

CAREER PLANNING AND FORWARD PROGRESS

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When, where and how do you plan your career? No. 1, you decide what you really want! What do you want to accomplish during your life? Not what your parents wanted. Not what your spouse or children want. But, what do you want? Deciding what we want is difficult, getting it is even harder. To do this we need a life plan. We need to think of personal growth and values. We need to maintain health and fulfill spiritual needs. We need to develop our personal lives and to establish fruitful relationships. The problem is that we live in a world of change and risk. Change in our world is occurring faster than ever before in history. To move forward we must gamble. Somehow we must be flexible and adapt to this changing world but still steer a constant course toward our goal. We need to stack the odds in our favor, and we can. In the ultimate, you are the person who controls your life. You are the one who determines your forward progress.

A vital part of a life plan is your career. Sure, most of us have to work to eat, pay the rent, and survive. But, beyond that point, most of us like a challenge and most of us like to achieve. Our careers can give us the satisfaction of challenge, achievement and self-realization. I say to you, very candidly, if your career doesn't offer more satisfaction than financial survival or even financial success, then change! There are already too many people in the TGIF crowd. For our lives to be exciting and challenging, our careers must be exciting and challenging. Sometimes, to achieve our goals we need to change.

Helping people in the energy industry chart their careers has been my profession for over ten years. I have some ideas which may help you. I believe you should determine your career goals, formulate a plan, and evaluate yourself and your industry.

All right, you say, how do I decide what I really want to do. Go into a room by yourself, close the door, get a pencil and a paper, and write down, "The major goal I want to accomplish in my career before I die." Now, I know very few of us like to think about death or dying, but death is part of life, and I'm afraid there is no way that we can get out of this world alive. So, we really have to think in those terms, because it helps us realize that we have X number of years to accomplish what we want to do. If you are 25 now, you have 40 years before you are 65, and if you are 35, 30 years: 45, 20 years, etc. But don't stop at 65 unless you want to. You may be like a super engineer I know who, after he retired at 65, started his own consulting firm, and now at 69 is having more fun and making more money than he ever did before.

After you decide on your goal, and ONLY YOU can make that decision, then decide exactly how you are going to accomplish that goal. Start your plan from where you are NOW and build a realistic career plan.

Decide what you are going to accomplish THIS year, and start TODAY! Then break this year into quarters and set a goal to be accomplished every three months. Write out your goals! Then, evaluate what has been accomplished and how to proceed to accomplish your next immediate goal. Write down your evaluation and go over your evaluation again at the end of that quarter and see how you have improved in the areas you thought needed improving, and what accomplishments have really been made during this period of time. Have a five year goal, a 10 year goal, a 15 year goal, a 20 year goal, and a where you want to end-up goal! If you don't know your goal, you are like a ship without a pilot. You are tossed about in every direction by all of life's storms.

Okay, you have made your decision. You have set your goal. You know where you want to go. But how do you get there? EVALUATE YOUR TALENTS! Self evaluation is difficult but to make your plan work you need to determine what you have to sell. Consider your academic background, your experience and your talents. Determine your strengths. Usually, the functions we like to perform are the ones we perform best. Emphasize the positive by emphasizing those strengths. Write down your major strength, your second, your third, etc. And remember that most bright people are multi-talented. We are more likely to be under-employed than over-employed. Then, determine where you need to improve. Plan to keep learning and improving so that you can match the demands of your goals.

Of course, career progress is related to conditions within the industry. Fortunately, for everyone working in the energy industry today, things look very good. There is a shortage of qualified professionals in the 3 year and higher level brackets. More positions are available for geologists, geophysicists and petroleum engineers than there are qualified personnel to fill the jobs. The shortage is so acute that it rated a five page article in the Oil and Gas Journal. And Mack Wallace, Texas Railroad Commissioner, has called for a crash program to train engineers. The long term outlook is also pretty good. A recent report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that employment in these fields will grow faster than the average of all occupations through the 1980's.

In this applicant's or employee's market salaries and benefits have improved. Salaries accelerated rapidly the last half of 1980 and, today, salaries for qualified professionals have increased from 20% to 30% above those being paid for comparable positions in 1980. Benefits have increased with many more "perks" being offered. The greatest incentive being offered today by the smaller independents is the opportunity to participate in production through an override. However, many other forms of participation such as performance bonuses, profit sharing and/or stock options are also being offered by other firms. In some cases, major oil firms have even started offering bonus programs as well as autos, and club memberships. The majors have, for some time, offered excellent capital accumulation plans through pension and profit sharing plans. The demand for oil and gas today makes our industry a very attractive one, indeed.

All right, you have set your long range goals, evaluated your talents and your industry. Now you need a position that fits your current talents and your goals. How do you find the position you want?

