



Randy's Work *and You*

December Edition

Dear clients and colleagues,

I want to wish every one a Happy Holiday Season and a prosperous New Year in 2010.

In this edition, The Kiplinger Letter forecasts what 2010 will look like in terms of job growth. You can draw your own conclusions from this report. I discuss the three steps to get started in developing your personal branding statement.

Copies of all past E-zines are archived on my website. Feel free to pass this E-zine on.

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This month's topics:

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1. Kiplinger on Jobs in 2010.

Jobs are on everyone's mind these days, as unemployment creeps up despite economic growth.

There's not a lot Washington can do, and a Dec. 3 White House summit meeting with CEOs, union leaders, small business owners and others will yield few fresh ideas and fewer results.

Extending unemployment benefits again...putting cash in consumers' hands...and additional federal spending

On infrastructure will be on the table. But Congress is likely to gag on more deficits swelling spending.

The fact is, only time will cure the problem...

A gradual revival of credit and a renewed willingness to take on a prudent amount of risk, especially among and on behalf of small firms, where most job creation takes place. In today's risk averse climate, few firms are willing to expand, betting on a better tomorrow.

And for those that are willing, financing is tight... by government fiat (tougher lending standards) or because lenders have become super cautious.

Meanwhile, it'll get worse before it gets better.

Expect joblessness to peak at about 10.5%...

And to remain in double digits through 2010. Just to hold the rate steady, the economy needs to add about 125,000 jobs a month...enough to absorb young folks seeking their first jobs plus new immigrants. For much of the year, that won't happen, and total employment will probably increase by only about 1 million next year.

Indeed, it'll be spring before the long slide in total employment ends, with businesses, large and small, finally starting to hire more workers than they let go.

There's still plenty of room to boost production without adding to payrolls, switching part-timers to full-time and stretching the workweek...now at a 45-year low.

And manufacturers can lift output by about 5% in 2010 without hiring workers.

The best prospects for growth are in health care, a field that kept increasing throughout the recession, gaining 234,000 jobs so far in 2009. The tempo will pick up as the economy does.

And passage of health care reform by Congress will only add to demand for nurses, pharmacists, home health care aides and technical assistants.

Another early winner: **The energy industry, especially nuclear, solar & wind.**

In addition, human resources professionals, lawyers, accountants and consultants are likely to see rising demand early next year. Bright spots in manufacturing include food processing, pharmaceuticals and production of medical equipment.

At the other end of the spectrum: Construction, retailing and finance.

It'll take years to regain pre-recession employment, putting back on payrolls the 7.5 million folks who lost their jobs.

Not to mention the 1.5 million people just entering the labor market or the 9 million part-timers seeking full-time work.

2. Three steps to get started on creating your brand.

By Randy Block

In the job hunt, it is imperative that each job hunter be unique from the rest of the crowd.

When people ask what you do, are you at a loss for words? A response of “I am in a job hunt”, “I am a consultant”, or, the worst reply of all, “I am in transition” are turnoffs.

Yes! You appear the same as everyone else. Using terms like “team player”, “bottom line”, “results oriented”, “successful”, “competitive”, “dedicated” etc. do not differentiate you from as other job seekers. *Everyone else* has these terms on his or her résumé. Put another way, every job applicant is a “team player”. So what?

When asked “What do you do?”, respond in kind. Say what you do today! State your brand.

There is something that you do that no one else does. Your brand needs to reflect this. Your brand says that you know what works in today’s economy. In his book *Me 2.0: Build a Powerful Brand to Achieve Career Success* (Kaplan, April 09) Dan Schawbel defines branding as **The art of articulating and communicating your skills, personality and values so that others seek you to help them solve a problem.**

Personal branding typically begins with establishing an inventory of core competencies, expertise, demonstrated abilities, and existing level of recognition, informed by market research or feedback. Questions to be answered revolve around who needs to know about you, what need are you best positioned to fill, and what differentiates you from others in your field or space?

Personal Branding consists of three elements:

- * Value Proposition: What do you stand for?
- * Differentiation: What makes you stand out?
- * Marketability: What makes you compelling?

Your are now a business of one.

