager, Operations Analysis Department, Liberty Mutual
2. **Lloyd Backus**, Advertising Director, Real Estate, The New York Times
3. **Tiffany Boyd**, Vice President, Human Resources, General Mills Canada
4. **Yolanda Fuller**, Vice President, Community Capital Department, Citigroup
5. **Erica Hamilton**, Vice President, Global Consumer Group, Citigroup
6. **India Harris**, Senior Accountant, NRG Energy, Inc.
7. **William Lynn Howard**, Principal, Coppin Academy High School
8. **Angela Jeffers**, Assistant General Counsel, IP & Supply Chain Management, Banc of America
9. **Shawana McGee**, Associate, Portfolio Management Department, BlackRock Realty
10. **Roy Miott**, Director, Customer Operations Services, Freddie Mac
11. **Faida Mitchell**, Vice President, Business Services Officer, Commercial Lending Department, BB&T
12. **Tomya Ryans**, Senior Director of Operations, Office of the President Accounts, Kelly Services
13. **Nicole Siblal**, Senior Internal Auditor, NRG Energy, Inc.
14. **Keisha Slaughter**, Senior Consultant, West Monroe Partners
15. **Davon Snipes**, Project Consultant, Global Process Excellence Department, Hess Corporation
16. **Sandy Taylor**, Director, Head of Supplier Diversity and Global Sourcing & Procurement Services Department, Merrill Lynch
17. **Gwendolyn Turner**, Director, Worldwide Supplier Diversity Department, Pfizer, Inc.
18. **Crystal Walker**, Director, Financial Communications, Coca-Cola Company
19. **Lori Washington**, Manager, OCC Project Permitting, BP Products North America
20. **William Wilson**, Director, Manufacturing Housing Strategy Department, Fannie Mae
21. **Dawn Wynn**, Process Owner, Special Projects Group, Target Corporation ■

Implementing Organizational Change

By Lovell Saunders

In the midst of challenging economic times, far too many businesses and organizations seem to buy into the stay the course doctrine. As a result, their inability to adjust to the new market dynamics pulls them down like an anchor around their necks. In order to survive, businesses, as well as people, need to reinvent themselves and find ways to change and adjust to the new landscape. As a leader, the ability to implement change throughout an organization is one of the most challenging tasks to accomplish. If completed within tight time constraints, it can be downright revolutionary.

In order to survive, businesses, as well as people, need to reinvent themselves and find ways to change and adjust to the new landscape. As a leader, the ability to implement change throughout an organization is one of the most challenging tasks to accomplish.

In today's globally diverse and fast-paced information technology age, the ability to rapidly change to meet your client's needs has become a true competitive advantage. Corporate revolutionary and former GE CEO, Jack Welch, believes that a "Willingness to change is a strength, even if it means plunging part of the company into total confusion for a while." Yet, even a revolutionary approach to organizational change requires a comprehensive alignment of vision, strategy, and culture.

Organizational change typically happens as a result of either evolution or revolution. For evolutionary changes, the process is on-going and the organ-

ization can be treated as an organic entity. However, change brought upon by revolution requires a more focused alignment of the aforemen-

tioned components - vision, strategy and culture. More importantly, top-down/leadership support cannot be overstated.

VISION

In order to implement change, there needs to be strong clarity of the organization's vision and goals. A leader must have a vision that is shored-up by a strategy and a detailed execution plan. An important part of this alignment is the ability to sell the vision and explain what the organization is doing and why it is doing it. People will typically do their best to support that in which they believe and helped to create.

The ability to navigate the change maze and adapt quickly will determine whether a leader is a rising star or fallen angel. Before any approach to change is implemented, leaders should understand what the barriers and drivers of the change are. Quite often, leaders and the vast majority of worker bees do not have a clear line of sight as to what they are doing or why they are doing it. Leaders should ensure that there is a clear explanation of why the old way no longer works and why the proposed change or the new vision or direction is better.

STRATEGY

The general purpose of a strategy is to focus the investments of an organization. Most leaders hope that these investments will lead to competitive advantages that are not easily duplicated. In addition, many believe that strategy is a framework of difficult line in the sand choices that truly determines the trajectory of an organization. As a result, when orchestrating change, leaders must ensure that there is alignment with strategy and organizational culture. If the strategy for the organization is to adjust to the changing market place faster and more efficiently, then the culture needs to be less bureaucratic and more collaborative. Otherwise the strategic goal may never be realized and the company's change initiative will fail.

CULTURE

Culture is thought of as a set of values, beliefs and rules that guides a person's behavior. It can be so ingrained that it allows others to predict the actions of a group and assign relevancy. Depending on the strength of an organization's culture and how long its employees have been immersed in it, any changes to that way of life will be very difficult. Most people have a natural aversion to change and the prospect of learning a new process, tool, or technique is daunting to some. As a result, some will adapt and some will leave.