First, look within your present firm. Talk with your manager and discuss your feelings in a positive way. Ask for his advice and help. If you feel that he or she is not easy to talk with or would not understand, perhaps the firm has a human resources or personnel department. Try to find someone with whom you can establish rapport. Discuss your reasons for wanting to move within the company. Point out how your skills may be better utilized in another position or that you need exposure to different areas so you can broaden your experience. Several major oil firms post their open positions company-wide before seeking anyone from outside. This may give you an opportunity to ask for what you desire. Explore your opportunities to move within your present firm first. No avenues open? No way to move? Then, my advice to all job seekers is: ALWAYS keep the job you have until you have accepted and finalized another offer. Does this mean you use your employer's time to job hunt? NO! You use your time to job hunt!

There are three main options for actively seeking a job: college recruitment, an employeeer paid professional employment service, or direct contact. Most of you seniors will be recruited directly from your university. If you miss recruitment or if you are already out of school, you may select one of the other two options. Experienced professionals have only to turn to the classified section of any of the major trade journals to review the numerous opportunities advertised. I will briefly discuss the option of selecting a service and then offer you some tips to use if you select the direct approach option.

If you decide to go to an employment service what should you look for? First of all, they should be professionals in their field. And, they should be able to meet your specific needs. Some firms specialize in particular fields and others do not. The reasons for picking a professional employment service should be that they have a good grasp of what is happening within your industry; they have contacts with established firms, firms which while you may not be aware of it, are seeking your talents; they are able and willing to present your qualifications in the best manner to an interested employer; and they are willing to work with you to maintain confidentiality. Also, they should advise you on how to interview, should negotiate for you, and should assist in closing the job offer.

You should have some idea of their past performance. How long has that particular service been in business? What is their reputation within the industry? Do they specialize in working with energy industry professionals or do they have a general service for all industries? If you decide to work with an employment service, talk with the consultant with whom you will be working. What is his or her background? Have they worked in your particular field? How long have they been in their present position? Can they give you detailed information about the position you see advertised? Can they intelligently discuss your background with you, offer advice and suggestions on how to find the type of position you want? Will they assist you in preparing a professional resume? Do they LISTEN to what you want, your goals, your desires and what you want to accomplish in a career change?

In short, select an employment service in the same way you would select any other professional service. Consider their reputation and how well they can satisfy your particular needs..

Now, some tips for you if you decide to take the direct approach. These are things I have seen others learn the hard way. The most important areas are: finding and contacting companies, the resume, the interview, negotiation and evaluation of the offer. As I said before, there are plenty of ads to review in the journals. But what if the job you really want is not advertised? New graduates should handle this a bit differently from people already in the field. If you are a graduate, write a brief letter outlining your immediate career objective and attach a resume. The resume should include your grade point average in your major; your overall grade point average; working experience (especially any industry-related work experience) and indicate how much of your college expenses you financed. Give your letter and resume ten days to reach its destination and then give a follow-up call to arrange a personal interview.

If you are an established professional, make a list of 25 companies you want to target. Select companies which have the growth pattern that interests you, the location you want, or whatever goal it is that you want to accomplish by your career move. How do you arrive at this list of companies? You can go to the library and ask for the Dun and Bradstreet, Poors Registry or any of the many oil and gas directories available. This will give you the name of the firm and the addresses, names and locations of officers and managers. Write a personal letter to the Manager of the division, department, or whatever area is appropriate. Consider your level of experience and direct your letter to the HIRING AUTHORITY. If you are upper management level, address your letter to the President. You do not want to address your letter to a person with whom you might be competing. In your letter outline your general goals - do not be so specific that you eliminate yourself from any possibilities - tell them what your present responsibilities and duties include and CAPSULE your former experience, emphasizing your major accomplishments. Describe your present firm, but do not include your firm's name. Give them a reason why you are contacting their firm. Do not include your resume. Tell them that you will follow-up with a personal telephone call, but also list your home number and the times they can reach you there. Then, do a follow-up. If at all possible, try to arrange a personal interview. If a personal interview is not possible, but they do request a resume, forward the resume, with a letter confirming your conversation and requesting that your inquiry be kept confidential.

When writing your resume, keep it to two pages (busy executives do not have the time or interest to read through 10-pages). Resumes should include your personal information, but that does not include your spouses and childrens' hobbies (I have actually seen this). State your educational background, which should include scholarships and/or special awards, major professional association memberships and any special achievements within those associations. An experience summary at the top of your resume is good as it capsules and highlights major accomplishments. Then give a chronological background of employers, starting with your present employer. Give dates, job titles, and major responsibilities and accomplishments. If you are in upper management with 20-25 years experience, summarize your early work history. For example, 1955-1960 - Major Oil (name of company) Training Program starting as Field Engineer and promoted to Senior Drilling Engineer. DO NOT be reluctant to show major accomplishments - remember,

a resume is a selling tool, and if you are going to be your own salesman, you need to present yourself in the best possible manner. But, keep it brief and keep it simple.

