

CareerSmart Advisor™

Strategies & Solutions for Your Career Success

A Note From Dave

Here at ExecuNet, we regularly stress the importance of networking. Having a strong group of supporters is invaluable regardless of whether you're an at-work executive or one currently in transition.



So it didn't surprise me when I read an article in *The Wall Street Journal* recently that suggests a new and different networking approach to mentoring. In "A New Approach to Mentoring," Kathy E. Kram and Monica C. Higgins say that just one person — one mentor — can't possibly offer the advice individuals need to navigate today's complicated workplace. They suggest building a network of people who can help guide you and your career — a "personal board of directors," they say.

The authors offer these tips to building your mentoring network:

1. Know thyself. Knowing your goals, strengths and weaknesses can help you determine who can provide support.
2. Know your context. Know how you will achieve your goals and who can help you reach them.
3. Enlist developers. Identify individuals who can also learn from you.
4. Regularly re-assess. Adapt your network as your career goals evolve.
5. Develop others. Make mentoring a mutually beneficial experience.

I have another suggestion: don't ever stop building your network. It's one of the most valuable career development tools you can have.

Sincerely,



Dave Opton
ExecuNet Founder & CEO
www.execunet.com/davesblog

Preparing for Change

By Marji McClure

Today's business environment is uncertain, to say the least, with company shutdowns, mergers and acquisitions, and layoffs garnering the majority of headlines and attention. Inevitably, with such uncertainty comes change — implementing new processes, adjusting to new leadership or a new company. Regardless of the complexity of the change, chances are most executives are in the midst of change right now, or will be in the near future. Their ability to adapt — and even thrive in a changing work environment — can strongly impact their career and separate them from the pack as leaders who can handle perhaps some of the greatest challenges in business.

"We will all need to shift our expectations of leaders during this time," says Maureen Metcalf, president of Ohio-based management consulting firm Metcalf & Associates. "They will no longer be the people who have the answers based on past experience, but rather the people who are able to figure out the answers with our help to challenges never faced before. It is more than managing change. Leaders and their companies will have a strategic advantage when they can see change as a chance to create opportunities that we never imagined a few years ago."

Opportunities include both growth to a company's bottom line as well as growth to an individual executive's career. "Research shows that when a senior executive effectively manages the change programs within a corporation, the results can contribute as much as 19.5 percent in shareholder value," says Allan Steinmetz, CEO and founder of Inward Strategic Consulting, a Massachusetts-based management consulting firm.

Contributing to the Cause

To be considered a successful change agent, an executive must be able to manage change for himself, his team and his entire organization. "A critical competency for every leader is the ability to not just lead change within a company, but also be prepared to react and manage changes that affect them at an organizational and personal level," say business consultant Milo Sindell and Dr. Thuy Sindell, a leadership consultant and coach.

In addition to vision and analytical and communication skills, executives need to possess superior conflict resolution abilities, says Susan Arth, CEO of Sea of Change, a California-based consulting firm that provides services such as executive coaching and career counseling.

To prepare personally for a change, executives need to be able to anticipate that change to ensure they will be part of any new processes

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Insider Insight

How To Make the Media Your Mouthpiece to the Public

By Karen Friedman

Anasty Valentine's Day storm in 2007 grounded hundreds of flights across the country, delaying and stranding tens of thousands of passengers. While many waited it out in the comfort of food courts inside heated airports outfitted with shops and Internet access, hundreds of Jet Blue travelers — including small children — were trapped on planes at John F. Kennedy International Airport with no food, overflowing toilets and little, if any, information for more than 10 hours. In fact, CNN reported that parents on these planes were ripping up T-shirts to make diapers for their babies.

While CEO David Neeleman said he was “humiliated and mortified” by the meltdown that eventually led to a Passenger Bill of Rights, the pressing issue is how airports can strengthen relationships with passengers in an era of blogs, chat rooms and 24/7 news coverage that has the power to unleash epidemic-like bugs that can spread rumors at lightning speed and tarnish reputations worldwide.

