

# CareerSmart Advisor™

## Strategies & Solutions for Your Career Success

### A Note From Dave

As you're reading this issue of *CareerSmart Advisor*, are you ignoring the flood of email messages coming into your PDA? Because it's at your fingertips, and those fingers can easily send a response, do you feel as guilty as I do when I'm not opening and responding to email within a matter of minutes?



If so, I suggest you check out an article by Stewart Friedman that appears on the *Harvard Business Publishing* website called Master the Art of Interruptibility. Friedman is a Wharton School professor who wrote the popular book, *Total Leadership: Be a Better Leader, Have a Richer Life*. It's a book worth reading if you can disconnect yourself from your PDA long enough to turn the pages.

Anyway, in this recent article, Friedman captured my attention with some suggestions on how to break this cycle of continuous accessibility our PDAs enable. Among his ideas: tell your boss you're going to be electronically inaccessible for certain blocks of time during the week to see if you are actually more productive as a result. Friedman challenges readers to consider how much they could actually accomplish if they could focus on just one task at a time, and on how much other people and tasks could benefit.

If this works for you, let me know. But I might not respond right away. I'm planning to start only checking my email between 6am and 6pm. It might not be exactly what Friedman had in mind, but it's a start.

Sincerely,



Dave Opton  
ExecuNet Founder & CEO  
[www.execunet.com/davesblog](http://www.execunet.com/davesblog)

### How to Become a Better Interviewer

By Marji McClure

**W**hen considering what skills successful leaders need, most people don't think much about their ability to interview others. Yes, the skills they need when interviewing for a job are important, but the skills necessary to interview potential candidates and build strong teams may be even more crucial to possess.

Because executives will screen candidates for their team — and maybe the entire organization — they really need to excel at interviewing. Hiring the wrong people can have severe repercussions for executives. Poor hires can diminish an organization's performance and reflect negatively on the executive who did the hiring. Interviewing is the executives' first step to get it right.

"One of the biggest mistakes an executive can make is trying to 'wing' an interview — no matter which side of the desk they're on," says Louise Kursmark, president of Massachusetts-based Best Impression Career Services Inc. "Just as top-notch candidates prepare for job interviews, hiring managers need to spend some time in thoughtful preparation to ensure that the interview is a productive business meeting for all involved."

"You will be spending more time with this person than your spouse. Make sure the relationship is going to work before becoming engaged," says Roberta Chinsky Matuson, president of Human Resource Solutions. Chances are, this is a relationship that you're going to have to build through the interviewing process since the majority of new hires are found outside the company. According to corporate human resource respondents of the latest edition of ExecuNet's *Executive Job Market Intelligence Report*, 59 percent of executive level job opportunities were filled by external recruitment in 2007, with the rest filled through internal promotion.

#### The Pre-Interview Stage

The first step in the interview process happens before the candidates even walk in the door. You need to have a clear picture of what the ideal candidate will look like. What skill set will they possess? What background should they have? "Preparation starts before a job is ever posted or listed with a recruiter," notes Kursmark. "First establish what you need this person to accomplish, with specific performance expectations. Then identify the qualifications, experience, personality traits and

**Continued on page 4**

<b>Insider Insight</b> Research, Reinvention, Resilience: The Three Rs of Career Success .....	2
<b>Your Career Advisor</b> Consultant or Corporate Executive: Which Career Path Should You Take?.....	6
<b>Food for Thought</b> Six Rules for Increasing Revenue and Profits .....	7

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## Insider Insight

# Research, Reinvention, Resilience: The Three Rs of Career Success

By Alisa Cohn

Most people think when you finish school, you are done with the three Rs. In achieving career success, you have a new set of “Rs” to conquer — Research, Reinvention and Resilience. Wherever you are in your career, you’ll find yourself in one of these three phases of the career success cycle.

### Researching Opportunities

Luckily, this is not library research. You won’t memorize any dates or names of dead presidents! This research includes a reflective look in the mirror and a scan of the environment; who are you and where should you be positioning yourself? You set the best goals for yourself when you know that. Your research should include what you know about yourself, what others think about you, and what is going on in the external environment.