Corporate cultures can change; however, it will require an extraordinary leader to accomplish this. To change the culture of an organization requires a methodical approach and the initial target should be the practices around the core culture. Quick changes to the core are extremely difficult and can cause severe identity crises. However, changes to some of the practices around the core can be far more effective.

When Lou Gerstner first became CEO of IBM, he inherited a very bureaucratic and conservative culture. Instead of trying to attack the core, he started to make more meaningful changes to the practices. For example, one of the first things he did was to relax the drinking policy (employees could now have a beer at lunch) and the dress policy (casual Fridays and no ties if people were not meeting with clients). These subtle changes to IBM's practices (rituals and symbols) made dramatic differences to the core culture and the new direction of the company.

In conclusion, as a leader and implementer of change, you must have the ability to give meaning, purpose and direction to the work your people are doing. It is largely about inspiring

people to want to come to work and share in the vision, strategy and culture of the organization. More importantly, it is about encouraging people to think about what they are doing as

something bigger and broader than just the task they are assigned or the paycheck they receive. ■

The Executive Leadership Council Focus

Tracey Gray-Walker

By Tamara Nall



As the Chief Diversity Officer, Ms. Gray-Walker drives the advancement of AXA Equitable's goal to foster a diverse and inclusive environment within all of the company's business units. She also advises and supports executive management on diversity and inclusion goals; develops relationships with diverse professional organizations for talent acquisition; and measures progress on the company's inclusion initiatives.

Tracey joined AXA Equitable's Financial Management Development Training Program in 1989 and rapidly ascended within the organization to key positions in marketing, sales, business planning, operations, technology and finance. Tracey's broad base of experiences has resulted in increased revenues, improved operational efficiencies and cost reduction programs. Prior to her position as Chief Diversity Officer, she led the company's Retail Distribution Group in achieving exponential growth within diverse markets as the Vice President of Business Development and Opportunities.

Tracey was named the "2004 Autism Ambassador of the Year" and currently serves as a Trustee of the Board for The New Jersey Center for Outreach and Services for the Autism Community (COSAC), a non-profit organization in Ewing, NJ. COSAC is dedicated to serving parents and professionals in the autism community.

In March 2006, Tracey was recognized among The Network Journal's 2006 "Twenty-Five Influential Black Woman in Business" and in October

2007 was featured in Profiles in Diversity Journal magazine as one of its women worth watching in 2008.

Prior to joining AXA, Tracey spent four years with Touche Ross & Co., as a senior auditor. She has a Bachelors degree in Accounting from Fairleigh Dickinson University in Madison, New Jersey.

Tracey resides in Plainfield, NJ with her husband Derek and son, Trey.

What were success key factors in your career?

The three most important success factors were determination, preparation and attitude. With the first two points, I made sure that I put forth 110% effort with every assignment, whether personal or job-related. I attended every meeting and presented every idea after having researched every angle. As well, I always understood the business impact of a decision or opportunity. I wanted to know how a decision would affect the bottom line. As managers, you must stay close to revenue generating issues and opportunities. With the third point, I truly believe "that attitude will take you further than aptitude every time." People are willing to teach you if they like your attitude and see your eagerness to excel and learn.

What obstacles have you experienced during your career and how did you overcome them?

Everyone will have to overcome obstacles. Over the years, some of them have been age, gender, etc. During my career, faith was critical. I truly believe that God did not bring me this far to leave me. I had

the faith that God would help me stay on course. Even during the most difficult times, I did not get overwhelmed by negativity and other influences that can often distract managers.

Congratulations on your membership into ELC. What words of wisdom do you have for NextGen Network members?

Focus on your goals. Leverage every opportunity for visibility and advancement. Most importantly, do not lose sight of your 'authentic self.' If you stray from your core, people will notice. All of the NextGen Network members are bright individuals who have bright futures. You will make it, but on your individual journeys, stay true to yourself.

Over the years, how did you protect yourself against downturns or recessionary periods?

There are two angles: personal and professional. From a personal perspective, I made sure to spend less and save more. My family and I never lived above our means. On the professional side, I always thought about my next steps. There is always the possibility that you will be impacted. You should ask yourself several questions. Are you prepared for the tough times? When evaluating your current position, are you an expense or a revenue generator for the company? At the end of the day, companies look to cut costs when the economy weakens. If your position is not directly contributing to the bottom line, your job may be more vulnerable than others. Regardless of your position, you should always maintain relationships, work hard at every challenge

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Sustaining Oneself In An Uncertain Marketplace

By Kenneth A. Goodwin Jr.

When change occurs, an opportunity arises, and a need is created. Thus, here lies the key to sustaining yourself during uncertain times. Here are a few nuggets of wisdom to take with you on your journey.

Panic For The Moment, Then Accept Your Circumstance

Panic because it is only natural and releases some of the toxins within your body and mind. Accept your circumstance with the belief that you are where you are for a reason. However, condition your mind to believe that this situation is temporary and provides you with the time to seek new opportunities.

