

## The ABCs of Career Management for the New Year

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Each New Year requires a review of your successes during the past 12-months along with an identification of those areas, which can use improvement. Below, you will find a list of SEVEN ABC's to improve your career building blocks. They could be your foundation to a bright 2013!

- **A-** Would any list of tips omit a fast check of your **attitude** toward your projects, your boss and the status of your career? I am sure you will agree that it is easy to identify bad attitude in others, however evaluating our own attitude is an entirely different matter. Take a few minutes and inventory your mind-set toward your career. Does it require a 360° adjustment or would a 10 course correction improve your performance?
- **B-** Are you one of those professionals who needs to bring **balance** to your life's pursuits? Do you focus too much in one area of your life and need balance? Life Coaches will tell you that you need to have a balance of Career, Family/Friends/Relationships, Financial, Health/Fitness, Leisure, Philanthropic and Spiritual areas of your being. We are given seven days in a week with 24 hours in those days. Are we using that time wisely?
- **C-** When doesn't **character** matter? We all struggle with consistently doing the right thing at the right time. Many times our worst critic is ourselves. As we review our role in the coming year, it would be in our interest to evaluate any flaws that might creep into our lives and if necessary develop some character-building checkpoints. Then work on that area.
- **D-** What one thing do you want to accomplish this year? **Determination** is one of the attributes that will get you there. Diligence and tenacity will see you through many of the rough and bumpy paths that you may find yourself traveling this year.
- **E-** How long has it been since you conducted an **experiment** regarding new ways to accomplish the same task? Such an experiment can lead to improved performance. No doubt, the most beneficial result is it will better equip you to handle change. And I am sure you will agree that embracing change in our economic climate is a real asset.
- **F-** What could a **focused** approach to your life and or life plan do for you? Minimize distractions so you can maintain focus with your projects, goals and

plans. Most distractions are just background noise. Why not develop a pattern of staying focused on the people in your path and the projects at hand?

- **G-** How do your personal and life **goals** fit into what you want to accomplish in 2013? Do you have a list of things that you want to accomplish in an overall life plan (review B)? Goals give us a vision of what we want to accomplish. You will be amazed at what you can accomplish when you drop into your mind's eye that one thing that you want to achieve in 2013.
- **H-** Will you not agree, **habits** control many areas of our lives? We need to maintain the good habits that will take our career to the next level. But lifestyle changes are needed in some areas of our lives. Sometimes we need to say NO to requests for more of our time. At other times, we need to say YES to stretching ourselves and developing new skills. It takes 21 days to form new habits. Practice good habits for 30 days, and you will see a positive lifestyle change.
- **I-** Shouldn't you develop an **inquisitive** nature? Understanding the WHY's of our habits, attitudes, workplace processes, customer requirements, etc. can do a lot to move our career forward. Begin the pattern of asking why questions along with What, How and When.
- **J-** Do you have the confidence to **JUMP-START** a new chapter in your life? Even more importantly, you have the knowledge, drive and dedication to make a positive directional change to improve your life style. It all begins with a first step toward your goals and lifetime pursuits. Are you prepared to take the first step?
- **K-** As you develop your work life and find your passion, what **kernel** becomes the seed for your career growth? Is it your time management and self-management skills that need to be ratcheted up a notch? Or is it your ability to get organized and efficiently complete tasks? Only you can determine the kernel what will become your seed for success.
- **L-** Becoming a content expert is important. Why not take advantage of **Lunch and Learn** opportunities? Professional organizations offer continuing education opportunity through conferences and monthly meetings. You may want to take advantage of Toastmasters International to sharpen your public speaking skills.
- **M-** If there are career **mirages** in your past or on the horizon, why not identify your career illusions and put them in your past so you can move on to a brighter future? We have so much opportunity with our grasp. Unfortunately, we get caught up in our own daily drama and miss opportunity that is ours for the taking.
- **N-** How long has it been since you used the word **NO**? May I recommend that you use the phrase "tell me more". If you have the pattern for saying NO to new

projects that would stretch your skills set, why not say YES the next time and experience a break-through moment. If you find yourself wanting to say NO, why not say "not at this time" instead. Even better, why not accept the challenge and learn something new about yourself and your ability to step of your comfort zone?