Self-reflection is the first step of research. Set aside 20 minutes on two or three different occasions to ask yourself some of those questions that jiggle around in the back of your head. Writing in a journal helps clarify these for you. Objective behavioral assessments like the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, interest and skills inventories, and a values assessment can also help you understand yourself better.

Some questions to write about:

- What are your goals and values?
- What are you best at and worst at?
- How do you most want to contribute?
- In what have you been most successful?

Once you know what is important to you and what your strengths are, it’s time to get others’ perspectives. Many companies have a formalized 360-degree

feedback process that solicits feedback about you from managers, peers, employees, and, sometimes, external people like customers. If your company offers this, take advantage of it. Tailor it so that the questions asked of others are relevant to you.

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The Three Rs are an interlocking, ongoing process, not a one-time circuit.

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You can do your own version of 360-degree feedback simply by asking colleagues and friends some questions. Some questions to consider: What am I known for? If you had three words to describe me, what would they be? Make up your own questions. A vice president of marketing I worked with once asked the question: “If you were a cartoonist drawing me, what props would you put in my hand?” People are eager to answer questions for you, and most often they will want you to return the favor for them.

The last phase of research is exploring the external environment. Find out what is new out in the world. Talk to your network inside your current company. Remember to constantly refresh your internal network and reach out to people in other functions. Spend time observing. Who gets promoted? What are they known for? What skills do they have and how do they showcase them?

Your network outside your company

**Continued on page 3**

## Insider Insight

### Continued from page 2

is equally important to help you inject yourself with new thinking. Finding out what is on your peers' minds lets you view the broader external environment. Read trade journals — consider picking up one you've never read before and read about other functions. If you are in engineering, for example, read a new engineering publication and also read something about high-tech marketing. Keep your ears open for the new and different; you don't have to be an expert, but your awareness will help you understand the environment better.

A perfect example of research is a vice president of engineering I worked with. He realized he wanted to be in a more service-oriented profession and he wanted to spend more time with people, not just technology. He discussed this with his external network, and he discovered some hot challenges in healthcare that his technological expertise could solve. He used this information to position himself out of a software firm into a leadership role in a hospital, which he found much more fulfilling.

### A Reinvention Exercise

After you have done some research, you will probably have some new ideas about where you want to go. To get where you're going — whether it's the next promotion, the new company or a new career — you will have to reinvent yourself. You will have to build new skills and experiences and transform yourself to convince others you're ready.

Many people get stuck in this phase because they have a hard time convincing themselves they can do it. This prevents them from stretching themselves for a big promotion or trying to find a career that excites them. And yet, if you think about it, you reinvent yourself in response to external events all the time. In fact, entire nations reinvent themselves. You only have to spend a few days in the new business centers of India and China to see that! When you decide to reinvent yourself in response to something you want to do, rather than what is thrust upon you, you take more control over your own destiny.

You will get the best results in your

## Putting Your Resilience to the Test

How resilient are you? Rate yourself on the questions below from 1 (not true) to 3 (very true). The total will reveal your level of resiliency.

1. I am always curious about new things.
2. I am comfortable taking professional risks.
3. I don't dread difficult conversations with people.
4. I enjoy learning something new even when it's tough; I often prefer that to doing something I'm already good at.
5. When people "lash out" at me, I think they are in a bad mood.
6. After completing a tough task, I never worry how it will be received.
7. I never jump to conclusions when a problem arises.
8. If I decide I want something, I spend some time assessing if it's a good idea before I just do it.
9. When I discuss a hot topic, I can keep my emotions in check.
10. If a colleague is upset, I don't notice.

### Score: 24-30

Very resilient — what bigger risks could you take?

### Score: 18-23

Semi-resilient — how can you upgrade your resilience to upgrade your life?

### Score: 10-18

Not-so-very-resilient — which resilience tool do you want to practice?

reinvention if you follow these tips:

- Look for ways to cross-pollinate what you do now into other areas. A managing director of a large investment bank found that persuasion skills he honed teaching sixth grade helped him manage client relationships.
- Seek out role models who have reinvented themselves. When you picture someone doing it, you can picture yourself doing it.
- Volunteer in a capacity totally outside your comfort zone. A marketing executive of a large public company agreed to be on the audit committee of a nonprofit. He found that numbers experience — which made him nervous at first — helped him reinvent himself into a CEO of a start-up.