The Three Steps:

#1. Achievement inventory:

Write down your all of your achievements biggest achievements since 2001 (in so many ways, the 90’s and before don’t count)

For each, write down how you did it and what was your role.

What is the commonality in the achievements in terms of the problems that you solved?

Note the verbs (organized, managed, lead, designed etc.)

Now write 4 our 5 sentences that describe what you do based on the above.

Pay close attention to whether you enjoy doing the functions.

#2. Do a survey of you:

Call 6 of your closest associates. Do not do this by email. We want those who will be honest with you.

Ask them, "When I am not around and my name comes up, what immediate impressions do you have of me both personally and professionally?" Do not prompt for a response.

We are looking for how you are *perceived* in the business community. In my view, perception is the new reality.

#2 Synthesize and test:

Take the input from your associates see if it is in alignment with what you have written at the end of the first step.

Write out 4 or 5 drafts of your brand that combine your inventory and survey.

Send three sentences of drafts of your personal brand to each of the six associates and ask them to "vote" or make a comment.

Choose the best and "field test it" in networking. Be open to modifying it as you go.

Other guidelines for developing your brand:

1. Never use a title in a branding statement
2. Your sentence contains a pronoun (usually first person singular), a verb and an object. For example, my own branding statement is "I help professionals transform their strengths, talents and values into revenue".
3. Do not describe "how" you perform the brand. The words "through" and "by" are out. If they are interested, then you can tell them "how".

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Randy brings expertise in executive search as a certified career coach. He has guided all levels of professionals in the areas of career transition: changing careers, choosing a career direction, evaluating/negotiating offers, executive career marketing, finding jobs, getting organized, as well as finding opportunities for self-employment, freelancing and consulting. He holds an **IJCTC** certificate from the Career Planning and Adult Development, a **CCMC** (Certified Career Management Coach) from Career Coach Academy and a **PCRC** (Professional Certified Retirement Coach) from the Retirement Coach Institute. His email address is randy@randyblock.com or visit his website at www.randyblock.com.

3. Boomer Corner: Older and wiser? Say so

Older job seekers should confront stereotypes head-on, career experts say

By Andrea Coombes

SAN FRANCISCO (MarketWatch) -- Hunting for a job is never easy, particularly in labor markets like this one, but it can be even harder when your hair is going gray. Even if age bias were rare -- and many say it's not -- after a rejection or three, it can become difficult to go to another job interview without the worrisome feeling that stereotypes are working against you.

But that attitude may torpedo your chances of landing a job.

"If you have an expectation that there will be age bias, you will probably find it," said Marci Alboher, a senior fellow with Civic Ventures, a research group that advocates for people starting second careers.

How much do you pay in 401(k) fees?

Few investors know what they're paying in administrative and other fees for their 401(k), but there are ways to find out, says Ryan Alfred, president of BrightScope, a retirement-plan ratings and research firm. MarketWatch's Andrea Coombes reports.

The trick, she said, is to confront biases head-on by laying to rest common stereotypes. For instance, take the stereotype that older workers aren't technologically adept: If you know how to use some of the latest tools in your industry, be prepared to talk about that so you can walk into the interview feeling confident and in charge.

"You'll be able to rebut the presumption that might be in the air," Alboher said.

Others agree. Got a lot of experience? "Make that a gimme," said Eileen Habelow, senior vice president of organizational development at Randstad, a staffing and recruiting firm. She said job seekers should talk to prospective employers in terms of "I can definitely do what you need me to do. Here are all the things I can do because of my years of experience."

Also, talk about the problems you've solved. "Emphasize the value of that experience bank," Habelow said.

Long-term unemployment

The unemployment rate for workers 55 and older in October was 7%, well below the 10.2% rate for workers overall. But a significant portion of older jobseekers stay unemployed for six months or longer. In October, about 46% of unemployed workers age 55 and older had been looking for work for 27 weeks or more, compared with 38% of workers aged 25 to 34, according to Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Certainly, age bias exists, though measuring it isn't easy. One proxy is the number of employment-based age-bias claims filed. That figure is up sharply in the economic downturn, with claims of age discrimination rising 29% in fiscal year 2008 compared with a year earlier, according to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. But there are ways to improve your chances of landing a job, regardless of your age, in these still-uncertain times.

