

Chapter 1

Understand the Future of Work

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In this chapter, you will learn:

- The factors that are impacting our careers
 - What employers are really looking for
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To help you make the most of this book, let us set the scene for you and pose a question: What is happening in the world of work, and how can you succeed in this new paradigm?

Change Is the Only Constant

The accelerating retirement of the baby boomers and worsening shortage of knowledge workers are just a few of the trends reshaping the labor market and making personal branding more crucial than ever. To put the advice in this book into context, consider the following additional changes you can expect in the employment landscape of the new millennium.

Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future.

—John F. Kennedy, 35th President
of the United States

Shrinking Job Tenure

In both prosperous *and* challenging economic times, the duration of job tenure decreases. During periods of economic growth, job hunting and job hopping intensifies. And, during economic recessions, downsizing further shrinks job tenure. Consider these facts:

- According to the U.S. Department of Labor, over the past few decades, the average length of time a person stays in a job in every sector of private business has decreased.¹ Today, employees change their jobs every two years, their companies every three, and their industries every four.
- A 2005 ExecuNet survey revealed that corporate leaders are changing companies every 3.6 years, down from 4.1 years in 2002.² For some occupations, the expected average tenure is even shorter. Take chief marketing officers: At the world's top-100 branded companies, CMO tenure is just under two years, according to a 2004 Spencer Stuart survey.³ Why the revolving door? CMOs are now accountable for return on investment (ROI).
- In a project-based world, the new loyalty is to the project at hand. If the project doesn't deliver results that directly boost the bottom line, the typical organization will cancel it—along with team members' employment contracts. This is not a secret to most career-minded professionals: A 2006 Pew study revealed that 62 percent of Americans believe that there is less job security today than there was 20 or 30 years ago.⁴

In this dynamic environment, the time you have to make your mark is reduced. You must be crystal clear about the value you bring to your organization and the specific project. You must deliver that value consistently and, at the same time, be prepared for changes to your assignment or employer. The first 100-day plan, once reserved for CEOs, is something you need to bring to every new assignment.

Blurred Boundaries between Work and Personal Life

The BlackBerry, ubiquitous Wi-Fi, and mobile phones have created a “work anytime, anywhere” world. This blurring of boundaries between professional and personal life will only increase as being in the office becomes less and less necessary for knowledge workers. Again, the facts and figures say it all:

- With the exception of France (where the work week has been reduced), the number of hours we work each week has increased. In 1969, couples in the United States, aged 25 to 54, worked a combined 56 hours per week. By the year 2000, they were working nearly 70 hours.⁵
- Hotels, airports, Starbucks, and cafés have become Wi-Fi zones, making it easy for people to work from any location. Entire cities, like Philadelphia and San Jose are becoming “Wi-Fied.” And you can expect Wi-Fi on aircraft and in many public places in the coming years. Companies are starting to expect an “always-on” attitude from employees.

As you spend more time working from remote locations, your visibility around the office will decrease despite the increase in work hours. Your personal brand must be powerful enough to impact colleagues and managers even when you are not physically present. This freedom allows you to work from anywhere at times that are convenient for you; but you now have to ensure that you’re communicating your value with every e-mail and every phone call. And if you are going to be on the job all the time, you’ll want to increase the fulfillment you gain from your work, aligning it with your values and passions.

This book is a testament to the virtual project team. The authors have only been in the same city at the same time twice during the writing of the book. We have never met our editor in person, nor have we met in person with our graphic designers who created the images for the book. Most of William’s words were written

while on a plane or in an airport lounge. Yet, with an electronic project management system, Wi-Fi, and Skype, we put this book together on a short schedule.

Accelerating Organizational Change

Under increasing pressure from Wall Street to grow revenue and profits, companies are continuously extending into new business areas, expanding internationally, merging with and acquiring other entities, outsourcing work, and rethinking their products and services. Consider these trends:

- Companies continue to leverage technology to ensure that information flows where it is needed. Use of technology renders geographic boundaries less important, making all organizations global and all businesses e-businesses.
- Globalization and technology advances are forcing companies to develop more fluid and complex organizational structures characterized by cross-organizational networking, alliances, and outsourcing of noncore activities to specialized agencies.
- Regulations such as the Sarbanes-Oxley Act are creating jobs in finance and corporate law, while IT jobs are being handled offshore.
- More work is done in the United States by fewer people, as evidenced by the rise in productivity. Information technology and the pressure on companies to increase shareholder value through economies of scale have driven this productivity increase.

Just when you understand how things are working in your current organization, they are likely to change. The rate of change is increasing and many external factors that are beyond your control impact how you work. The burgeoning flexibility of organizational structures increased the options for how your job can be accomplished. And the people competing for your job are no longer the

people in your city; they are the people in the next city, state, and even country. Likewise, you will have the opportunity to work on projects that are located in Paris even if you are living in Peoria. Those who embrace change and accept it as a constant will reap the benefits of this ever-changing environment.

Employees' Growing Mobility

The shift from guaranteed company-sponsored pensions to employee self-managed retirement plans has enabled employees to be more mobile. You no longer have to be tied to a job that you don't like until you turn 65. It's been a long time since we've encountered someone who even wanted to work for the same company for his or her entire career. In addition, professionals alternate between working for organizations and working for themselves. Thus, they need to develop and implement ongoing personal marketing plans to be constantly prepared for their next assignment, all while making strong contributions to their current employer or clients.

