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Strategies & Solutions for Your Career Success

A Note From Dave

You may have noticed on the ExecuNet member site and in our email messages that we have been offering “Coffee Break” webinars alongside our popular online FastTrack 90-minute programs. While the FastTracks typically feature a richly detailed audio and visual presentation from a business expert or best-selling author, the Coffee Breaks are more tightly focused — just 30 to 60 minutes long — and they are a benefit of your ExecuNet membership.



We’ve already had great success with the few Coffee Breaks we’ve produced, and there are quite a few more lined up. Here’s a sampling of what’s upcoming:

- 6.28 — **Strategies for the New “Show Me” Marketplace** — Jarvis Cromwell shows you how to employ sales and marketing techniques to turn negative feelings into positive, profitable perceptions.
- 7.13 — **Break Through to the Other Side** — ExecuNet’s Leslie Roe discusses how you can use ExecuNet tools and common sense strategies to attract the attention of recruiters.
- 7.20 — **Differentiating Yourself in the Marketplace** — Jean Erickson Walker helps you identify what makes you a unique problem-solver and shows you how your résumé makes you memorable.
- 8.10 — **Managing Work and Life** — LifeCare’s Allen Baler and Wendy Kaufman provide you with strategies to help you better manage work and personal responsibilities and achieve your “happy medium.”

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Sincerely,

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

Your Summer Career Development Plan

By Marji McClure

How are you planning to spend your summer? If you think it’s not the right time to actively develop your career, think again. Whether you’re in transition looking for your next great professional opportunity or you’re employed in a job you truly enjoy, summer is definitely not the time to put your career development on vacation. So get out those golf clubs.

Well, sort of. “My first thought [about job search activities during the summer] was golfing,” says Paul Mathews, president and founder of Conn.-based Hire Aspirations and an ExecuNet meeting facilitator. “Golf...being trapped in a golf cart with an industry professional or colleague is a great chance to talk about value proposition, objective and targets you are pursuing. Regardless of whether you are a golfer or not, do not take the summer off. Let your competition take the summer off.”

Don’t Stall the Job Search

Consider how you — and many executives like you — usually spend the summer months. Depending on the industry in which you operate, work may slow during July and August, but it certainly doesn’t stop. Recruiters and hiring managers may operate at a slower pace as well, but jobs still need to be filled.

“Summer is no different from any other time of the year,” says H el ene Seiler, executive vice president, pre-boarding for Stewart, Cooper & Coon. “Hiring managers typically take turns taking their vacations and never leave for more than a week.”

If a recruiter takes many weeks of vacation, a client company isn’t going to put their hiring initiatives on hold, notes Dilip Saraf, an executive, career and life coach at Fremont, Calif.-based Career Transitions Unlimited. “It also shows that such a recruiter is not grounded in today’s reality, and you must find other avenues to keep things moving.”

Networking and scheduling informational interviews are just a couple of job search strategies that can be more effective during the summer months than most executives realize. “Most people think it is too hard to get meetings during the summer with vacations,” says Mathews.

“However, companies still have needs and problems in the summer, and

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FastTrack Programs
June and July 2007
Hosted by Dave Opton,
founder and CEO, ExecuNet