### Learning Resilience

First, the bad news: reinvention brings risk. Resilience — mental toughness — allows you to bounce back more quickly from setbacks and try again. Research shows that resilience is one of the top qualities leading to success. People who proactively increase their resilience stay focused more on problem-solving rather than the problem. They have greater faith in themselves, and they take more action. Therefore, the good news: resilience can be learned.

Learning resilience takes knowledge

and practice. The key techniques to remember are:

- Focus on the big picture. When you know where you're going, setbacks are just inevitable obstacles to move around.
- Reframe events. Rather than think the worst, practice thinking optimistically when difficulty occurs. This is not Pollyanna thinking; this will give you enough mental peace of mind to think rationally.
- Maintain an "A-Team." These are the people who will help you do both of the above. You trust them; they understand you; they root for you. Reaching out to them when the going gets tough may be hard to do; that's exactly when you should.

The Three Rs are an interlocking, ongoing process, not a one-time circuit. Sometimes it's clear which one you have to focus on; sometimes you work on them all together. Career success and fulfillment is a dynamic work in progress, just like you. ■

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## Better Interviewer

*Continued from page 1*

culture-fit factors that represent an ideal candidate. Be prepared to discuss and defend your criteria based on the specific performance goals you have established.”

It's important that you have internal buy-in on what you're seeking in a candidate. It doesn't just benefit the internal processes, but can create a foundation that benefits the candidates as well and makes for a productive interview experience for all involved.

“Get all stakeholders and reporting structures identified beforehand,” says Don McNamara, founder and president of Heritage Associates, a sales management consulting, training and coaching company. “Nothing kills a good candidate quicker than to feel they are being led on a fishing expedition, for they want to know what their role, responsibilities,

authorities and reporting structures are — and that's just for openers.”

Depending on the size of the company, human resource professionals may take on some of the early screening processes.

“Candidates seen by the hiring manager should be considered ‘viable’ to reduce the time demands on the manager and streamline the process,” says George Hallenbeck, PhD, product manager for Minneapolis-based Lominger International, a leadership development resource provider, and part of Korn/Ferry Company.

### Interviewing Strategies

There are many ways in which to gain the most information about a candidate during an interviewing session. Many experts agree that behavior-based interviewing, which elicits specific examples of experiences from candidates rather than generalizations, is quite effective.

[See box, page 5, for tips on conducting

behavior-based interviews].

“Another good method for getting beyond scripted interview responses is to ask your candidates to demonstrate how they would perform a specific aspect of the job,” says Kursmark. “You could set up a ‘white board’ exercise, give the candidates a relevant business problem, and ask them to walk you through the steps they would take to tackle the challenge.”

If the candidate has not explained himself clearly when discussing how he would solve these business problems, or if he hasn't answered your questions completely, don't be afraid to ask for further clarification, says Tina Hamilton, president and CEO of Whitehall, Penn.-based hireVision Group, a human resources outsourcer. “Ask questions such as, ‘I am still not clear on this question, Can you tell me exactly how you...?’ At that point, the candidate is put in a position to answer the question,” explains Hamilton. “If he does not, this is a multiple red-flag, as the candidate not only lacks experience needed, but also this is an obvious look into how the candidate follows clear direction.”

Hamilton recommends conducting two- to four-hour interviews for more critical positions. “This gives time to see how the candidate deals with the pressure of being in an interview for a prolonged period of time, breaks down their reserve, and allows you to ask questions twice in different manners,” she says. Such an interview process begins with an ice-breaker to explain the process to the candidate and follows with a review of the candidate's work history. Hamilton says this usually takes from 30 minutes to an hour or more. Then, ask them to relate their skills and experience to processes they were involved in and follow up with behavior-based interview questions.

Whatever you do, let the candidates talk. Don't control the conversation. “We commonly hear about executives conducting interviews where they do 80 percent of the talking, and the candidate walks away questioning if they want to work with someone who appears to have terrible listening skills,” says Chinsky Matuson. “The opposite should occur. The interviewer should be doing 20

### Using DISC to Find the Right Hire

To ensure a job candidate is the right fit for a position, the hiring manager must determine how that individual's skills and personality will enhance an organization's processes. Linda Dominguez, CEO and executive strategist for Executive Coaching and Resource Network Inc., says that the two main questions that a hiring manager needs to ask are: Can you accomplish the goals of the job (technically) and can you fit in here (behaviorally)?