Regardless of how well-prepared your airport or business is for the unexpected, every organization in the world is susceptible to surprise events that can spiral out of control, fueling the growling appetites of a new and sometimes frightening media. Typically, the more people affected by an event, the more likely it will become a big story that hangs on for days. That's why weather-related stories frequently make headlines. The key is to help the press help you tell your story so you define the issue and allow the media to become your mouthpiece to the public. That means taking off your professional hat and putting on your customer cap so

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you think like them to better understand how the story will be covered, what questions will be asked, and what you can do to manage the madness.

For example, when speaking at a recent transportation conference, I asked a group of airport directors what travelers care about. Their one-word responses included: “security,” “accessibility,” “vendors” and “prices.” Maybe so, but an unofficial quick passenger survey during my own travels revealed much more basic concerns such as: “clean bathrooms,” “food,” “electrical outlets to charge electronics,” “parking spaces,” “taking off on time” and “arriving on time.” Though simply stated, that's the point. When you speak to a reporter, you are actually speaking to that reporter's audience. Their audience is your customer. When you sit in your customers' seat and see the issues through their eyes, you have a greater chance of communicating clearly and simply to connect on a more personal level. While every situation is uniquely different, the following lessons can help you take off and land smoothly on every leg of your trip.

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No One Cares About Your Problems

The traveling public doesn't care about your problems. When their plane lands after several hours of sitting in cramped seats, they want to get off the plane. So, when a gate isn't available, a jetway isn't connected, or their luggage is lost, they don't understand that the airline, not the airport, is likely at fault. Quite frankly, they don't care.

Instead of going on the defensive and taking the "it's not my fault" attitude, look for opportunities to be part of the solution. For example, during the Christmas holiday several years ago, US Airways passengers were treated to mounds of missing luggage piled sky-high at Philadelphia International Airport's baggage claim. As local photographers captured the images and angry passengers publicly vented, airport personnel ran to the rescue — handing out coffee, taking names and numbers and trying to reunite passengers with their bags. That became part of the story presented to the public which portrayed the airport as caring, compassionate and proactive. How you attempt to fix a problem can often leave a more lasting impression than the problem itself.

Talk Early and Often

As a television reporter for more than two decades, I can tell you from experience that reporters will not wait for you to provide information in order to report a story. Instead, they will interview people affected by what's happening and report the story from that viewpoint. So, it is critical for you to provide whatever information is available as fast as possible in order to reduce the chance of speculation and inaccuracy. Furthermore, if you wait, the story will be told from the perspective of the alleged victim, and you risk being perceived as uncaring or guilty of some wrongdoing. Even if you do not have the details, tell the media, so they can inform the public that the situation is being reviewed and a statement will be issued shortly.

Be Available

When respected journalist Mike Wallace of *60 Minutes* was asked what he would do if he were at a company that got a call from his news show, he said "If I were running a company that got a call from *60 Minutes*, I'd say, 'Come in. Ask me anything you want.'" While you can't give journalists unescorted access to your airport, Wallace's message is dead-on. If you get a phone call, return it. If you're asked a question, answer it. If you're not available, provide someone who can help the reporter meet their deadline. If you receive an email, respond. By being available, you create an environment of openness and honesty and establish relationships with people who cover your industry and can become your allies. The seemingly unimportant journalist who works for a barely read community paper today could land at *The New York Times* tomorrow.

Manage the Message

By being proactive, you also make the reporter's job easier. If you call them first, they get the correct information out quickly and won't have to spend all day trying to track you down. But it's also critical to manage your message, which means preparing in advance. Rather than just respond to questions, it is your responsibility to determine what you want to say and look for opportunities to weave those messages into your responses. To prepare, write down three or four bullet points and stick to the same story every time you speak. You should also brainstorm the tough questions and think them through in advance so you limit any surprises. Additionally, it's important to keep other audiences, such as employees, vendors and stakeholders, in the loop so they hear the news from you directly.