- **O-** Have you mastered on-line tools? Hot Jobs, Career Builder, Dice, Monster and local job boards are excellent tools to see who is hiring. Just posting your résumé may not deliver the result of landing your dream position. Building a circle of influence, which takes networking at the next level, may be just the boost your career needs. Keeping in touch with your contacts and managing your contact base may pose a challenge. If you have not gotten into social networking via the web, might I suggest that you spend a few minutes or hours learning about Facebook, LinkedIn and others? But a word of caution might be in order. Companies may get a window into your ethics, work style, character and personality traits by reviewing the pages of your contacts.
- **P-** Would you agree that having a good **plan** is much like having a pattern for success? Agreeing with the importance of planning and taking the time to put together a plan are two entirely different matters. Do you have a career plan? If not, why not? Have you taken the time to write down seven things you want to accomplish in your career this Year? Quarter? Month? Week? Day? Why not try it and see if you can measure your success? One other note, there is a difference in a realistic plan and a fantasy plan. Dreams are important, but your strengths need to align with your goals. Through education and training new strong points emerge and dreams are realized.
- **Q-** If you find yourself in an organization that is downsizing, you may need to develop a **quick start plan** to assess your strengths and quickly market your skills. What would you want to include in your quick start plan? Would you start by developing a list of contacts, polishing your resume, researching job boards, reading local newspapers or even perusing company websites - all to get an understanding of the type of positions available at this point in time.
- **R-** Will your **résumé** make the cut in today's tight job market? If you have researched résumés, are you confused? Do you need a chronological format or a functional style? How many pages should your résumé be? Does paper color or texture matter? Who will read a paper résumé? Aren't all resumes on-line today? Is the conflicting information baffling? Résumés are customized work histories and overviews that address your ability to contribute to corporate goals. The skill sets required are fluid depending on swings in the economy as well as industry

demands. A well-written résumé reflects not only what you have done, but what you CAN do. Recent studies indicate that a well-designed resume combined with job coaching can decrease the time between jobs by as much 30%.

- **S-** As you review your life, what would you say is more important **Success** or **Significance**? Will you agree that to complete tasks and projects successfully allows you to build a solid foundation for future success? As you look through the rearview mirror of life, making a difference while finding significance in your life's work can motivate you to accept new challenges and stretch your capacity for contribution to group goals.
- **T- Tempo**, like pace, is an interesting word, isn't it? What is the tempo of your work ? Does it match that of the team? Does it match the expectations of your team leader, customers or management team? Have you considered the importance of finding a career position that benefits from your work tempo? If you are methodical and pay attention to details, does your team value your contribution? If you set a fast pace, do others on the team struggle to keep up with your pace? Is the tempo of your work style fast like a Rock Band or slow like easy listening? Finding the job with the right tempo can go along way toward job satisfaction.
- **U-** Do you have a sense of **urgency** when you approach tasks? As you review tasks, do you understand deadlines and have a record for meeting target completion dates? There is nothing more frustrating than being put in the position of having to become a firefighter when a little planning and efficient execution would minimize disruptions and facilitate the smooth completion of a task. Whether it is completing projects at work, evaluating your career options or managing a job search, you need to approach the project with a sense of urgency.
- **V-** Are you **vigilant** and alert to new job opportunities? Have you applied SWOT analysis to your job search? What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that you face in your job search. Do you sharpen your skills by taking advantage of training and educational seminars? Do you attend professional organizational meetings where continuing education units are offered? What would you need to do to take your career to the next level?
- **W-** Would you agree that you have the opportunity to **write-your-own-ticket** and obtain a rewarding career position? Or would your mindset see only the despair surrounding your unique situation which you feel is stymieing your career growth? At this writing in most markets 94% of Americans have jobs and in certain

areas of the country that number is higher. But in other areas, the number might be slightly lower. What would it take from you to keep the job you have (if you are employed) and broaden your skill set? Should you find yourself jobless, why should a company hire you?

- **X-** Are you like many of my trusted associates? What can be used as **X**? Writing around difficulties offers the opportunity for creativity, when presented with a box or dead-end. One could coin a new word or words. Why not explore your immediate career opportunities? Then there was examine your strengths and weaknesses in order to transition into your new position. Use your expertise to become a content expert and add value to your next position. Or take a moment to exhale and catch your breath before you launch a job search. The list is almost endless with ex words transformed to X words. There is value to brainstorming when you find yourself faced with dilemma - it is very interesting how the brain works.

Why not X? Since, **X is the Roman numeral for TEN**. What would be the first ten things you would do if you found yourself unemployed or needing a new job?

*I.* Who and what do you know? How many people are in your network? Make a list and add to it frequently. Whether you maintain a file of business cards or use an on-line service, your contacts are valuable. Find a reason to keep in contact with your network or centers of influence quarterly.

*II.* Have you created a career disaster plan? Financial Plan? Action Plan? If we have learned anything since 9/11 and the natural disasters that followed in this decade, it is that we need to expect the unexpected. Even seemingly secure companies and industries can be faced with challenges that cause them to examine their workforce and reduce expenses – and cut staff.