- 6/28 — **FREE PROGRAM FOR MEMBERS** —
Strategies for the New “Show Me”
Marketplace — Jarvis Cromwell
- 7/12 — **The Virtual Handshake** — Scott Allen
- 7/13 — **FREE PROGRAM FOR MEMBERS** — **Break**
Through to the Other Side — Leslie Roe
- 7/18 — **Dare To Be Different: The Key to a Faster**
Job Search — Tucker Mays & Bob Sloane
- 7/19 — **U R A BRAND! How Smart People Brand**
Themselves for Business Success —
Catherine Kaputa
- 7/20 — **FREE PROGRAM FOR MEMBERS** —
Differentiating Yourself in the Marketplace
— Jean Walker
- 7/25 — **Build Your Talent Pipeline** —
Louise Kursmark
- 7/26 — **MarketOne: Land a Top C-Level Role This**
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Peter McCarthy
- 6/26 — **Chicago** — Melody Camp
- 6/27 — **Toronto** — Martin Buckland
- 6/28 — **Toronto Sr. Executive Roundtable** —
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- 6/28 — **Columbus** — Janine Moon
- 6/28 — **Dallas** — Bob Hueglin
- 6/28 — **Atlanta** — J. Patrick Haly
- 6/29 — **St. Louis** — Bill Severson & Cyd Dodson
- 7/6 — **Colorado Springs** — Dr. David Solly
- 7/9 — **Miami/Coconut Grove** — Jeannette Kraar
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- 7/10 — **Orlando** — Jim Douglas & Mike Murray
- 7/10 — **Sacramento** — Wilcox Miller & Nelson
- 7/10 — **Seattle Sr. Executive Roundtable** —
Susan Stringer
- 7/11 — **Philadelphia** — Ed Kelleher
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- 7/11 — **Cleveland Sr. Executive Roundtable** —
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Judy Rosemarin
- 7/11 — **New York City** — Judy Rosemarin
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- 7/12 — **Atlanta Sr. Executive Roundtable** —
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Your Career Advisor

Finishing the Last Piece of the PIE: Performance, Image and Exposure

By Monique A. Dearth

Consider the successful rising star who performs well and has the right image, but who has spent all of his time behind-the-scenes getting the work done that he has failed to devote the energy needed for personal exposure and visibility. When he is finally teed up for the big job, no one knows who he is; and he gets passed over for the position.

We know *performance* is key to success. Books have been written about execution and delivering results. Just as important is *image*. In fact, image consultants are a new breed of entrepreneur hitting the streets. However, there exists a third piece of the PIE, which is equally, if not more important, than performance and image. That third piece is *exposure*.

Why Others Should Know You

Most successful career executives know you have to have all pieces of the PIE. But, the reality is that most executives spend their time and energy on performance and image. Arguably, the value of exposure for senior-level career advancement is the most important

piece of the PIE and serves as a tremendous differentiator. Yet, time and time again, we see exposure being relegated as a nice-to-have, not a need-to-have, in the competitive world of personal development.

All too frequently when we conduct executive assessments at Fortune 500 companies around the world, we hear things like, “He always makes his numbers, and he seems to have great presence; but I just don’t know that much about him.” One example stands out. He was being considered for a significant promotion to an officer-level role in a large global conglomerate. During his executive assessment (an intense 4-step process designed to give substantial feedback to high-potential employees at promotional points in their career) we heard, “For having worked for this company for 13 years, Jon is probably not as well-known as he could or should be. He needs to work on gaining positive exposure with the senior-leadership team and share the successes that he has led in store operations.” We also heard, “He hasn’t gotten the level of exposure that he needs with the senior-leadership team...he’s good

Tips for Developing Your PIE

- Consistently deliver exceptional results.
- Be able to connect and articulate how the “big picture” translates into tactical plans.
- Demonstrate intimate knowledge of your subject matter...become known for something...be distinct.
- Exude confidence, not arrogance...don’t be afraid to keep people informed of your accomplishments.
- Possess excellent presentation and platform skills.
- Maintain composure under pressure.
- Interact and communicate well at all levels of the organization.
- Build personal connections and cast your net wide.
- Never underestimate the power of spending time with people and treat everyone with respect.
- Don’t assume your results will speak for themselves...they need a voice behind them, namely, your own voice.

on his feet and has good presence, but isn't known enough." The end result? The promotion went to another more well-known person. Does well-known mean well-deserving? Not always.

The Work Doesn't Always Speak for You

Oftentimes people respond to suggestions that they work on their personal visibility program by saying, "I'm not going to suck up to the boss. My contributions should speak for themselves." Yes, perhaps. But the reality is there are ways to let people know what you do, and ways to become visible within the organization, without feeling as if you are a walking billboard advertising your accomplishments.

How to Become Visible When Virtual

Absence makes the heart grow fonder? Don't count on it. More likely: Out of sight, out of mind. The importance of exposure is magnified for employees who don't reside within the corporate offices. Naturally, they have to make even more of an effort to be known. With the increase in field-based and high-travel jobs, many executives find making the time to become visible in a corporate office to be very difficult.