“Knowing the two-part goal of the executive interview, strategizing the questions to identify technical expertise is the easy part (and 10 percent predictive for future performance),” says Dominguez. “The identification of a candidate's behavioral style (55 percent predictive of future performance) can be an easy process as well — if you know your own style, the style (culture) of your organization, and you are able to accurately determine the style of the candidate.”

Dominguez suggests using an assessment tool such as DISC to identify a candidate's style. She explains that a DISC assessment reveals how you solve problems and challenges (the Dominance factor); how you influence others (the Influence factor); how you react to or respond to risk and change (the Steadiness factor); and how you display independence or dependence (the Compliance factor).

“The assessment does not evaluate how well one handles each of these factors; it simply identifies the behavioral tendencies — to a greater or lesser degree — in each of the four categories,” says Dominguez.

Dominguez offers this example: a highly Dominant person who deals directly with problems and challenges, who is low on the Steadiness scale (because of a quick reaction to take calculated risks) interviews with an organization that is highly Steady (one that takes a more unhurried approach). “Could it work for both of them? Yes, if the organization is willing to take the risk and the candidate is willing to put in the amount of energy required to be less dominant and more reserved and steady,” notes Dominguez.

She recommends individual clients understand their own style to identify which corporate and individual setting is the best for them. “With this knowledge and a little practice, both the hiring executive and candidate can learn to tailor a set of questions to open the door of communication and determine if the fit is right from both sides,” says Dominguez.

**Continued on page 5**

## Better Interviewer

*Continued from page 4*

percent of the talking and the candidate should be given ample time to respond to the questions.”

### Expect Questions from the Candidate

While preparing the questions you are going to ask a candidate, it's also important to be prepared for questions the candidate may pose. Executives need to be ready to answer questions about themselves (their leadership style) as well as the company they work for.

Janet Walsh, president and CEO of Georgia-based Birchtree-HR LLC, a global consulting firm that focuses on human capital financial management, says that executives should expect a candidate to ask questions such as:

- Could you describe to me your typical management style and the type of employee that works well with you?
- Where are your major concerns that need to be immediately addressed in this job?
- What is your company's policy on providing seminars, workshops and training so employees can develop their skills?
- Are there any restraints or cutbacks planned that would decrease the budget here?
- What particular computer equipment and software do you use here? When was your last upgrade?
- How will my performance be measured? By whom?
- Are there any weaknesses in the department that you are working on improving?
- What types of people seem to excel here?
- Can you give me an idea of the typical workload and extra hours or special needs it demands?
- Can you describe the atmosphere of the office?

Hamilton stresses, however, that you shouldn't reveal many details about the job or the company until the end of the interview. “Anything you offer prior to

### Behavior-Based Interviewing Techniques

Experts agree that one of the most effective strategies in learning if a candidate has the qualifications necessary for a particular job is behavior-based interviewing. “It's a technique that requires the candidates to supply specific examples from their past experience rather than relying on generalizations or suppositions,” explains Louise Kursmark, president of Best Impression Career Services Inc.

According to executive coach Leila Bulling Towne, there are specific ways in which to craft the questions that will yield such examples — and answers:

1. Use open-ended questions; ones that cannot be answered with “yes” or “no,” and include the pronoun “you.”
2. Pick a starter word like what, when, where, who, why, how, explain, tell me, or describe.
3. Select the competency or soft skill crucial to the success of the position.
4. Then fill in the blanks: describe the most recent example of using [insert competency] in your current role.

For example, if you're trying to understand how well a candidate responds to pressure, Kursmark suggests asking the following questions:

1. How do you respond to pressure on the job?
2. Tell me about a recent experience when you were under a lot of pressure to produce results. What did you do and what was the outcome? In retrospect, would you have done anything differently?

this could lead the applicant to answer the questions in a manner that serves their own interests in qualifying for the position,” she says.

### Can You Really Just Know?

Sometimes executives don't rely on interview questions or assessment tests to pick their next hire. They instead rely on gut instinct when selecting a candidate for a position. Experts agree that this is a risky approach, since it is not based in fact.

