

LifeMapSM



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July 2010

This Month's Message:

**A Challenge to HR
Professionals.**

Paths Forward

**• Need Career
Coaching?**

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A Challenge to HR Professionals.

About ten or so years ago I was watching the movie *As Good As It Gets* starring Jack Nicholson as a writer with

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obsessive compulsive disorder and Helen Hunt as a waitress with a sick child. In one powerful scene Hunt, with her son struggling to breathe, is bounced from holding on one phone line to the next and, ultimately is forced to run, child in arms, to an emergency room. Finally, in fear, anger and desperation Hunt yells "F---ing HMO's!" The audience in the theater broke out into spontaneous applause.

The following week I was in my monthly consultation with the CEO of a medical organization. When I mentioned this movie experience to her she indicated that she had read reports of this reaction in many theaters. She sighed in frustration and said that though the US health care system did indeed need substantial overhaul and streamlining such comments were truly hurtful and somewhat depressing to those in the system who were struggling to make it work.

This conversation has come to mind more than a few times during this recent recession. As part of my commitment to providing pro-bono services when I can I frequently speak to job search /career networking groups to offer a bit of support during these tough times. Over the last year as the job picture worsened and now as it ever so slowly starts to improve I have frequently been taken aback by the often dismissive and sometimes outright hostile comments concerning those in the human resources function.

As the old saying goes "some of my best friends are . . ." in HR and for the last year or so I've been sharing with them what I've been hearing from hundreds of job hunters. And that is that from two-thirds to three-quarters of job hunters think HR is:

"part of the problem, not part of the solution"

"couldn't care less about job hunters"

"are more of a hindrance than a help"

" to be avoided if at all possible".

The reactions of my HR friends are quite similar to that of my health care CEO. They say they're doing the best they can, with inadequate resources, that many job hunters don't understand the role of HR in hiring and that it was their genuine interest "in people" that led them to a HR career in the first place. But, sadly, the best of intentions do little to dispel the growing fear, anger and desperation that today's job hunters share with Helen Hunt's character in that movie.

Almost every management tome proclaiming to be "in search of excellence" or seeking companies "built to last" or the

"best places to work" all identify human resource management as key to organizational success. My fear is that the contemporary and seemingly growing disenchantment with and vocal disrespect of HR could lead to further diminished HR budgets and less emphasis on those practices that contribute to engaged, productive, and successful workplaces.

My challenge to the human resources community is not to complain about the seeming unfairness of many of these reactions, not to dismiss them as the mere venting of the disgruntled, unemployed or underemployed but to tackle them head on with information, action and optimism for the future of our economy, our enterprises and of their chosen profession. Here are a few suggestions.

Paths Forward

- **Get Out There.** Don't hide in your office or cubical. Get out there and share your knowledge. There are tons of venues needing your job savvy expertise. I bet your church or community group hosts a periodic job search session in its basement. Your local department of employment or local career center would love to have you do a session for them. Will you, as some HR friends have said, get flooded with resumes if you do this? Perhaps. But if your presentation clearly indicates what an HR person can and cannot do to help the typical job hunter then this shouldn't be a problem. If your organization chooses to donate copies of the revised edition of *Winning Job Interviews* to attendees as a goodwill gesture be sure to contact www.CareerPress.com or www.Amazon.com for a group discount.
- **Update the Receptionist and Web Site.** Make sure the company receptionist and web site has a current list of employment opportunities and the accurate contact person for each - either the appropriate HR person or the hiring manager depending on your internal process. Job hunters hate sending impersonal "to whom it may concern" communications and have no one to follow up with to find out if the position has been filled. Getting the information to your organization's web master is not enough; make sure it gets posted.
- **Who Referred Whom?** When contacting a potential job candidate be sure to let him / her know what recruiter or job board referred them to you. This gives job candidates valuable feedback with which they can streamline and

improve their search.

- **"Splash!"** A job candidate told me that the sound he heard most frequently after he had applied for a job was " a splash followed by the sound of crickets". To the great laughter of the group I was addressing he explained that it was the sound of his message in a bottle hitting the water followed by almost complete silence. Recruit, cajole, shanghai, dragoon, beg, or kidnap someone from IT to get or design you an auto-response system for all on-line applications that can also be used manually to input names and emails of those applying with hard copy. An intern (from HR or IT) can usually figure out how to do this. Simply letting folks know you've actually heard from them is worth its weight in PR / community relations gold.

- **Interview Follow-Up.** Every candidate who has been screened by phone or interviewed in person deserves to know the time-line for the hiring process, whether he/ she is still in the running and if and when the position is filled. Again, an intern (either from HR or the hiring department) can handle this once some appropriate boilerplate wording has been approved but it is HR that should assure that the process is completed on a professional note.

LifeMap is about creating environments that inform, respect, welcome, and support those with whom we interact for the benefit of our enterprises, our professions and ourselves.

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Resources

- Are you or someone you know job hunting or thinking about it?

The best, concise, all-round job changing guide available.
Revised Edition [Winning Job Interviews](#) by Dr. Paul Powers.

In this easy-to-follow, step-by-step book, Dr. Paul Powers demystifies job interviewing, explains why the process actually favors the job hunter, and shows how you can dramatically improve your interview skills. Packed with solid, practical information and laced with both humor and "kick in the pants" motivation, *Winning Job Interviews* is the book you wished you had before your last interview... and is mandatory preparation for your next one!

· Stalled at work? Still struggling to find your true vocation?

Or know someone who is? Order your copy of [Love Your Job!](#) *Loving the Job You Have, Finding A Job You Love* by Dr. Paul.

<http://www.drpaulpowers.com/booksandarticles.html>

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