We spoke with a regional manager based in the field for a large IT services company. As sales tapered off, he was impacted by a layoff. When he asked his manager for some constructive feedback as to why he was let go, his manager told him that while he was one of the best performing managers, he had been unable to convince senior management to retain him because nobody knew who he was. It's dangerous to count on one person to drive your visibility program. Ensure that more than one person

Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your non-negotiable entry ticket.• Reputation-builder...starts your legacy...yours to lose.• Provides a common denominator in the promotion process.• Determines your ability to take on more responsibility.
Image	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develops early in your career.• The message you send before you speak...whether intentional or not.• Includes attire, confidence, demeanor, body language, communication.
Exposure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How others know of your performance.• Makes you visible to those who can influence your career.• Every interaction counts...make sure all are positive.• Can be enhanced by a network of supporters.

knows who you are. There is a lot to be said for casting a wide net within the organization.

There are things a person can do to stay connected while being physically away from the offices. Consider regular phone calls or emails so that your name stays fresh in their minds. Periodic updates, presented succinctly and proactively, will remind people who you are and what you are doing. If you close a big deal in the field, send a giant cookie cake to the home offices with a note saying, "We did it." You can bet people in the break room will ask who sent the cookie ...and why. Schedule regular visits to the office — not so frequently that people wonder why you never seem to be out working, but certainly frequently enough that you pass from acquaintance to associate and people learn who you are.

For field-based employees, visibility does not apply simply at the corporate offices. Be prepared when people come to see you in the field. You must have your game face on when people from the corporate office visit on your home turf. What they see is a snapshot of you and how you run your operations. Will they remember just another boring field visit, or will they walk away having had the opportunity to observe you as a host? They will be watching. How well did

you treat your visitors? Did you invest noticeable time in preparing for their visit? Do you treat those around you with respect? These important factors can all serve to increase your visibility.

Self-Promote Modestly

Exposure is more than networking. It's about ensuring that people, specifically the decision-makers in the organization, know who you are and know what you have accomplished. It's about being more than just a name, but rather about being a face and a personality known for certain accomplishments within the workplace. Successful career executives recognize the importance of finishing off the PIE.

There exists a fine balance between positively promoting yourself and becoming visible in the organization and appearing insincere and arrogant in your quest to become known and noticed. Earning exposure the right way comes from talking only when you have something relevant to share. It comes from ensuring that you have more than one sponsor or supporter in the organization who knows your skills, your performance, your work ethic. And, it comes from taking the time to honestly get to know people, not because you think they may be able to help you in the future, but because you never know when you might be able to help them.

One final note on exposure: Be prepared. Exposure can be really good, or it can be really bad! Manage it accordingly. Don't seek exposure (when partnered with strong performance and image) if you are not prepared to deal with the inevitable consequences of increased responsibility and promotion. ■

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some industries are busier in the summer than any other time of year. You should target these types of companies as well as other companies you are targeting throughout the year.”

Experts agree that the summer months are a great time to move forward with job searches, because a relaxed atmosphere exists during the summer season that can oftentimes make decision-making individuals more accessible than at any other time. “People are in a good mood and open to it...when the approach is right,” adds Mathews. “Sometimes it’s hard to reach people with vacations [scheduled]. The good news is that gatekeepers also take time off, so your target might be stuck answering the phone.”

Overall, many workers don’t take the vacation time they’ve earned. According to a recent survey conducted by Yahoo Hot Jobs, nearly half of all American workers failed to take their vacation days in 2006. Reasons respondents gave included having too much work to do, the cost of a vacation, and opting to save their vacation time for future emergencies. These could be some of the reasons why you’re more likely to find hiring managers at their desks during the summer and why you might spend more time at work yourself.

Managing Your Absence

One reason executives cite for not taking all their vacation days is they are afraid the company won’t run as well without them. To ensure that doesn’t happen, executives need to prepare for their vacations long before summer hits. Stever Robbins, an executive coach in Cambridge, Mass., says that executives need to have a mini-succession plan in place. “A critical part of their job is developing the people beneath them, so at any moment, they can leave and others on the team can step up to take their place,” says Robbins.

If you’re not sure you have those qualified people on your team and that makes you leery about taking vacations, you’re not alone. Robbins recalls a client

Should You Unplug?