Business psychologist and executive coach Carl Robinson, PhD, of Seattle-based Advanced Leadership Consulting, says that interviewers are subject to various interview bias errors, such as:

- Primacy effect — Picking a person because he/she is the freshest in your memory.
- Order effect — People think the first or last interviewee was the best even when the middle one was the true star.
- Subjective weightings — Check those biases at the door (male/female, color, height, school, country club, accent, how they are dressed).
- Self-image hiring — Just because they think like you doesn't make the candidate a terrific choice.
- Halo effect — Especially for CEO candidates, be careful about the impact reading about a candidate in

the press or seeing them on TV may have on you.

“Too often, interviewers are biased toward ‘charismatic’ personality types even though there is no scientific evidence to support that charismatic leaders are across the board more effective, which will impact their decision-making, hence the need to use predetermined questions, compare answers, have more than one person conduct interviews and do extensive reference checking,” says Robinson. In addition, make sure that each candidate is asked the same questions, adds McNamara, and that you stay on target with those questions. “Too much small talk and that of a personal nature bogs down the interview and leads to unnecessary segues,” says McNamara.

Interviewers hire on gut instinct because the person reminds them of themselves. “Beware the just-like-me bias,” warns Dr. Rachele Canter, president of San Francisco-based executive development firm RJC Associates. “Interviewers tend to be more comfortable with people just like themselves and thus tend to hire clones.”

However, there are times when you should absolutely follow your instincts. “Although I don't recommend making

**Continued on page 6**

## Your Career Advisor

# Consultant or Corporate Executive: Which Career Path Should You Take?

By Paula Asinof

Every time the economy expands or dips, executives who are tired, bored, displaced, or in search of above-market earnings, come out of the barn in droves looking for “greener pastures.” They frequently assume that their experiences running a “real” company qualify them to provide insight and expertise as a consultant to other companies.

Meanwhile, consultants looking for financial stability have thoughts of going corporate. Consultants are often confident in their abilities to lead organizations. Who could be better qualified than they are to run a company from the inside? After all, they have been the guiding hand for many companies’ strategic, financial and technology direction. They have been trusted counsel for their top executives.

Unfortunately, grazing in the other “greener” pasture is more complicated than it seems on the surface.

### Life as a Consultant

The defining characteristics of the consulting environment are similar from firm to firm, regardless of whether it is a large global firm or a small local one. At a senior level, success is based on sales revenue.

As a consultant, engagements are driven by thought leadership and strategy. Your clients typically have a list of problems that need to be solved — and the list changes frequently. Corporate decision-makers ensure that consultants have

special access to people and resources. After all, they have already or will shortly write a very large check for their services.

From a delivery perspective, work is often standardized and methodology-based. Engagements have a beginning, an end, and a defined scope. Often little or no responsibility for implementation or outcomes is specified.

There are some exceptions. Certain contractual arrangements have shared responsibility for results and that is reflected in the fee. Secondly, the consultant handles implementation of a system or process. Once it is “done,” the consultant still leaves and doesn’t have to live with the consequences. Supervision and personnel responsibility is usually limited to performance on the project by the team members.

### Life as a Corporate Executive

In corporations, whether public or private, profitability and shareholder value are the bottom line. Success is based on contribution to operating results.

Organizational leadership, from vision to planning through execution, drives performance. Decision-making and risk-taking, with accountability for choices, is fundamental. Outcomes are everything. Activities are heavily implementation- and results-driven. Few projects are intellectually stimulating.

Most of the work of the organization is continuous and operational. Much is policy and procedurally based. There is a broad distribution of people in a corpora-

tion, with a tendency to gather around the mean in intelligence, motivation and interest in their work. Comprehensive personnel management is required by line and most staff executives to maximize the contribution of all employees in the company.

### Making Your Career Choice

If you are a consultant and still think you are a candidate for a change to a corporation, consider whether you are most suited for a consulting-like role or for an operating leadership position. Your business acumen, facilitation ability, and communication skills are key skills that will be valuable in a corporate role.

If you are an executive and still want to try consulting, consider whether you are most suited for a partner (translate that into sales) role or for delivery management (translate that into a project or multiple projects). Your experience in making things work and your ability to negotiate complex organizations will be helpful in a consulting role.