Manage Your Sources Of Cash Flow

While unemployed, you can, by contract and/or legislative authority, access cash flow or delay payments (cash outflow) for a period of time. These include but are not limited to:

- State unemployment benefits
- Credit card insurance
- Student loan economic hardship deferment
- Mobile, cable, electrical and gas bills. Negotiate with these companies, as they maybe willing to delay or lower monthly payments

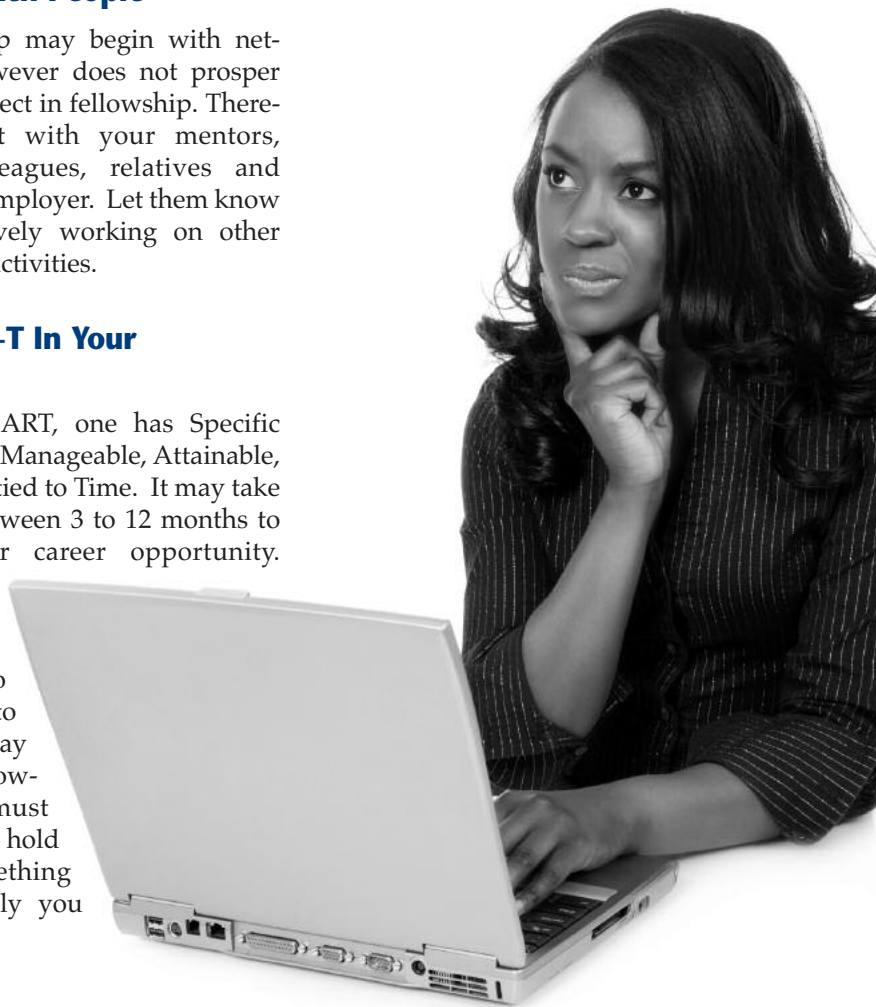
Do Not Just Network, Connect With People

A relationship may begin with networking, however does not prosper until we connect in fellowship. Therefore, connect with your mentors, friends, colleagues, relatives and prospective employer. Let them know you are actively working on other projects and activities.

Be S-M-A-R-T In Your Objectives

In being SMART, one has Specific goals that are Manageable, Attainable, Realistic and tied to Time. It may take anywhere between 3 to 12 months to land another career opportunity.

Every day take small steps. Similar to a baby who first begins to walk, you may fall down, however, you must get back up, hold on to something and eventually you will walk. ■



The Executive Leadership Council Focus • Continued from page 6

and volunteer for those initiatives that give you visibility among senior level executives.

What effect did ELC and NextGen Network have on your life, personally and professionally?

Eight years ago, I attended the Mid-level Managers' Symposium. I had never seen

so many African-American professionals in one room. The event opened my eyes to all of the missed opportunities that organizations, such as ELC and NextGen Network offer. After leaving that event, I decided that I would never miss these events again. They can have such a strong impact on one's professional career. The sessions and the network are phenomenal. I encourage everyone to

take advantage of these opportunities. Not everyone is afforded the chance to meet so many like-minded individuals through channels, such as the NextGen Network. It is at your finger tips, so make the most of it. ■

The Prudential Effect

Building Leadership Skills Through Volunteerism

By Dawn Kelly, Nacema Blake, David Artuso, Prudential Financial

To say that 2008 has already been a challenging year for consumers and corporations alike would be putting it mildly. Record price increases in food and fuel and the subprime mortgage crises, just for starters, have caused economic hardship across the country.