Opinions are mixed about whether executives should bring any electronic devices — from laptops to PDAs — on their vacations. But the fact is, many do. According to a recent AP-Ipsos poll, 20 percent of respondents carried laptops — along with their luggage — on their most recent vacation and 80 percent took their cell phones. About 78 percent of ExecuNet members says they remained connected through a BlackBerry, Treo, laptop or other mobile device. Just 9 percent said they were unlikely to check email during vacation.

If you can’t be out of the loop, do what you can to keep a low profile while you’re on vacation. For some, taking care of messages from the office actually means a more relaxing vacation in the long run. Paul Mathews, president and founder of Conn.-based Hire Aspirations and an ExecuNet meeting facilitator, says that he reserves two hours each day of his vacation to respond to emails, voicemail messages and questions from individuals at his office. “Most of this work I do before anyone wakes up on vacation, and it actually helps me relax the rest of the day,” says Mathews. “I get more rest doing a little work, than if I just let go and let it pile up.”

Hélène Seiler, executive vice president, pre-boarding for Stewart, Cooper & Coon, says she prefers to communicate via her BlackBerry while on vacation since she can better control the influx of messages. “Make sure you check your BlackBerry every day during your vacation,” says Seiler. “It’s best to clean up email clutter and forward emails to delegate some of the tasks. Aim for going back to work with no more than two days of emails to check. If you cannot be reached through BlackBerry, you should plan on an extra day off upon your return to check all emails. Refrain from checking voicemails and have a message that people should email to you. This gives you more control over your time.”

“Experts agree that the summer months are a great time to move forward with job searches, because a relaxed atmosphere exists during the summer season that can oftentimes make decision-making individuals more accessible than at any other time.”

who hadn’t taken a vacation in four years. “She never had the courage to go on vacation,” recalls Robbins. To begin taking vacations again and get comfortable about the process, Robbins’ client started taking mini-vacations about six weeks before her scheduled vacation where she would plan to be at off-site meetings for the day. “She would find out what didn’t get done when she wasn’t there,” says Robbins. “It enabled her to spot the weak links.”

Robbins adds that his client’s fears were unfounded; her staff handled her absence well. “If you’re doing your job, you should always be making sure someone you manage is capable of taking over your job when you’re ready to leave,” says Robbins. “If no one is capable, you need some different people,” adds Robbins.

Yet, for some executives, it is the fear that their team members will perform too well that prevents them from taking vacations at all. That fear is also unfounded, adds Robbins. “There’s a fear dynamic that [executives think] ‘if other people can do my job, I’ll get fired.’ That’s backwards,” says Robbins. “You’re valuable [to your organization], because you can develop people as good as you are. If you develop people, you’re building a strong company.”

Saraf agrees that having a strong team will only make you appear more valuable. “For anyone, especially an executive, the best career advancement policy is to make yourself dispensable,” says Saraf.

“Although this is counter-intuitive, if you consider how your superiors feel about this, you will realize why this is so. For an executive to minimize the impact of their being away, they should start thinking

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about succession planning long before the vacation is approved.”

Executives should delegate appropriate responsibilities before leaving and let the boss know what to expect during their absence. “Making a list of critical developments that will not surprise your boss is essential so that even when things pop up, your boss can deal with them with some forewarning.” If you do delegate work to others, make sure everyone — inside and outside the company — knows who’s doing what. “Change voicemail and email messages to forward to a colleague or subordinate that lets a sender or caller know who is handling items while the executive is out of the office,” says Nada Norval, senior vice president, transition services for Cleveland-based Ratliff & Taylor.

A list for direct reports can also be helpful in making sure things run smoothly during an executive’s absence. “I post a sheet of paper with my name on it, and everything that needs to get discussed with me or decided on gets listed on the sheet,” says Mathews. “When I call in, the sheet is pulled by my admin; and I address all concerns.”

Planning Team Member Vacations

While it’s vital to have all of your bases covered before you take your summer vacation, it’s just as important to do the same when each member of your team takes time off too. “At the beginning of the summer, map out what’s supposed to happen,” says Robbins. Then, determine how it’s going to happen despite team members’ vacation-related absences. For instance, says Robbins, if your employee Bill is leaving on vacation, it’s important that others know what they need from Bill before he leaves.