Talk, Don't Write

It's far easier and less time-consuming to send an email than to pick up the phone. But email can be impersonal and create the impression that you have something to hide by conducting a one-way conversation that does not allow for questions. Even if you fear being misquoted by speaking, most reporters can detect sincerity, empathy, compassion or

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a level of concern when they hear your voice. By all means, try not to ask reporters to provide lists of questions in advance, especially when a story is unfolding. What they want to know won't change that much from story to story:

- What happened?
- When did it happen?
- How did it happen?
- How many people are affected?
- Was anyone hurt?
- What are you doing to correct the problem?
- Are we safe?
- What will you do to make sure this doesn't happen again?

They will ask questions they believe their audience would ask. Typically, readers want to know how you're protecting their interests.

It's Not Their Job To Protect You

By the same token, it is not their job to protect you. Contrary to popular belief, most reporters are not out to get you. They don't purposely try to make you look bad, but they won't go out of their way to make you look good either. They're after a story, but not always the story that you want them to tell. To better control the story, do your homework to understand what kinds of stories they tell. Read their publications to see how they write, what kinds of questions they ask and what they've said about your industry in the past.

State the Obvious

Even if a reporter has written about your airport before, don't ever assume they

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adopted by their organization. Be engaged in what is happening in your company — where it is going and where it needs to go, suggests JE Martin, senior compliance project manager for Fircosoft Inc. and a GE-certified change management trainer. “If there is an important change happening in the business (of course, you have to be smart enough, savvy enough and in touch enough to know about these), see how to get involved and take an ownership stake,” says Martin. “Be personally invested in the change.” One way in which to accomplish that is to first be able to see that change is on the way.

What should executives do if they perceive change is coming? The Sindells, authors and co-founders of San Francisco-based Hit the Ground Running, suggest they take these actions to help determine if they will, in fact, be part of that change:

- Identify how to be involved in the change process/implementation team.
- Define how their organization will be affected.
- Begin to create a plan to support their employees and reach out to other groups to see options and opportunities.
- Proactively communicate to company leaders about ideas you have.
- If you realize that your position is doomed, then begin to craft an exit plan.

Getting Your Team Engaged

Once you, as the leader, become personally invested in an organizational change and solidify your future within the company, the next step is to help your team become equally invested.

It is especially important that an executive know all of the main details of an upcoming change so they can be effectively communicated to the team. The Sindells suggest an information-gathering stage in which executives learn about the size, scope and ramifications related to a change. “It is critical that the leader gathers as much information as they can regarding the change because they will become a focal point for information from their team,”

they say. “If they don’t have information, they will lack credibility and influence.”

Arth says it’s important for an executive to understand his team and its concerns and be available to answer any questions. “[Executives] need to listen, respond to questions and concerns with candor and allow time to adapt to changes,” says Arth. “There is always a period of resistance, and some need longer to accept change. Executives can convert managers to become change agents by opening the lines of communication, listening to brainstorming ideas and utilizing the talent available before decisions are cast in stone.”

Martin says there has to be a whole communication plan around the change. “The champion should have the same message as the manager and the people working on the change team,” she says. “There should be a plan to address different channels with different groups at different times for different purposes. Do I want people to know about the change? Or are they actually going to have to do something — take action — on the change message? You cannot over-communicate, but you can muddy the message if everyone on the team (from champion to workers) isn’t singing the same song or variation of that song.”

Houston-based executive coach Cecelia Rose says it’s important to talk about the change and let employees vent, if they need to. Once they feel they have been heard, they can move forward with the change, she says. “The sooner this is done, the sooner the change can take place,” adds Rose. “This leads to meaningful conversations and innovation. This will help minimize stress, burnout, depression, frustration and resistance to change, conflicts and negative attitudes, allowing for a more productive, high performance and profitable change for the corporation.”