These conditions affect every industry, including the nonprofit sector, which is especially affected during seasons of market instability. Nonprofits must be more efficient and creative to achieve their goals given this environment of uncertainty. Despite all the economic distractions, individuals and companies can stay focused on development by working with nonprofits to build leadership skills through volunteerism.

Prudential understands the difference that strong leadership can make in the productivity of any organization—whether it is public or private, for-

profit or non-profit. Leading effectively in any situation, including economic downturns, requires certain skills including vision, initiative, a drive for results and the ability to build consensus and partner with others.

That is why Prudential encourages employees to participate in leadership positions on the boards of nonprofit organizations. Their involvement brings benefits not only to boards on which they sit, but also to the company.

Through our Board Placement Program, we work to match employees interested in serving the community with nonprofit groups seeking board members. We ensure that the employee's skills match the nonprofit group's needs.

Through our Board Placement Program, we work to match employees interested in serving the community with nonprofit groups seeking board members. We ensure that the employee's skills match the nonprofit group's needs. We also support employees who serve on boards at Prudential's request, as well as through their own initiative, by providing training designed to

Tips for Building Skills Through Volunteerism

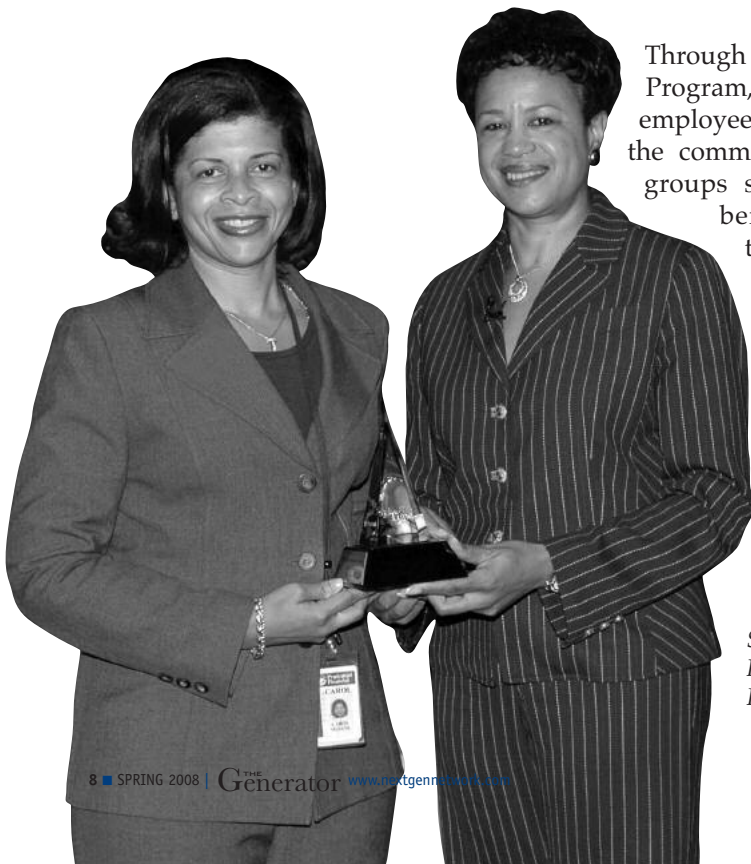
Serving on a nonprofit board or volunteering can help you improve your personal effectiveness and influence skills. Below are some tips on how to get started.

- 1) Identify the skills you need to strengthen by reviewing the competencies that are valuable to your organization.
- 2) Determine the amount of time that you can commit to serving on a nonprofit board or volunteering.
- 3) Identify a nonprofit with which you would like to work. Follow your passion in selecting your nonprofit!
- 4) Ensure that there is a good fit between your available time, interests and the skills you need to improve with the mission and needs of the nonprofit board or volunteer project.
- 5) Let your manager know of your efforts and the challenges and successes you achieve while moving ahead with this skill development work.

help them be more effective board members.

Our employees bring a range of assets to the nonprofit boardroom. They are able to share their individual expertise and strengths as well as the business acumen they have gained as employees of a successful public company. At the same time, the invaluable

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Sharon Taylor, Senior Vice President, Human Resources at Prudential Financial Inc. (right) and Carol Sloane, Director, Process Management, Prudential Financial Inc. (left).

Young Professional's Toolbox: Managing Your Career In A Tumultuous Environment

By: Ramsey Jay, Jr.

While there may be some debate whether the United States has “officially” entered a recession, there is no debate that our economy has slowed. With financial institutions at the epicenter of the credit crisis, consequences are being felt from Wall Street to Main Street. Homes are being foreclosed, blue chip corporations are being downsized, and jobs are being eliminated. In this tumultuous environment, it is vitally important to have practical principles that we can apply to help us maintain our careers’ upward trajectories.