Get foot in door

Find someone to recommend you. "I don't care if you're 24 or 54, if you can get a personal introduction, it's almost like all stereotypes are off," Habelow said.

That's where social-networking sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn can help: Look for

people you know who may know someone in the company to which you're applying, and then ask for a referral.

But pick up the phone to request the referral, rather than relying on a message sent through the site.

"What drives me crazy is when somebody uses those tools as the end-all, be-all. Use them as a first step," Habelow said.

Create an online brand

Post profiles on those online networking sites, said Marva Goldsmith, president of Marva Goldsmith & Associates, a career-advice company. Make sure to detail your industry-relevant skills and experience. And include a link to your profile on your résumé to demonstrate your familiarity with online tools.

Also, make connections with others and set yourself apart as an expert in your field by participating in industry-specific groups on these sites, Goldsmith said. For example, a computer-security pro might join some of LinkedIn's "information security" groups.

Confront the stereotypes

For instance, some hiring managers may assume older workers are less able to adapt to change, so in your cover letter or résumé, say you're "very adaptable to changing corporate policies and direction," said Rick Saia, certified professional résumé writer at Pongo Resume, a job-search advice site. Then "be ready to talk about previous situations where things changed with your job and you adapted easily."

If your salary is higher than that of a younger worker, explain how you'll be cheaper to train due to your experience. "I can be up and running in no time. I have the technical skills, I've managed people," Habelow said. "Whatever you've done before that typically takes a newbie time to get good at."

And another stereotype: Anyone with gray hair must be on the verge of retirement. If you're ready to work another decade, say so during the interview.

Similarly, be sure to clarify your goals. For instance, if you're not eager to move up the ladder, say, "I can bring you leadership experience but I don't need a leadership position," Habelow said. If you're happy to mentor younger colleagues, say that.

Create a skills-based résumé

Focus on your skills and knowledge relevant to the job at hand. "There's less and less emphasis on chronological résumés," said Samuel Greengard, author of "The AARP Crash Course in Finding the Work You Love."

Don't spill your guts about your entire career. "The résumé is merely a marketing document to get an interview," Saia said. Focus on the last 10 to 15 years unless experience from early in your career relates to the job for which you're applying. Your résumé should be "the greatest hits, the highlights," Greengard said.

Make yourself stand out

Raise your "knowledge quotient." "It's about making yourself the most irresistible, attractive candidate you can be," Greengard said. How to do that? Take classes specific to your field. Attend workshops and conferences. Ask younger people in the field what the hot issues are.

Also, craft an eye-catching, interesting cover letter. For instance, someone seeking a teaching position could begin a cover letter with: "The demand for dedicated teachers has never been greater. America's future requires experienced professionals," Greengard suggested.

On your résumé, use the "professional summary" at the top to grab attention. Answer these questions, Saia said: "What do I bring to the table that no one else can, and what is the edge that I can provide?"

4. Success Story Over 60, and Proud to Join the Digerati

By JAMES R. GAINES

IN the summer of 2008, just before I turned 61, I went to work at FLYP <<http://www.flypmedia.com/>>, an online digital publication that combines text with Flash animation, motion graphics and streaming audio and video to tell stories. It's part of a larger effort to explore new forms of multimedia journalism.

FLYP's founder, Alan Stoga, is several years younger than I am. The other people on the staff are decades younger than either of us. Most of them, I suspect, have body piercings or tattoos of some sort. You can say 60 is the new 40 all you want. Where I work, even 40 is pretty old.

I used to be the top editor of Time, Life and People magazines (back when print was king). On my first day at FLYP, I was introduced to the staff as someone who "has forgotten more about magazines than any of us has ever known." This comported nicely with my self-image. I thought that by this time in my life, kids coming out of college would be lucky to work with me, pleased to learn from the experience that I've worked so hard (and proudly) to achieve.

It hasn't turned out that way. The young digerati at FLYP are ambitious, smart, thoughtful and hard working, and in fact, I feel lucky to be working with them.

Staff members have been very patient about helping me understand things like video codecs and MySQL databases. So much so that I learn more than I teach most days, which is both humbling and thrilling.