Both consulting and executive roles have challenges and rewards. Neither is as easy as it looks. As long as you find the one that works for you, you will be where the grass is greenest. ■

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*Paula Asinof, a career management expert and founder of Yellow Brick Path, accelerates the careers of successful executives and professionals who want to move up or move on to their next career opportunities. Asinof can be reached at [YellowBrickPath.com](http://YellowBrickPath.com)*

## Better Interviewer

*Continued from page 5*

a positive hiring decision based solely on your gut, I do say, follow your gut if you don’t feel good about someone,” says Robinson. “It’s inherently harder to accept someone or for them to succeed in your eyes, if you have doubts about them from the beginning.”

6 | CareerSmart Advisor

### Making a Choice

Once the interviews are completed, executives need to review their notes to determine which candidate will receive a job offer. Sometimes, that means choosing between two great candidates.

“One of the best ways to distinguish between several good candidates is to use culture-fit questions,” advises Kursmark.

“Ask your candidates to describe the best boss they’ve ever had, or the most productive work environment, or a situation when they were unhappy on the job. Compare their answers to the environment of the job, the department, and the company to see if this person is a good fit.”

Leila Bulling Towne, executive coach at San Francisco-based The Bulling

**Continued on page 8**

# Food for Thought

## Six Rules for Increasing Revenue and Profits

By Wes Ball

**T**oo much of American business is focused on cost management, the Achilles heel of American industry. What most businesspeople have failed to realize, however, is that almost any company has the potential to geometrically increase its revenue stream and profitability. Moreover, studies of how “Alpha companies” come to dominate their product category or industry prove that you don’t have to be the dominant company in your category to benefit from the Alpha model. Almost any company of any size can create dramatic, sustainable growth — usually in a year or less — by following the same strategies and rules that Alpha companies employ.

Here are six rules CEOs, senior-level executives, executives at second- and third-tier companies, and owners of smaller businesses can apply to become — or at least act like — an Alpha company and navigate past the cost-management trap to revenue-side management.

### Functionally Satisfy at Least the Minimum...

emotionally satisfy the maximum. If functional satisfaction were the true differentiator of top brands and survival brands, Coke would not be an Alpha — Pepsi clearly proved that it was preferred in blind taste tests. To work toward becoming an Alpha, you must meet at least minimum functional needs and provide higher levels of satisfaction and significance than your competitors. You must make customers feel smart, appreciated, more attractive, more respected, and/or more fulfilled.

### Don’t Compete on Price

Alpha companies don’t gain or maintain their Alpha status based on price alone. In fact, they compete less on price than their competitors do. Don’t get confused

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Companies that dominate their category make it a priority to maintain and protect their Alpha assets relentlessly.

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about the importance of price. Price is the final value judgment customers make — it is the conclusion they create based on weighing all of the benefits a product or brand seems to offer.

### Drive Expectations

You must differentiate your brand not by what it does, but by what it makes customers want. If your company can satisfy those elements better than anyone else and at a higher level of emotional needs satisfaction, it can then generate controlling influence with customers and competitors. The company that can drive expectations — among customers, distributors, and/or referral agents — to the highest level has the greatest immediate influence in the marketplace.

### Measure Causes Over Outcomes

Measuring and comparing sales, profits, market share, brand awareness, stock prices, margins, or any of the other outcomes that businesses spend so much time worrying over only clouds the focus on the causes that drive those desired outcomes. It is far more productive to understand your company’s performance in terms of causal factors, such as perceived satisfaction of needs (especially self-satisfaction and personal significance),

than in terms of final outcomes. The list is long, but other key causal factors driving revenue generation include communication effectiveness, brand differentiation, and loyalty generation.

### Critical Change Occurs...

once competitors start to follow your lead. This process of leading the pack starts with driving new and higher customer expectations. Once competitors discover that your customers are influencing customers of other products to buy your product because you have set new, higher expectations, those competitors start to follow your lead. When this happens, you have established a level of influence and momentum that can be sustained for as long as you protect the “Alpha assets” that got you there, such as product performance, availability, company personality, customer support, and so on.