What if you do arrange the interview on the first telephone call? Find out as much as you can about the position during your telephone conversation. One of the ways to do this is to ask. "Can you tell me exactly what your firm's requirements are at this time?" "Do you have a specific position in mind that we are to discuss?" "Will this position report directly to you?" Try to get this information before interviewing. Of course, if you are dealing with an employment service, you should certainly have these facts well in hand, along with any other pertinent information that will aid you in interviewing. They should have such things as the background and personality of the supervisor for whom you will work, and annual report or informational brochure. If you are talking directly to the firm, you can get an annual report from your stock broker. Or if you have time before the interview, ask your contact person to please mail you current information. Research those reports thoroughly. Remember, to get a job offer, it is important to identify the person who has the hiring authority and to show them that you have the capabilities of helping them solve their problems. No matter how qualified you are as a drilling engineer, if the employer needs a geologist, you are not going to solve his immediate need.

Now for the interview. Remember to appear at your professional best. Have your shoes shined, your hair cut, your nails clean, wear a suit, a tie, no wild plaids, no white socks. For ladies, a suit or a tailored dress, with a hat and gloves. Have hair freshly done in a businesslike style. No tee shirts, no jeans, no cowboy boots and certainly no low cut blouses or miniskirts, and no strong perfumes. All this sounds very elementary, but I know of several instances where candidates were eliminated because of their off-beat or careless appearance. When going for an interview, remember that most managers are not professional interviewers. Many of them may be as uncomfortable as, perhaps, you feel. An interview can be a stressful situation for both of you. After all, if the employer makes a mistake, it is very costly for his firm. The best approach for you is to relax, have confidence in your appearance and your ability, and listen carefully. Most employers will ask questions. Why are you interested in their firm? If you have researched as you should, you should have the answers - rapid growth rate, their potential in your particular area, etc. Why do you want to leave your present position? If your answer comes under "The more opportunity" bracket, then you should have a well-thought out reason why the opportunity for you to grow career-wise is not within your present firm. Never, never badmouth your present employer. All employers are going to want to know "How can you help me?" Your best answer to this is know what his specific needs are, and how your specific talents and skills will benefit him and his firm. This does not include a dazzling display of how you think his firm should be re-organized from top to bottom. Most managers want someone who can help them solve their problems, not someone to come into the firm and decapitate everyone with a machete.

Here are some QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD ASK: "What exactly does this position require?" Or, "What exactly do you need?" "Why is this posi-

tion available?" "What happened to the person who was in this position?" "Will I be reporting to you?" If not, "Will it be possible for me to meet the person for whom I will be working?" "What are the promotion possibilities in your firm?" If this is a very new firm, ask "What type of financing or backer do you have?" Should you mention salary? Yes! A good way to phrase your question is, "Exactly what type of salary range did you have in mind for this position?" Or, "What kind of compensation package are we discussing?" And, really do think about fringes. Fringe benefits sometimes can amount to 25 to 40% of your base salary, and if they are in a non-taxable form, they can increase your income considerably without increasing your taxes. If you complete an employment application and fill in your present salary, always in the Salary Desired write, "Negotiable depending on the package." Never pin yourself to a figure until you have discussed the position and had time to evaluate the situation. If you are asked to name a figure during your interview, base your answer on your worth, not what you need. Employers are not particularly interested in what you need, but they are always interested in how much you will be worth to them. Ask what type of review program the firm has. Is it semi-annual, annual, or based strictly on performance? Determine the growth potential. Are they looking for future management material, or do they want someone to plug into a position for the rest of their life? Find out how their long-term plans match your career goals and lifetime planning. What if the employer asks personal questions that you feel have nothing to do with your job? The best answer is, "I really don't see how that information would have any effect on performing this job", and go on to the next item of conversation. This may cost you the interview, but if the interviewer is that concerned with items you consider strictly personal, you would not be happy working for them anyway. Never volunteer negative information about yourself.

What if they do make you an offer? Ask for a letter confirming your offer as they outlined it and as you understand it - and cover the points with the employer at that time. Walk through the offer verbally --- Mr. Employer, as I understand it, you are offering me a base salary of \$35,000, with an auto, a club membership at the Petroleum Club, and a bonus of 20% of my salary. On the moving costs, as we agreed, you will pay the real estate fee on the sale of my house and all actual transportation of household goods. Then say, that you would like to receive the offer and have several days to consider it. Indicate that you will get back with an answer by a given date. And, I would say, the maximum time should be within a week or ten days after you have received their written offer. Whether you do or do not receive an offer, thank the person for his or her time and interest. Shake their hand and leave with a definite conclusion one way or the other. If you both conclude there is no further interest, be sure that you leave them with a good feeling. If there is interest, but no job offer, be sure you have a date by which they will notify you of further action. This should be within a week or ten days, unless there are very strong extenuating circumstances for them not to give you a firm indication. If you lose three months waiting for a job offer, and it never comes through, you have lost three months of very valuable time that you could use in working on your new career.