If you communicate well with your team members, chances are they will adapt well to the change. A lack of communication can have more damaging effects than any change ever could. “What I hear from my clients, and I have been working with clients in transition for almost 15 years, is that they were not

angry about the change itself, but how it happened,” says Rose. “Not feeling respected and being the last to hear, not being asked for their input or what they know from their vantage point and knew from being on the front lines.”

Even if you are an effective communicator, it’s not a guarantee that you will receive buy-in from all members of the team. But at least these communications will provide insight into which staff members will be able to adapt to upcoming changes, and which may need to be reassigned or exit the company.

Communicating the Change

Cliff Hakim, author and founder of Massachusetts-based Rethinking Work, a career consulting and strategy firm, says that he directs his clients toward values-driven leadership as they embark on organizational change.

Hakim says the Giving Voice to Values program at The Aspen Institute Business and Society Program also promotes these values-driven development methods, and it suggests using these questions as a catalyst for meaningful action:

- What if I were to act on my values?
- What would I do and say?
- To whom?
- How?
- In what sequence?

“I have used these questions effectively and they have worked to raise confidence and ability in managing personal uncertainty and organizational change,” says Hakim.

Regardless of what strategy you use to communicate change, it’s important to have an organized process in place to deal with it. Martin says that she feels that every company should have someone who understands change management and can teach managers about it, and work with teams as well. This would not be a full-time position; instead, it would be a part-time add-on role for the right individual, Martin stresses.

Rose suggests bringing in outside help that specializes in guiding people through change processes. “This will support the company in moving forward with the change more quickly and help

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with getting the employees' buy-in on the changes taking place in the company," Rose explains.

If Change Management isn't Your Strongest Skill

While it is the role of a good leader to help manage his team through change, sometimes that leader himself admittedly has difficulty managing change on his own — therefore, helping others navigate through change can be a nearly impossible task. Experts agree that it's helpful to conduct exercises that help make change a more natural process in leaders' lives.

Steinmetz suggests that executives force themselves to change their own behaviors. Driving a new route to work or wearing a watch on the other wrist are simple, yet effective, exercises in change. "Executives need to force themselves to do things differently and recognize how hard it is to change behavior in one's daily life, and have a greater appreciation of

Expert Resources:

- Susan Arth, Sea of Change (suearth@yahoo.com)
- Cliff Hakim, Rethinking Work (RethinkingWork.com)
- JE Martin, FircoSoft (FircoSoft.com)
- Maureen Metcalf, Metcalf & Associates (Metcalf-Associates.com)
- Cecilia Rose (Cecilia@ceciliarosecoach.com)
- Milo Sindell, Hit the Ground Running (HitTheGroundRunning.com)
- Dr. Thuy Sindell, Hit the Ground Running (HitTheGroundRunning.com)
- Allan Steinmetz, Inward Strategic Consulting (InwardConsulting.com)

what it would take to embrace change within a large corporate environment," Steinmetz says.

Steinmetz adds that an inability to change can have an adverse affect on an executive's career if it isn't addressed. "Corporations have made as much [progress] as they possibly can in technological advancements and investments to improve performance," he says. "At this stage of process redesign and performance improvement, it is all about motivating, inspiring and enrolling people to embrace change."

He notes that executives who have adapted to change and executed change

management programs in their organizations are recognized within their industries for their achievements. "The classic executives who we often hear about are Jack Welch during his time at GE, Louis Gerstner at IBM, Steve Jobs at Apple, and the list goes on," says Steinmetz.