### Deep, Sustainable Strength Takes Time

Like almost everything else in life, developing deep sustainable strength takes time. Although a company can become an Alpha in a short period of time, to sustain that leadership status takes much longer. Customers, competitors, distributors, referral agents, and even employees need to become accustomed to seeing you in the leadership role and following your lead. Your corporate management also needs to accustom your company’s culture to that new lead position. Companies that dominate their category make it a priority to maintain and protect their Alpha assets relentlessly. ■

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*Wes Ball is founder of The Ball Group, a strategic innovation management consulting firm, and author of The Alpha Factor: The Secret to Dominating Competitors and Creating Self-Sustaining Success. Ball can be reached at [TheAlphaFactor.com](http://TheAlphaFactor.com)*

## Better Interviewer

*Continued from page*

Towne Group, suggests creating a rating system of sorts when preparing for interviews (such as rating candidates on a scale of 1 to 5 for the various qualifications of the job). “If you keep data that way, it’s easier to put two candidates side-by-side and compare them,” she says.

Another thing to consider is who could be the best fit for your organization today and in the future. Assess how each candidate could fit into the company as it evolves. “Does one individual show more potential than the other to grow and adapt and tackle new challenges? The individual who does a better job of learning from experience is generally your best long-term asset,” says Hallenbeck.

Still, the candidates may actually make this decision for you. “Sometimes, you think you have a choice, but you may not as an offer may be declined,” cautions Chinsky Matuson. “It is best to keep the other candidate ‘warm’ until such time that the offer has been accepted.”

### Making You a Better Leader and a Better Candidate

Experts agree that executives should seek out training to become better interviewers. Their internal human resource professionals can provide solid guidance as well as outsourced services. “Statistically, managers who have been trained in interviewing and staff selection make better hiring decisions for the company than the managers who are not trained,” says Walsh.

That training will help you now as

### Expert Resources:

- Leila Bulling Towne, The Bulling Towne Group ([TheBullingTowneGroup.com](http://TheBullingTowneGroup.com))
- Dr. Rachele Canter, RJC Associates ([RJCAssociates.net](http://RJCAssociates.net))
- Roberta Chinsky Matuson, Human Resource Solutions ([YourHRExperts.com](http://YourHRExperts.com))
- Linda Dominguez, Executive Coaching and Resource Network Inc. ([Executive-Coaching.com](http://Executive-Coaching.com))
- George Hallenbeck, PhD, Lominger International ([Lominger.com](http://Lominger.com))
- Tina Hamilton, hireVision Group ([hireVisionGroup.com](http://hireVisionGroup.com))
- Louise Kursmark, Best Impression Career Services Inc. ([YourBestImpression.com](http://YourBestImpression.com))
- Don McNamara, Heritage Associates ([Heritage-Associates.net](http://Heritage-Associates.net))
- Carl Robinson, PhD, Advanced Leadership Consulting ([LeadershipConsulting.com](http://LeadershipConsulting.com))
- Janet Walsh, Birchtree-HR LLC ([BirchtreeHR.com](http://BirchtreeHR.com))

you interview candidates to add to your team and in the future, and when you are a candidate sitting on the other side of the desk. “You will learn to provide hard core examples of how you were successful doing similar work in the past,” says Robinson. “You will remember that employers are more interested in the results you achieved than in how smooth an interviewee you are.”

### Interviewing and Onboarding Provide Solid Foundation

Learning how to effectively interview and being committed to such practices will help both you and your company achieve solid short-term and long-term results that will extend beyond that initial hiring.

“Learning how to interview helps the company improve selection decisions, promotes a positive company image, makes efficient use of managerial time, shortens the time needed to fill positions, increases productivity, reduces overhead costs, and develops success profiles for positions,” says Walsh.

Chinsky Matuson notes how both a customized interviewing program along

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We slashed turnover in half. Those numbers translate to a savings of well over \$300,000 and that is just for the first year.

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with a solid onboarding program can help companies achieve a significant return on their investment. With such programs, she helped a client achieve impressive success. “We slashed turnover in half,” says Chinsky Matuson. “Those numbers translate to a savings of well over \$300,000 and that is just for the first year. They will continue to reap the savings and increase their retention as they get better at this. I saw similar results with another client; only their savings was well over \$1 million as we stopped the hemorrhaging of their sales team.” ■

## CareerSmart Advisor

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