1) Do not wait until you need your network to start networking:

We all know people who seem to appear and engage only when they need something, don't we? That is a violation of good networking. Better yet, how many of us meet someone that we know could aid in our development and are told by that individual to “keep in touch”? Yet how many of us are truly diligent about keeping in touch before we need something? It is okay to send a handwritten note to say “hello”, meet for lunch to just “have lunch”, or leave a voicemail to say “I was thinking about you”. It takes many years to develop a robust network but it is worth the time, effort, and energy. It is these buoyant relationships that will keep you afloat when tumultuous times hit.

2) Keep a keen eye on your tasks of today, as well as your career goals of tomorrow:

It is very easy to adopt tunnel vision on the day-to-day tasks and responsibilities of your present employer. Such an acute focus on the tasks of today can make it easy to get frustrated and disenchanted about the “little things” that flare up. Many of these items give off the illusion of being mission critical today, but will likely turn out to be trivial. Managing those little things correctly does not ensure a successful career, however, mismanaging them can have an adverse effect. The ability to articulate our career goals for tomorrow with the same precision, detail, and clarity that we can articulate our assignments for the day, will ensure continued positive progress towards realizing our dreams.

In the film *The Great Debaters*, Denzel Washington inserted a line in the script that his mother shared with him as a young boy, “We do what we have to do, so we can do what we want to do.” This statement is true for many of us, and is important to remember as we manage our careers in a tumultuous environment. At the end of the day, there are many things that we cannot control, but we can always maintain a positive attitude, stay connected with good people, and pursue our long-term career goals with passion and purpose. ■

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experience of working with the non-profit helps employees develop skills that improve their ability to get results and be effective on the job.

For more than three years, Carol Sloane, Director, Process Management in Prudential's Retirement business, has been serving on the board of an organization that provides charitable, education and social programs to assist African Americans of all ages.

“Volunteering on the board of directors has strengthened my organiza-

“Volunteering on the board of directors has strengthened my organizational, communication and leadership expertise.”

— Carol Sloane

tional, communication and leadership expertise,” Carol says. She has also been able to build relationships with individuals outside of the financial services industry and credits her

board service with helping her increase her network. Her greatest learning has been around strategic planning.

“Strategic planning is key for charting the direction of any organization, as well as for planning your career,” Carol explains. “In order to be successful, companies and professionals should have a multi-year plan. It is important to have a vision for yourself and a plan to execute on that vision,” ended Carol. ■

Drive Up Your Personal “Stock Price” In a Bear Job Market

By Glynda L. Brown

No matter what type of job you have, you may increase your chances of keeping it in tough times by simply making a few behavioral adjustments. These five steps may help you weather the storm and can even lead to a promotion when the market comes back and times are better.

Keep Your Skills Up To Date

No matter what kind of work you do, it is critical to keep your skills up to date. Be aware of your manager’s priorities and what skills might be needed to stay ahead. Talk with your supervisor and pay attention to company newsletters and reports. Show your willingness to take on new tasks and track how well you are accomplishing your work. Take advantage of any training offered by your employer or find low-cost community programs. Make sure your supervisor knows what skill training you have undertaken.

Follow the Rules About Work Behavior

You most likely already know the rules about what to do, or what not to do at work, but let’s review the basics. We can forget how we come across to others! While most layoffs have nothing to do with individual employee behavior, career advisors indicate that following these guidelines can tip an employment decision in your favor:

- Avoid gossip as much as possible.
- Stop complaining!
- Make sure your breaks are not too long.
- Be conscious of other people’s time.
- Limit long phone calls.
- Recognize the good work of coworkers.
- Be known as someone who shares information.

- Be a model of fair treatment.
- Look at the positive side when something negative happens.
- Be known as a positive, cooperative problem solver.

No matter what kind of work you do, it is critical to keep your skills up to date.

Be aware of your manager’s priorities and what skills might be needed to stay ahead.

Know Your Value and Communicate It

If you are flying under the radar, you are likely to be among the first eliminated. Compile a weekly status report that outlines the projects you are working on, your progress and your key performance indicators, and send that report to your boss each week. Proving your worth in challenging economic times ranks high on the list. Talk up the efficiencies and cost savings that your business innovations have achieved as well as the revenue you or your business has generated.

Be Positive

People who stir the rumor mill and bring the team down are definitely at a higher risk. Often, the people who tend to get laid off are those who have been vocalizing their dissatisfaction with their jobs or their company for some time. If you want to keep your job or control when you separate from your employer, you should change your negative attitude. However, be aware that your coworkers’ perception of you may not change right away. Meet with your boss and recommend ways that you can improve the situation in your department or in your company. In other words, show your colleagues your change in attitude. Also, note that having a history of playing devil’s advocate can work against you during a recession. If you are always arguing the “other side” and you are worried about your job, you may need to find a gentler way to express your opinions.