What if an offer is not made during the interview, but arrives later? If you really want the job, but the offer is not up to your

expectations, negotiate! Try to negotiate without causing hard feelings or losing the job offer. Assure the employer that you are interested in accepting the position, but also tell them that there are points you need to discuss further before a final decision. Again, approach negotiations on the value of your worth. Stress what you can bring to his particular job and how you can meet his needs. Of course, if you are working with a professional employment service, this is when they should go to bat for you. Particularly if you are realistic in your desires. They should discuss current trends in relocation, fringe benefits and/or base salaries with Mr. Employer. However, if you are doing your own negotiating, it is up to you to convince Mr. Future Employer that his dollars and cents investment in you will pay off in future dollar and cent dividends. Frankly, most employers in our industry today are definitely not trying to buy talent cheap. In fact, most are very competitive with their base salaries and try to offer attractive fringes. Many of the small independents are offering overrides or royalty pools. Larger firms are offering bonuses and stock options. Many, many firms are now furnishing autos at levels that were never furnished before. Most of today's negotiations involve relocation. Relocation is extremely expensive today because of the increased cost of housing, and mortgages. Almost all firms now pay real estate fees. Many are offering home purchase plans and mortgage differential programs. And, some are giving cash relocation amounts to cover new drapes, etc. in housing. If there is an item that you feel should be covered by the employer, and it is not in your offer, NOW is the time to say so. After the fact, is too late.

How should you evaluate the total job offer? Here are questions to ask yourself: Is this job in the geographical location that I want? Are these the kind of people that I can personally relate to on a day-to-day basis? Remember that next to your family, you will probably spend more time with your fellow workers than with anyone else. Do these people have my kind of ethics and values? Does this position answer my next immediate career goal? Does it give me the opportunity (at this time) to make other career moves within the organization? Or, does it give me the opportunity to widen my experiences and increase my value significantly? If I do have to move outside of this organization, will I be three years older, but not more valuable? Is this the kind of working environment where I function best? If this is a desk position and you are essentially a field person, can you really be happy? Is this the level of responsibility that I am seeking. Is this a compensation package that I feel is fair? Does this position give me the opportunity to utilize my special skills and to continue expanding my knowledge? If you can answer "Yes" to all of these questions, then I would say you have a marriage - or at least a very good engagement.

What if you can answer "Yes" to all the questions but one? Perhaps it is not the location you originally wanted, but this job is fantastic in every other way? This is a question for you and for your family. Discuss the situation thoroughly with your spouse. Be sure, if you do make a move, that everyone won't be miserable in three months. Try to assure that there are compensating factors for the family as well as yourself. You don't want to come home to rebellion every night.

Perhaps everything is perfect about this job, except that three years from now you don't know how you can advance in the firm. Maybe

your boss is only five years older than you are, and there is no upward mobility unless he is promoted rapidly. Again, this is your decision. Consider the experience that you may gain over the next three or four years. Will it expand your talents so that making an upward move into another firm will be worth the effort? Too many times have I seen an employee take a lifetime job, only to find that the firm is sold two years later and the entire picture has changed! Everything in this life is a calculated risk, and we have to take a gamble if we are going to make progress. But be sure the gamble is worth it to you. A very good friend who started his business about the same time I did, said to me, "if I were talking to a group of young people today, I really don't know if I would tell them to work as hard as I have for the past eleven years, would you?" I would. For the first four or five years I worked six and seven day weeks and 10 and 12 hour days, but I have built a company I'm proud of. Looking back where I was eleven years ago, and considering where I stand today in job satisfaction and achievement, I count it all worth while. And, I think that is the true measure of career satisfaction. Is the cost worth it to you? What are you working toward? What are your goals, your values, your ideals? What kind of impact does your life have on others and to what effect? I want everyone here today to be a winner in this game of life. One of the best ways to be a winner is to know what your plan is, set your goals, and despite interruptions or hardships or set-backs, continue working toward your ultimate plan. You are very fortunate to be in the energy industry today. Your opportunities appear unlimited. You can chart a course of personal success and play a vital role in maintaining the strength of our country. You can work with good, honest people. I'm proud of the energy industry and the people in it. Thank you, for the privilege of speaking to you today.