Standing still is not an option. Constant reorganization means constant disruption in the workforce—meaning that employees at all levels must continually manage their own careers rather than waiting for their employers to do so. You can't expect things to remain static, nor can you entirely predict the future. So, the only way to ensure that you achieve the career of your dreams is to build demand for your unique offerings. This may sound daunting, but in fact it is the opposite. It gives you the opportunity to profit from your work both financially and personally. It enables you to firmly grip the reins of your career and direct your energy toward your goals.

What Employers Really Want

Just like you, employers want to stay ahead of the competition. They want customers to see their products as different from—and better than—all the other options out there in the market. And they want to command the highest possible prices for their offerings. They crave a

creative workforce comprising professionals and leaders who can deliver innovative solutions that meet consumers' most pressing needs. Innovation requires creativity—which in turn derives from a diverse workforce of individuals who are maximizing their unique strengths.

The importance of diversity will continue to expand down to the individual level. Conformity is the enemy of innovation. So you will have the opportunity to be yourself and to succeed because of it. When you are just one of many others with similar skills and abilities, you don't contribute to the diversity your organization needs to generate creative, innovative ideas. Instead, you become a commodity. And people don't get excited about commodities. Ever hear someone say, "I love crude oil" or "I love pork bellies"? Being a "Me-Too" executive, manager, or professional doesn't cut it in the new world of work. Our message: Be yourself!

Our original plan for this book was to offer several chapters of detailed analysis showing how the employment model has shifted in order to demonstrate why you must change your career-management strategy. Then, we recognized that savvy careerists are well aware—sometimes painfully—that the days of corporate uniforms and pension plans are long gone. The standard career-management tools of the past have become less potent. Indeed, it has become so commonplace for people's resumes to acknowledge layoffs and gaps that any associated stigma has virtually evaporated.

On an intellectual level, you probably know that you should be managing your career just as you would your own business. After all, the idea of Me Inc. has been around for more than 10 years. However, in our career and personal branding practices, we consistently encounter business professionals who have not internalized this concept enough to actually change their career-management *behaviors*. Some of these individuals understand that they should think and act differently, but they aren't sure which career-management tools and techniques are most effective. Others simply haven't had to start managing their careers differently: They've advanced easily through referrals from their network, and opportunity after opportunity has just appeared at their feet. Still others aren't technology-savvy. For

example, a person who hasn't had to look for a job in the past five years might be unsure of how to use the Internet effectively in a search for new opportunities. Inexperience about online job hunting abounds because too many people wrongly assume that they can just post their resume on a job board and then sit back and wait for the perfect opportunity to present itself.

*KEITH DENNY, BUSINESS DIRECTOR,
FOOTWEAR INDUSTRY*

Keith Denny's story is typical: Keith enjoyed a stellar, progressively responsible career at Nike Inc. after graduating from college. He managed the inaugural Niketown store and worked his way up to director of the \$350 million custom-footwear business. Then he was recruited by a New England-based global outdoor apparel company, moved his family across the country, and became vice president of Global Brand Management for its most profitable category. For 18 solid years, Keith enjoyed successive promotions because his strong industry contacts knew his reputation for excellence and his talent for developing his people. Keith never had to look for a job or angle for a promotion. Only once did he ever prepare a resume—and that was when he was recruited away from Nike.

After three years with Keith's new company, the composition and aims of the company's management team changed. Keith saw the warning signs that his job was on the line. For the first time, he began working with a career coach to plan his long-term objectives and chart his next steps. As a man in his middle years, Keith strongly desired more work-life balance and a greater sense of fulfillment from his work. Although his company was well known for its community service initiatives, Keith rarely felt that he had the time to participate in them. As a result, he felt unfulfilled by his role.

In conversations with his coach, he realized that he wasn't up-to-date on current job-search methods, because he had never had to use them. An introvert, Keith also felt uncomfortable with networking and touting his qualifications. He and his coach had just begun work on his resume the day before Keith was summoned to HR, where he learned that he was about to be laid off. Although Keith had taken some tentative steps in the right direction, he wasn't nearly prepared to launch a strategic job search.

New World of Work—New Opportunity

In today's new world of work, the pace is increasingly blistering and the competition constantly stiffening. Yet, the confluence of social, technological, and economic forces that have transformed the business landscape presents you with tremendous new opportunities. By opening your eyes to what's happening in the corporate world, you boost your chances of identifying the kinds of opportunities that most appeal to you. And you position yourself to seize those opportunities by making sure that those around you know precisely what you have to offer.

Too many people are thinking of security instead of opportunity. They seem more afraid of life than death.

—James F. Byrnes, U.S. jurist and politician

Notes

1. U.S. Department of Labor, *Asian Pacific American Federal Career Guide*, May 10, 2006, www.dol.gov/_sec_federal_career_guide.pdf.
2. ExecuNet Press Release, "Average Executive Tenure Less than Four Years," June 15, 2005, http://www.execunet.com/m_releases_content.cfm?id=3096.

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3. Greg Welch, "CMO Tenure: Slowing Down the Revolving Door," July 2004, <http://www.spencerstuart.com/research/articles/744>.
4. Ruy Teixeira, "What the Public Really Wants on Jobs and the Economy," October 26, 2006, http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2006/10/public_wants.html.
5. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Working in the 21st Century," <http://www.bls.gov/opub/working/page17b.htm>.

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