Be a Team Player

Getting along with others is critical when downsizing is on the table, especially for those who tend to be independent workers. These times require cooperation, flexibility and a willingness to go the extra mile. Professionals who just sit at their desk and do their 8 to 5 are at risk. The problem with hunkering down, is that it gives the impression that the employee is not interested in the organization. Prima donnas should be on notice too! If you are an excellent performer but do not get along well with others, keeping you around may not be worth the effort. ■





Member Spotlight

Heather James' "Transitions"

By Sheila Marmon

"My transitions have led to better opportunity – it has been a transition of increased self-awareness and upward mobility."

– Heather James, an eight-year member of NextGen Network

After winning a 2000 ELC Business Commentary Scholarship, which granted her membership into NextGen Network, Heather has maximized her affiliation with the organization. She has attended the monthly meetings, chaired the Community Outreach and ELC Relationship Committees, participated in eight Mid-Level Manager Symposiums, and currently serves as a member of the ELC's NextGen Network Board. She values the organization for its "mix of executive development with strategic networking" and views it as a place to "develop life-long friendships."

An INROADS alumna, Heather began her career as an auditor. After receiving an MBA, from Clark Atlanta University, she shifted her pursuits to marketing. After a number of successful years at The Coca-Cola Company in brand management, Heather began to contemplate her first mid-level corporate transition. Heather made the decision to follow the former CFO of Coca-Cola to Revlon, where he became the CEO.

At Revlon, Heather deepened and expanded her marketing skill set by holding positions in the areas of promotion, product management, and licensing. After three years of growth and learning under her belt, she determined that she had maximized her opportunity. With Revlon facing stagnant growth and undergoing a restructuring, Heather realized her avenues for near-term advancement and expectations for financial compensation were limited. Heather saw this as an opportunity to manage her departure. She says "I was the poster child for restructuring – you have to prepare for the move, facilitate a smooth transition, and remember that change is constant." Heather accepted a severance package from Revlon, which allowed her to spend a year pursuing non-profit interests and civic leadership through a prestigious fellowship program.

After her year of non-profit service, Heather accepted a role as a Senior Marketing Manager role at Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.'s headquarters in Bentonville, Arkansas. Her objective was to transition from the supplier-side of retail to the merchant-side. Heather had deep "insider" knowledge of Wal-Mart since her alma mater, Penn State University, has a deep history with Wal-Mart through its logistics and supply chain curricula. Despite doing her extensive research on the Wal-Mart organization and culture, she soon determined the company was not the right match for her. Heather transitioned out of Wal-Mart, however is

grateful for the experience and learning that she garnered.

Heather's savvy management of her transitions has been the result of both her strategic forethought and perseverance. The words of advice she shares with NextGen Network are:

1. Pay attention to the overall changing corporate landscape and the challenges of the C-suite. Think at an enterprise-level.
2. Take the time to assess and manage your "personal brand." Determine where and how you can best achieve optimal relationships.
3. Massage you network. 'Pay it forward' and help people whenever you can. It is always important to keep in touch and offer assistance.
4. Maintain an adequate financial cushion. Avoid the financial challenges that may pressure you to select a job that is not ideal. Having the financial flexibility to take your time to find the right opportunity is critical to your success.

So, what is Heather doing now? She launched a branding consulting company, completed two women's executive education courses, performed a self-assessment, and is exploring options for her next corporate partnership. ELC members have provided career feedback and guidance. NextGen Network members have provided company insights and cultural knowledge. She remains active serving on Penn State's Education Equity Advisory and NextGen Network's Boards.

Throughout her transitions, Heather has built a robust skill set and a tenacious attitude. She sees a number of potential opportunities on the horizon. As Heather evaluates her next move, two things are certain – change remains constant and she will be leveraging these vicissitudes to reach another step higher! ■

CASE STUDY

Qualities of a Successful Job Candidate: Lessons from the U.S. K-12 Education Industry

By Leslie Talbot

Industry Overview

During the last two decades, we have witnessed significant changes in the U.S. kindergarten through 12th grade (K-12) education industry. New markets have emerged creating an environment that has fostered competition among the myriad of education agencies, institutions and firms that comprise the industry. Similar to leading corporations, 21st century K-12 public education institutions and companies must operate and compete on a global scale. Industry leaders must vie with corporate America, Western Europe, Japan and other post-industrialized nations to draw highly qualified candidates into the field. Attracting and retaining top human capital is crucial to the K-12 education industry since these knowledge workers will impact the life outcomes of our children and therefore society at-large.

What indicators do education industry recruiters use to identify top candidates? They look for individuals who have advanced knowledge and skills, a variety of technical qualifications, diverse personal and professional experiences and multiple skill sets.