Team members also need to determine who will fill each void, ensuring that all job responsibilities are covered. “The best way to fill the work gap due to vacationing employees is to work collaboratively with others (their peers) who have a different vacation schedule to share some of the burden during the time they are away,”

More than Just Time Away — How to Get the Most Out of Your Vacation

Once you’ve decided to take that vacation, you need to ensure you get the greatest benefits from your time away from the office. Dilip Saraf, an executive, career and life coach at Fremont, Calif.-based Career Transitions Unlimited, offers the following guidelines:

1. To derive maximum joy from a vacation, no matter how short or how close to home, the key is managing expectations and adopting the right attitude.
2. Since the trend for days away for executive vacations is downward, tasks that only you can address can be saved in a “wait” file for your return. Authorize someone responsible on your team to escalate them at their discretion to your boss and apprise your boss of this arrangement.
3. Notify your important customers and key contacts about your being away. Change your voicemail greeting (and do not forget to reset it immediately upon your return).
4. Let your team (and boss) know the best times and place to contact you, with a back-up contact point.
5. Returning to a piled-up workload defeats the very reason for going away on vacation. Make sure that all transactional tasks are delegated. The only undone work that you have to come back to is the work that only you can do (such as performance reviews and terminations).
6. Vacation is also a time for you to reflect on your job, career and your future. It is the best time to bring in fresh thoughts about what could be different.
7. If you do not hear from anyone at work, do not get anxious and call to check what is going on. Don’t let surprises at work get to you and spoil your vacation.
8. Do not send vacation photos to your hard-working team with a caption that reads “Wish you were here.”
9. Don’t chew out anyone for being remiss at what they promised. Remember that you are on vacation.
10. If you had a bad experience because things went awry, do not come back a martyr, start complaining and being in a foul mood because of that experience. To everyone else at work, you took a vacation.

says Saraf. “Managers, in turn, should also encourage their direct reports to work out an arrangement where the manager does not have to formally assign the workload among the working employees.”

Cross-training team members can also help alleviate potential problems that could arise when employees take their vacations, notes Saraf. “Most companies now exist with smaller-sized staffs and have depended on cross-training, which means workers have to step in for each other to fill the gaps,” says Norval.

There are several other strategies executives can put in place to ensure that their company’s operations maintain their momentum during the summer. Robbins notes how, if you’re collaborating on a project with other people, you can’t move faster than the slowest person. So, if possible, time projects so that the slower people are using the summer months to get their tasks accomplished. Another suggestion

Robbins has is to reserve the summer for projects that don’t require a lot of collaboration so progress won’t be stalled when team members are out of the office.

A Smoother Return

To maintain control over your office environment and avoid the need to return early, set parameters before you depart about how and when you should be reached by your direct reports. “The best policy is to alert your staff to look for critical items that cannot wait and to deal with them in earnest,” says Saraf. “If any item must require your attention, you should be reachable. The mantra is that you do not want to come back to a surprise, nor should you be fretting over what might be going on in your absence. This defeats the purpose of a vacation.”

Whatever you do, don’t come home early to deal with potential messes.

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Insider Insight

The “Nice-Guy” Factor Fosters Commitment

By Dr. Karen Otazo

When Lyndon B. Johnson was in the U.S. Senate, he used to tell mentors like Sam Rayburn and Franklin Roosevelt, “You’re just like a daddy to me.” In his homey Texas way LBJ associated himself with a “feel good factor”: because his mentors felt good about themselves when they were with him, they felt good about him too. It’s as simple as that.

I call this behavior “paying homage.” This may sound as a rather antiquated concept — the type of thing people do to kings and queens and in history books. However, it is important to realize that today’s business office is no less full of hierarchies and allegiances than the courts of yesteryear, and it is in your interest to observe and respect these. In the contemporary workplace, that’s not just about attending to those above you, but treating your colleagues and those who report to you with respect too.

Good by Association

Paying homage is not about being insincere or a sycophant, but about making others feel good about themselves and what they do for you, whether they are a boss or an employee, and they will associate that feeling with you. Doing so is important for everyone, whatever your level in the hierarchy. You get *other people to feel good about themselves* when they’re with you by:

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If people like you, life and work get a whole lot easier.