"The most successful leaders of the future will be those who are able to successfully adapt themselves and their organizations to take advantage of the changes we are seeing and will continue to see in our world," says Metcalf. "Their organizations will prosper when others do not. They will develop reputations for their successes." ■

Learnings from Landings

Only You Can Move the Job Search Process Forward

Even if you have an impressive résumé and outstanding credentials, your phone isn't necessarily going to ring as quickly as you expect it to. While, as a job seeker, you're anxious for the process to move along at a rapid pace, getting cooperation from others (such as recruiters) to hasten the process doesn't always happen. ExecuNet member Jeff Davis understands this first-hand and feels it's important for fellow job hunters to remember. "Don't underestimate either: the time lag between posting an opportunity and the response from a recruiter, or the low percentage response, regardless of how 'stellar' your résumé is," cautions Davis, whose search ended with a new C-level position.

Davis also advises fellow job seekers to not relax their search even when things look promising. "Don't back off just because you have three or four opportunities that

are progressing nicely," he says. "Until you have a signed offer in hand, act like you've got nothing." Davis learned this and more during his own search.

"I had two opportunities that went very far, only to have an internal candidate emerge and prevail, even though the hiring manager admitted they were less qualified than I," says Davis. "I have learned to always inquire about the existence of internal candidates early on."

Davis adds that he learned a lot about the recruiting community and how it operates during his job search. He says that he was unaware that sometimes junior-level recruiters conduct initial research with a candidate, but this is a process that has to be followed. "Even if they have not researched your background or done their homework, you have to be polite and respectful to the junior-level research associate to get to the partners," says Davis.

He adds that referring names of qualified candidates to recruiters can make them more apt to help you.

To help himself, Davis says there were four main strategies that worked best for him during his quest:

- Building and nurturing a personal network and being active in local area networking groups.
- Posting aggressively early on in the process after joining several paid posting services.
- Personally networking with private equity groups and venture capital firms.
- Reaching out directly to top-shelf retained search firms.

He also notes the value in enlisting services such as ExecuNet. "Set a pretty wide net and post aggressively on opportunities to get your information out in the recruiter community," says Davis. ■

Your Career Advisor

The Modern Social Networking Challenge

By Dr. Russ Ouellette

It is no surprise that many, if not most, good executives develop and maintain a robust Rolodex of associates and contacts to keep themselves connected to the world. These contacts are developed through many means, including board positions, professional associations and previous business interactions. Yet, what is the true value of these relationships? What economic purpose and usefulness do they hold? Also, do leaders know what to do once they have achieved these relationships?

While it is intuitive that the size of a network someone holds has utility, the truth is that depth also plays a role, and an organizational leader's success — as well as his or her career opportunities — depends on the strength and meaning of those relationships.

In 1973, Mark Granovetter published his now-famous study *The Strength of Weak Ties*, which highlighted the value and power of holding many weak relationships. In his research, Granovetter determined that people would most likely find jobs through acquaintances rather than close relationships.

His theory claims that our weaker relationships provide bridges to many other networks that we just would not otherwise be able to access. Simply put, the more bridges (weaker relationships) we have to other networks, the more information, access and value we receive. This theory made sense three decades ago, but much has changed since then. Shifts have taken place in our professional and social worlds that may require us to have deeper and more meaningful relationships these days.

A Structural Shift

In today's fast-paced world, firms and people need more information, must make faster decisions and be able to quickly respond to opportunities. In addition, our organizations have changed to meet these challenges. Specifically, flat

organizational charts, concepts of employee empowerment and team dynamics are talked and written about extensively. Social relationships have shifted from the communities we live in to our workplace.

Gone are the days when local social clubs satisfied our social desires. We hang out with the people we work with, have dinner with clients and associates, and even take our family on vacation with our firm. The 1970s dynamics that existed for social arraignments and organizational structures have shifted, forcing the relationships that support these opportunities to do the same. Therefore, the issue of relationship strength utility (strong or weak) shifts from “how many” to “how many is too much.” How many real relationships can any one of us have that can be productive, regardless of relationship depth?

Our computer databases can hold thousands of contacts. Yet, how many of these contacts have any real social meaning to us, or to those people stored in our files? Sure, we can send out newsletters, invite thousands of people to visit our blog or even invite these people to dinner with a few keystrokes, but what social or relationship value does that produce?