Qualities of Top Performers

What indicators do education industry recruiters use to identify top candidates? They look for individuals who have advanced knowledge and skills, a variety of technical qualifications, diverse personal and professional experiences and multiple skill sets. Top contenders are ambitious, as evi-

denced by their history of risk taking for professional advancement. The highly sought after candidate displays maverick-like qualities – those of a nonconformist – yet remains a team player. Competitive applicants tend to engage in social entrepreneurial practices and are typically portrayed as “innovators.” Most often, successful candidates are described as “well-rounded” by colleagues.

What metrics does the industry use to measure the prevalence and quality of these indicators? In other words, how does the market determine whether an individual is a competitive candidate? Well, ambition is identified based on the extent to which a candidate has employed innovative strategies, practices and/or solutions. A current, state-of-the-art skill set, most surprisingly, is measured by a diverse



employment history. The individual who stays in the same job, at the same company or organization for an extended period of time probably will not go to the top of the candidate list. Why? He or she has “learned the ropes” and settled into the corporate or organizational culture. It is likely that such a candidate has become comfortable and maybe even compliant – discouraged from continuing to push for self and professional improvement. However, this undesirable quality may be offset by the following metric. It is one that measures the well-rounded individual – he or she who excels in and displays a proclivity for participation in civic and philanthropic activities, has memberships in professional or trade associations and is described as the consummate networker.

Industry Analysis: What Changed?

The \$350 billion U.S. K-12 education industry is comprised of 17,000 local education agencies which include about 95,000 schools serving a client base of approximately 50 million elementary, middle and high school students. According to a recent industry report¹, 90 percent of all U.S. school children attend public schools, 25 percent of whom are concentrated in the 100 largest education districts. Client demand is generated primarily by population demographics (i.e. size,

age, geographic location and service needs), while supply (both the quantity of schools and quality of service provided) is determined predominantly by property tax revenues (although federal and state income taxes provide supplemental aid for innovative programming and special needs students).

The U.S. K-12 public education industry enjoyed a monopoly until the early 1990s when competition was introduced into the market. New market competition occurred in response to parents, education reform advocates and the federal government because many families – who due to residence or income – had few quality education options from which to choose. This marked the beginning of the U.S. education choice movement. Early tests of the movement included the 1990 Milwaukee Parental Choice Program² and the establishment of public charter schools, the first of which opened in 1992 in Minnesota.³ As a result, two primary markets prevail within the U.S. K-12 public education industry: district schooling and public school choice.

The Bottom Line

How do we determine whether an education institution is successful? Demand, of course! While choice schools currently experience high demand mainly due to their “newness” in the

market, over time, high demand will continue if and only if choice students and schools outperform traditional or district students and schools. The introduction of public school choice (or competition) into the U.S. K-12 public education industry has created a greater need to attract and retain talented workers. Like corporations, schools are only as effective as the capacities of their staffs.

The Lesson for Job Candidates

Twenty-first century public institutions, like corporations, must attract top candidates to remain viable. What is the implication for education choice job candidates or those in any emerging market who want to be viewed as competitive? They must:

- Continuously improve and diversify their skills on and off the job;
- Be ambitious, yet effective in team-based environments; and
- Demonstrate creativity, innovation and the ability to “think outside the box.”

These qualities will establish job candidates as “good hires” who will likely increase productivity and cost-effectiveness, provide opportunities for resource conservation and present innovative solutions to the companies for which they are employed. ■

¹Hoovers, Inc. 2008. *Industry Overview: Public Schools K-12*. [Electronic version]. Retrieved May 9, 2008 from http://www.hoovers.com/public-schools-k-12/--ID_143--/free-ind-fr-profile-basic.xhtml.

²The Milwaukee Parental Choice Program stipulates that students from families with incomes 175% of the poverty line or less (and who have not attended a private school during the previous school year) could receive a \$4,900 “voucher” (the per pupil state aid allotment) for tuition at any secular private schools in the program.

³Charter schools are nonsectarian public schools that operate with freedom from many of the regulations that apply to traditional or district public schools. Currently, over 3,500 charter schools enroll more than one million students across 40 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Retrieved May 9, 2008 from http://www.uscharterschools.org/pub/uscs_docs/o/index.htm.

NextGen Network Connections/Development Committee Update

By Jessica Che-Mponda and Karen Boothe-Begly, Co-Chairpersons

One of NextGen Network's key objectives is to ensure that it provides its membership with the tools that will enhance their ability to advance their careers in their respective fields. The Connections/Development Committee was created with this goal in mind.



With the ever-changing dynamics of the market place, it is imperative that individuals adapt to the new opportunities that may present themselves, or hone their ability to remain relevant in their current endeavors. In the first part of 2008, the Connections/Development Committee brought in speakers for our monthly membership meetings and small group forum sessions that presented tools, tips and methods to help our members accomplish this. Below are a few take-aways from our esteemed group of speakers thus far:

- John Kirksey, CEO of The Kirksey Group, spoke at the March membership meeting on how to manage your career in a downsizing market place. He emphasized that in today's economy, where change is a constant, the ability to manage through it by networking, updating skills, and keeping abreast of current affairs, will make the difference in how a person is positioned to take advantage of the change when it happens.