But here's a paradox: I'm also a boss, and the age difference further emphasizes that distinction. More clearly now, life in the office resembles my fate as a parent at home, particularly as my children grow older: My job is to sustain, to provide and sometimes to teach, not necessarily to be a friend. I think I might be happier as a colleague, but age makes the phrase "collegial boss" ever more oxymoronic, like "cool parent" — there's something suspicious about it.

Given this distance between us, I wasn't sure what my employees thought of me until I started writing this column, and I finally decided to ask them.

“I don’t ever think about Jim’s age until someone in the office brings it up,” one employee said, “usually referencing one of his digital gaffes — like forgetting to push ‘play’ on a YouTube [video](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/business/companies/youtube/index.html?inline=nyt-org) and then wondering why the video’s ‘broken.’ ” (Ouch!)

Another comment, a bit painful, too, but quite true: “We’re a small team where we can’t get hung up on who is guiding whom. New media isn’t about who has the longest résumé. It’s about who has the best ideas and who can implement them the most creatively. That’s something that age can’t really teach you.”

This was my favorite: “Seeing someone like Jim find what we’re doing exciting has made me see it in a new way, sort of like when I started out. His enthusiasm for it reminds me why I went this way.”

A fine young man. Going places, that boy.

But let’s be clear: My enthusiasm is not like theirs. One big difference between the FLYP staff and me is how strongly they react to things. At my age, the passion of youth looks a little tiring.

At times, when someone becomes anguished over an interview that didn’t pan out, or a favorite sentence that was cut, I want to put out a hand and say, “Hey, really, it’s going to be all right.” Other times, when a story goes well and one of them is feeling all manic and high-fivey, I want to say, “Hey, really, things aren’t as great as they look.”

In a way, the extremes of youthful emotion remind me of media commentary these days. Some pundits are in dark despair over the decline of reading and print, convinced that we’re becoming a nation of addled multitaskers who stare at screens all day. Another set seems to take great delight in the slow, painful death of “dead-tree media.” To both sides, I want to say: Get over it! Yes, the world of print publishing is going through a fundamental disruption brought about by the Internet. People are being laid off left and right, newspapers and magazines are folding, the book business is floundering.

In the digital world, though, social networks are now bigger than most national populations, more people are consuming more news and information than ever before, and an archive of all the world’s knowledge is being built and streamed to your favorite device. This new world brings with it as much promise as pain. It’s like youth that way.

Media will change as radically as technology allows, and right now the Internet is moving over the media landscape like a tsunami. But the job I learned to love when young was to tell stories, and the story has lost nothing in this transition. It is as elemental and as riveting as ever.

Everybody’s worried about the device. Could Microsoft

http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/business/companies/microsoft_corporation/index.html?inline=nyt-org> 's Courier be the answer, or the iPad? Good question, but not the most important one. It's less the device than the devices — the crafts and the art of storytelling — that need updating most urgently for the digital world.

The young people I work with now will be the settlers of that frontier, and I can't think of anything I would rather do than help them get there.

5. Humor Department: Murphy's work laws

A pat on the back is only a few centimeters from a kick in the pants.

Don't be irreplaceable, if you can't be replaced, you can't be promoted.

You can go anywhere you want if you look serious and carry a clipboard.

Eat one live toad the first thing in the morning and nothing worse will happen to you the rest of the day.

Never ask two questions in a business letter. The reply will discuss the one you are least interested in, and say nothing about the other.

When the bosses talk about improving productivity, they are never talking about themselves.

If at first you don't succeed, try again. Then quit. No use being a damn fool about it.

There will always be beer cans rolling on the floor of your car when the boss asks for a ride home from the office.

Mother said there would be days like this, but she never said there would be so many.

Keep your boss's boss off your boss's back. This is what I'm doing wrong.

Everything can be filed under "miscellaneous."

Never delay the ending of a meeting or the beginning of a cocktail hour.

To err is human, to forgive is not company policy.

6. Words that Inspire

The man who smiles when things go wrong has thought of someone to blame it on.

- Robert Bloch

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Randy Block . Executive Coach & Staffing Consultant
[ph. 415-383-6471 (vm only) e. randy@randyblock.com
<http://www.randyblock.com>]
<http://www.linkedin.com/in/randblock>
<http://twitter.com/boomeradvisor>

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