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- Telling them how they helped you or the business improve.
- Paying careful attention to their points of view.
- Thanking them sincerely for services rendered, even better if you can do so in public.
- Letting them know when others are pleased with what they do.
- Listening with attention and interest and not interrupting.

Politicians understand how important paying homage is. Businesspeople can learn a lot from them. My mother once met John F. Kennedy and never forgot that moment until the day she died. His focus and listening skills were so amazing that he made her feel as if she were the only person in the room. Bill Clinton has a similar reputation. Such ability to really see and hear another person is exceptional,

with others just wanting to follow those who possess it. When a colleague tells you how much he or she enjoyed meeting someone, that person was probably paying homage, consciously or not.

How Do You Become One of Those People?

Look for chances to let key contacts know the positives of your experiences with them, such as when they’ve done a good job, said something interesting, or supported you in some way. Give specifics whenever you can, so that they know why you think they’re good.

Remembering people’s names and small details about them — such as holiday destinations — is always appreciated. However, avoid obsequious behavior by only giving praise or attention where it is due. For instance, if you have enjoyed a speech, you might compliment the speaker on it. It works best to acknowledge something specific like the organization or impact of the speech, rather than a general compliment.

Paying homage is about making the effort to outwardly express genuine thoughts and feelings, not faking them. Most people can spot sycophants. Bear in mind that it’s easier to pay homage in person than in writing — sometimes a casual comment looks over the top when written down. Paying homage in small amounts, but often and irregularly, seems to work best.

Increase Your Likeability

To put this into a current context, the political races, of the three factors that matter the most — issues, party affiliation and likeability — only one has consistently predicted winners: likeability. People not only vote for, they also like to buy things from, marry and spend time with people they like. If people like you, life and work get a whole lot easier.

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Dr. Karen Otazo, managing director of Global Leadership Network, Inc. (Global-Leadership-Network.com), is a consultant and global executive coach for multinational companies worldwide. Otazo has more than 25 years of experience working with clients including BoozAllen Hamilton, Chase Bank, Colgate-Palmolive, Credit Suisse First Boston, The Economist Group, FMC Corporation, General Electric, Goldman Sachs, Lehman Brothers, Marks & Spencer, Motorola, Pepsico, Time International, and Vodafone. She is also the author of *The Truth about Managing Your Career* and *The Truth about Being a Leader* along with numerous articles.

Food for Thought

The Rewards of Coaching Top Performers

Deciding Who Would Benefit Most from Executive Coaching is a Challenge

By David Barnes

An organization is only as strong as its leadership team. As a result, it is increasingly important for organizations to invest in their current and future leaders and provide top performers with valuable incentives to remain with the company long term. An investment in executive coaching can do exactly that.

Organizations most often provide executive coaching to their top performers as a perk, as well as to important contributors who could use fine-tuning in areas such as communication strategies, people skills and management techniques.

It's a good investment because at the executive level, coaching is inexpensive compared to the amount a company pays in salaries, bonuses and perks. Moreover, rewards like bonuses dissipate quickly and really don't improve an executive's behavior. But the rewards of coaching are long-term for both the executive and the organization.

Who Gets Coached?

So how do organizations decide which executives would benefit most from coaching? Here are a few points to consider:

- Coaching is most often provided to executives with leadership, management or performance needs. An excellent time to invest in coaching is when an organization is involved in succession planning and wants to prepare its future leaders for success.
- Many companies establish committees to identify their high potential employees. These committees consider which employees are in line for key positions — for example, if the controller will succeed the CFO — and then provide external executive coaches to help these individuals prepare for their next role.
- Coaching is beneficial when an

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Companies really need to define the behaviors they want to see and then meet with the executive often enough to ensure that those behaviors are continuing after coaching ends.

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organization brings in a new executive from the outside. Turnover at the executive level is quite common and can cost an organization hundreds of thousands of dollars. Assimilation coaching helps a new executive get acquainted with the company culture and players and brings him or her up to speed quickly.