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- Ralph Jardine, Senior Vice President at HSBC, spoke at the small group forum in March on how to maintain a positive state of mind while managing your career through a transition period.

Ralph spoke to how your attitude and demeanor can come through in conversations and can impact your ability to find new opportunities. He stressed the need to maintain a positive, upbeat attitude as you seek new opportunities.

- Collette Ellis, Founding Principal of InStep Consulting LLC, spoke at the April NextGen Network membership meeting on her Company's "Competent Advantage Model" that teaches individuals how to leverage their strengths to take advantage of new opportunities. To learn more about the Competent Advantage Model, please visit <http://www.instepconsulting.com/individuals-competentadvantage.htm>

In June, members will hear from Leslie Talbot, CEO of Talbot Consulting, on how to advance their careers through civic and philanthropic services, with emphasis on leveraging non-profit boards. Additional membership meeting call topics will be posted to Collective X website in the coming months.

The Connections/Development Committee also wants to ensure that members feel they have a voice in the programs that are put forth on their behalf. To that end, we have the pleasure of featuring a member-picked speaker on the July membership meeting call. Please stay tuned for more information on that on topic and date.

We warmly welcome any feedback or suggestions and look forward to continuing to offer programs that add value to your membership with NextGen Network. Please do not hesitate to contact the co-chairs, Jessica Che-Mponda or Karen Boothe-Begly if you would like to join the Committee or have any questions. ■

Members on the Move

Bradlee Benn



Bradlee has received The Network Journal's "Top Forty Under 40" award, which recognizes top emerging business leaders who have demonstrated exemplary accomplishments in the corporate world and within their communities. Additionally, he recently started a non-profit foundation called the Thumbs Up Foundation. The foundation was started in memory of Bradlee's mother who passed away from A.L.S. (a.k.a. Lou Gehrig's disease). The mission of the foundation is to provide scholarships to minority women studying math, health & science in university. The foundation also financially supports organizations providing care to patients with A.L.S. or organizations that do A.L.S. research.

Regenia R. Sanders



Regenia has been selected to attend the Smith College Consortium on behalf of Accenture, LLC where she is a Senior Manager in Supply Chain Business Solutions. The Smith College Consortium offers high potential women from leading Fortune 500 companies two weeks of unparalleled quality executive education and the opportunity to learn from and network with other women managers and executives. The underlying theme of strategic thinking is woven throughout the curriculum, which brings together top professors from business schools and industry.

Sandye R. Taylor



Sandye received a Rising Star Award for Merrill Lynch at the Women's Bond Club's premier event, the Merit Award Dinner. The Rising Star Award is given to a nominee from each Corporate Member Firm. This honor is awarded to young women who are in the earlier stages of their careers, with 5-8 years of industry experience, that have already demonstrated leadership qualities, and are expected to be future leaders. Founded in 1921, The Women's Bond Club of New York is one of the oldest professional organizations for women in finance. Sandye is Director and head of Merrill Lynch Supplier Diversity and Global Sourcing & Procurement Services Environmental Sustainability.

Angela Jeffers



Angela has recently transitioned to Bank of America as Assistant General Counsel on the IP & Supply Chain Management team. She was previously a Senior Corporate Counsel with Food Lion, LLC.

Nicole Siblal



Nicole was recently promoted to Senior Internal Auditor in NRG Energy's Internal Audit department. She will be responsible for completing various audits at the NRG plants and corporate headquarters as well as assessing the risk factors in NRG policy processes. Previously, she was a Senior Accountant at NRG Energy, Inc in the Fuels Group.

Roderick Hardamon



Roderick was recently named the Head of Infrastructure & Integration for North America Alternative Investment Services (AIS) for CitiGroup's Global Transaction Services Business. In this new position, Rod will be responsible for AIS N.A. integration initiatives and program manager for the global AIS Model Office initiative that will define the common platforms and operational processes to be used in global hedge fund administration. Rod, together with the AIS N.A. management team, will also define the N.A. business model needed to meet the unit's projected business growth. Rod will also focus on developing strong links with Citi's business partners to deliver its client cross-sell commitments. Most recently, Rod was the Co-Head of the Mergers and Acquisition team for Citi Markets & Banking, where he led and executed numerous transactions around the globe including the acquisition of BISYS, Inc.

Kimberly Smith



Kimberly has recently accepted an offer to become the Vice President of Education at the Public Broadcasting System in Crystal City, VA. She will be overseeing two new growth initiatives focused on increasing the usage and integration of digital media and technology into K-12 classrooms. ■

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VICE PRESIDENT

KEVIN HINTON *Vice President, National Association of Investment Companies*

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