If you're like me, maybe one percent of any of these endless gratuitous invitations has meaning. Executives can easily find hundreds of email messages in their inbox each day, which dulls the social senses. Email is great for information-gathering and organizing our business activities, but it lacks any real social connection.

Therefore, a live meeting is necessary for any real relationships to develop, and these social activities require a substantial investment of time. It becomes a question of quality and return on investment. When we decide we need something, like a new job opportunity, how many of the thousands of people in our database will be able to sort through their thousands of relationships and be committed to helping us? This is the power of the strong-tie relationship in our modern social world.

How Strong are Your Connections?

I challenge any executive to go to his database and count the number of contacts, then go through the A's and count the number of people who would accept a dinner or lunch invitation for fun. If that number is low, consider how many of these people would actually advocate you for a job. I recently performed this exercise with an executive who had 1,200 contacts, and she became concerned.

It wasn't that she was unsociable or unable to make friends. She was concerned because she maintained a very “professional” relationship with her contacts. She was so focused on her firm's results (a good thing) that she did not invest the time to establish any depth in these relationships. She was doing her functional executive job well, but was poor at cultivating ties that would have personal value to her. In addition, how much better could she have done her job if she was the first to know about issues, invited to critical business social gatherings or asked about her interest in career opportunities beyond the walls of her firm?

We all have varying ideas about what a strong relationship or friend is, and this may account for varying levels of capability. I argue that if you are an executive, these capabilities exist to some extent. We may meet several associates once a month to trade information, but if there is a lack of emotional interaction or a lack of returning favors in some form, relationships remain superficial at best. Since it is impossible to be with, have an emotional connection to, or do favors for too many people, we have to decide with whom we want to make our investment of social capital. This is the modern social networking challenge.

Cultivating Real Relationships

By definition, leadership is about transforming people. To do that, we spend a great deal of time inside our firms cultivating critical relationships that will give

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From the Forums

Skills Needed for Senior Management and Leadership Positions

ExecuNet's Forum is the online community area where members can meet and help one another network their way into their next assignment or share information and experiences. [Access the Forum under "Make Connections" on the ExecuNet member homepage.] In this excerpt from a recent Forum conversation, the question concerning the skills needed for senior management and leadership positions is discussed. [Some content has been edited].

ExecuNet member Hari Kattana: I work for a large multinational IT company with deep skills in the areas of business partner technical/alliance management, project management (PMP certified), evangelism and a good deal of product and program management. I have presently more than 17 years of IT experience. I also hold an MBA in Business Administration.

I am presently in the quest to determine the right set of skills that can accelerate my career growth toward senior management and leadership positions. I have short-listed the following and would greatly appreciate it if any of you would share your opinion about my choices and suggest new ones that you think are being sought most in organizations today.

1. Program management certification from PMI Group.
2. Risk management certification from PMI Group.
3. Six Sigma certification.
4. Build skills on mergers, acquisition and restructuring activities.
5. Finance and accounting.

Thanks in advance for your thoughts.

ExecuNet member J5479: Over the years, I have seen a number of people

come into executive and C-level roles. These folks have come from many different backgrounds and have had different skills. Part of getting there is a matter of being in the right place at the right time. What I have seen that matters more is that they have been very, very good at what they do. They are the individuals who are the "go-to" people in the organization.

I have also had the opportunity to see people reach the C-level only to fail, sometimes spectacularly. At that level, it is no longer enough just to be outstanding in your functional area. Now, it is also important to work effectively with your peers. In many ways, your success will be dependent on their support of you (and visa-versa). Thus, you need to not only be outstanding at your job, but you also have to have sufficient understanding of their jobs to be able to make sure that you do not work at cross purposes.