- When a valued executive's behavior is less than optimal, a company should consider, “Can that behavior be changed?” If so, coaching is well worth the investment, and if not, by providing coaching, a company shows a genuine sensitivity and concern in dealing with any issues and can often avoid litigation if that individual must be let go.
- At the same time, most executives only

change their behaviors when a promotion, their position or other rewards are at risk. The prospect of getting in trouble simply isn't enough to motivate some executives to change. Plus, companies often tolerate negative behavior, as long as these individuals continue to achieve business results.

- Coaching is similar to a college degree: Some individuals apply theirs and others don't. With that being the case, coaching is most effective with employees who are mature, sincere and dedicated. These individuals envision where they want to go and set clear goals, and coaching helps them to achieve those. If an individual's commitment is soft, then coaching may fail.

Maintain the Benefits

Companies really need to define the behaviors they want to see and then meet with the executive often enough to ensure that those behaviors are continuing after coaching ends.

As external coaches, we often recommend that companies develop their own internal coaches to continue the maintenance process. In fact, that's essential for many executives who change, but are at risk of reverting to old behaviors once they're back in a high-pressure work environment, where they're so driven to achieve results that they fail to stick to goals established during coaching. ■

Development Plan

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Robbins suggests instead blocking out two to three days in the office after returning to catch up on work. Mathews suggests blocking out that first day back. “It is a tremendous feeling to be all caught up after your first day back,” says Mathews. “Without this approach, it can take weeks to catch up.”

Take a Real Vacation

When you do take vacation, don't forget the true reason why you took time off — to relax so you're ready to handle the demands of your job when you return. “Your vacation is for you to recharge,

Expert Resources:

- Paul Mathews, Hire Aspirations (HireAspirationsUSA.com)
- Nada Norval, Ratliff & Taylor (RatliffAndTaylor.com)
- Stever Robbins, The Stever Robbins Company (SteverRobbins.com)
- Dilip Saraf, Career Transitions Unlimited (7keys.org; career-transitions-unl.com)
- Hélène Seiler, Stewart, Cooper & Coon (StewartCooperCoon.com)

regroup and re-energize. It is easier to achieve this goal if you remove yourself from the transactional exigencies of your everyday job,” says Saraf. “If you fret over your emails while sunbathing in Hawaii, you have just transplanted your job on that beach and taken your cares with you.”

If activity at your company typically slows during the summer months, embrace that slow down and adjust your

own expectations accordingly. “You can only be as productive as you have resources and connections for,” says Robbins. “If everyone's taking the summer off, be productive — by giving yourself some rest and recharge time as well.” Use the time off to re-assess your career and your life. “Get some rest, listen to your family and friends, explore new perspectives about who you are and who you want to be as a leader,” advises Seiler. ■

Insider Insight

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It's not about winning the office popularity contest. Likeable people are just those souls who are comfortable and easy to be with and who treat others fairly and politely. These character traits bring down others' defenses, making them feel comfortable in your presence, and happy to give you their time and attention. It's then easier to get what you want out of them, since they will be looking for ways to affirm that connection.

Consider two people vying for a promotion. One is quite young and inexperienced. Friendly and honest, his assets include a genuine commitment to the well-being of individuals, and a tendency toward positive thinking. People really enjoy working with him.

The other is an experienced, highly effective manager of large teams. She is smart, tough and pedantic and likes to outline the worst case scenario. Who gets the job? Management may decide that it will be easier to teach the inexperienced one some management skills rather than change the interpersonal skills of the more experienced one.

That younger manager in this example may have had natural charm, but he was also a canny player. He knew which workplace behaviors brought others over to his side by making them feel appreciated and important.

Even if you don't see yourself as a charismatic or gregarious type, you can follow his example and up your likeability simply by:

- Making time and space to empathize with others' needs and concerns,

rather than always seeing the world from your own perspective.

- Making sure that you listen well, and allocate time for talking one-on-one with colleagues and junior staff.
- Keeping your remarks short so you don't lecture people, or trying to show how smart you are.
- Asking questions and then letting others answer them.
- Keeping your words and behavior low-key. It's often those quiet, subtle but caring and committed behaviors that make the difference.

Other people's opinions have a big impact upon your working life. The more you're liked by others the easier it is to get their votes, whether you're a TV performer, a political candidate or an executive. ■

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