*III.* Do you know where the jobs are? Based on 25 years of experience in the career business the following numbers hold true (plus or minus 4% based upon the economy). If you want to research actual numbers the US Department of Labor will have statistics, but the statistics for this year will not be available for a couple of years:

*a. 40+ % of jobs are with the local/state/federal government or public funded services such as education*

*b. 5%-8% of jobs are secured by applying on line*

*c. 5%-8% of jobs are secured through temporary agencies; this is a good way to test drive a career, before taking the leap to a new company or new career.*

*d. 5% of jobs are placed with recruiters or as they are known in the industry –Headhunters. The best way to get a headhunters attention is to excel. Their client companies only want to secure the “best” talent when they are paying a fee. If a recruiter contacts you, listen and keep their contact information.*

*e. Print ads in the classified, jobs publications or industry trade journals account for 10% to 15%;*

*during a downturn in the economy the number of classified ads shrinks.*

*f. College professors may introduce their top students to their company contacts. This is an excellent incentive to shine academically.*

*g. Job Fairs account for a small percentage. When talking with company recruiters at job fairs many tell me their goal is to find one or two good candidate. Other companies are there for mass hiring. Have realistic expectations when attending job fairs.*

*h. Using your network and getting a personal introduction is the best way to secure employment. Build your circle of influence one contact at a time.*

*i. Applying directly to companies is another way to secure employment*

*j. Using social networking is an emerging way to secure contacts and open lines of communication in order to obtain an introduction to a new opportunity.*

*k. One of my favorite ways to apply is to let a decision maker know that someone with your exceptional skill set is available.*

**IV.** Once you have identified where to look for a job, shouldn't you create the written and on-line tools to let decision makers know you are available? Of course, you need a resume. You will need one to apply to online positions. Also, you will need one that is graphically impressive. Additionally you may need a bio that discusses your accomplishments. There are those who will tell you that you don't need a cover letter. But wait a moment, before you buy that argument hook line and sinker. If you are applying strictly on line, an argument can be made for that point of view. However, if you are delivering, mailing or networking, a cover letter is an excellent way to show the decision maker that you can write. If you are serious about the interview, you will need to take a copy of References and let the interviewer know that you are interested in the company and the position (if that is true). You will see requests for Salary History more during a downturn in the economy. So expect to be asked about yours.

**V.** There is no substitute for researching the company's on-line website and related information. You need to be armed with knowledge, before the interview. You can find a wealth of information by using Google. In just a few minutes you will find out if the company is stable, their vision and mission. Would the company be a good fit for you?

**VI.** Follow directions clearly through the on-line application process. On-line applications can be tricky. You must complete them fully. One corporate recruiter said, "Our on-line application process is critical if a candidate wants to work for us. We see too many incomplete applications where candidates just attach their resume." She went on to say, "We have opt out questions that will disqualify candidates." Perhaps you should spend a few minutes reviewing the application to see what those questions might be.

**VII.** Prepare for the interview. Most interviews begin with the telephone screening process. You need to take the telephone screening process seriously. When looking for a job, keep your

résumé at hand. Remember your number one goal is to schedule a more in-depth interview with key team members. A good interviewer will have three to five qualifying questions. These questions may be framed in any number of ways to see if you are a good fit for the company.

**VIII.** The interview is not over until you have a few minutes to ask the interviewer a question or two. Experts agree that you SHOULD NOT ask about money, hours, benefits or those matters that interest you. Instead you should probe to see how you will fit into the corporate culture, contribute to their goals and set the pace for performance. By asking good questions, you will distinguish yourself as a candidate worthy of consideration.

**IX.** By following up promptly you will show the company that you have a sense of urgency. First you should send an email thanking them for their consideration – remembering this may be deleted. But don't stop there - send correspondence by snail mail – thanking them for their time and consideration.

**X.** In many positions, it is important to ask for the job – because you will not land the position until you do. Hiring authorities tell me that it is refreshing when a candidate say, “I would like to work for your company.” If you can honestly make this comment and you are not desperate for just any job, make sure you communicate your interest to the interviewer. Should you feel the position is a good match for your skills, tell them so.

- **Y-** You may find yourself saying **YES** to a position that is beneath your potential or you may find yourself saying YES to a project that would cause you to stretch your capabilities. Most jobs are what you make them to be. At worst you will learn something about yourself and your work style and at best you will develop new skills. Each experience has the seed or kernel for career growth. Unfortunately you will have to do many things you don't want to do on your path to your perfect job. In fact successful people do many things they don't want to! Your next yes may offer the opportunity of a lifetime.
- **Z-** Using a **zoom lens** can put your career into perspective, wouldn't you agree? Should you get the lens focused to closely on the subject, perception can be distorted. However if you examine too much of the background and do not identify the subject it can be come hazy and the target lost. Only you can put your career in proper focus. Use your career ZOOM Lens to focus on the target that will take your career to the next level by finding a good fit in your next career position.

So there it is. A complete list of Career Management tools from A to Z. What you do with them from here is up to you!