At this point, I have worked for seven separate CEOs (all in the same industry — biotechnology). They have come from very different backgrounds: an MD/PhD, an MD/JD, an MD, a PhD/MBA and three MBAs. Some of these individuals were founders of the companies, others came in later. Some came from the science/technology side, some from

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our firms value. The same applies to our careers, our leadership and the fulfillment of our personal mission. Therefore, executives need to cultivate real relationships that are meaningful. This does not mean faking friendships. On the contrary, real relationships require a mutual commit-

ment, a sense of investment and an expectation that we will be there for each other when the time comes. To network well, we need to purposefully seek out relationships that click in target areas where we need them. Simply stated, why not make friends with the people you like and who are where you want your career to go? There are plenty of nice people in

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The ones who were successful were able to operate in the areas outside of their core expertise, understood the importance of delegation and team-building, were passionate about their companies, articulate communicators and perhaps most importantly, knew how to sell.

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finance, and some from marketing and business development.

The ones who were successful were able to operate in the areas outside of their core expertise, understood the importance of delegation and team-building, were passionate about their companies, articulate communicators and perhaps most importantly, knew how to sell. They sold to the investors, the investment community, to key customers, and to the employees. They were able to convince the staff that not only was this a great

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every area of business and society. Your challenge is to find them, spend time with them and become friends. The challenge is also to be a friend to them. ■

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completely understand your issues or know precisely what you're talking about. If you want them to know something, tell them — even if you told them the last time you spoke. Reporters are often sent to stories because they're available or nearby. On the way, they may have gathered information from other news reports or sources, and don't kid yourself; reporters from competing newsrooms will share information with each other at the scene of a story. It is up to you to take the time to make sure they understand what you're saying. They will probably condense what you say to fit their format, and often mistakes are made because they think they understood you when, in fact, you meant something entirely different.

When to Correct Mistakes

If the reporter has made a mistake, by all means call and correct it so it isn't repeated every time a story is printed or broadcast. However, there is a difference between correcting information that

“ They will probably condense what you say to fit their format, and often mistakes are made because they think they understood you when, in fact, you meant something entirely different. ”

might impact the public or calling to complain just because you don't like the tone of the story. Sometimes, you can turn one negative report into something more positive. For example, a local reporter aired a scathing report about broken security cameras at one of this country's busiest airports. The report was loaded with inaccuracies, but those inaccuracies did not threaten public safety. Instead of fighting with the reporter or calling her boss, the airport called the No.

1 local television station in town and offered it an exclusive behind-the-scenes look at airport security. It was a positive story watched by a much larger audience.

Finally, don't speculate if someone asks you a hypothetical question. Stick to the confirmed facts. If you don't know the answer, say so. If you do know the answer, but can't disclose the information, then explain why. Maybe the matter is being handled by attorneys or perhaps it's information that could jeopardize security. If you're pressed, hold steady and don't fly off the handle. The only person who should be putting words in your mouth is you! ■

Karen Friedman is the founder of Philadelphia-based Karen Friedman Enterprises Inc., where she counsels spokespeople, newsmakers and executives to make the most of every interview, appearance and presentation. A former television news reporter and anchor, Friedman has repeatedly received the International Association of Business Communicators Recommended Speaker designation. She can be reached at KarenFriedman.com or 610-292-9780.

From the Forums
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company to work for, but that their contributions were essential and valuable. They were able to get people excited about being part of something bigger than any single person.

I realize that this is not exactly what you were looking for, but I hope that it helps.

ExecuNet member Hari Kattana: Your response was so pleasantly “out of the box” with respect to skills. I think you are spot on...in that besides the specific “job skills” there are other, softer, skills that are so important to gain traction on your career ladder.

As you mentioned, you need to be an expert on what you do, network, communicate, get people excited about what they do, build teams and most importantly be

able sell your idea. While I am at it, putting these in writing makes them that much more a core part of me.

ExecuNet member Michael McCarty: I realize in your post that you are looking for skills. I encourage you to also look at demonstrable behaviors which are supported by your known skills and abilities. Your skill set is yours. It's your behaviors and results that should get you noticed. ■

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