

## *Tips for Maintaining a “Healthy” Career!*

By Lorraine Rinker – January 2007

Start your new year with some tips to help you build and maintain a healthy career!

- 1. Get off to a great start!** - If you're a recent grad, take note and get real: there are jobs out there - - you just need to take the most effective approach to finding them. Career fairs and pouring through job listings in newspapers is not where most people are finding today's jobs. Students need to be more aggressive and creative in their job search; and that begins with expanding their contact networks.  
Make a list of the top 10 opportunities and go ahead and apply on-line through the company web sites. But, you're not done yet! Follow up with your personal contact and let them know you're "in the system" and would appreciate any additional leads they may come across. In the meantime, be realistic about your intentions; don't obsess about finding the "perfect job". Focus on the fact that your first job is just that; your first job!
- 2. Seek criticism** - Don't wait until your annual review to get feedback. As a senior director of IT in a Fortune 100 company, I requested a meeting with my boss once a quarter to discuss performance. I initiated the meetings and came fully prepared with the status of my existing performance goals and opened the discussion for ideas on how to continue to improve my performance. Doing this eliminated any "surprises", particularly since we operated in a very dynamic business environment where things were constantly changing. Checking in on a regular, periodic basis also made it possible for my boss to keep his boss informed in a timely and accurate manner. A win-win for all!
- 3. Engage yourself** - When the prospects of advancement slow down, look for opportunities to learn about other areas of the organization by signing up for a committee or task force. Active participation shows initiative and a willingness to learn new things!
- 4. Get real** - Spending most of your time inside the "company" can limit your perspective and knowledge of what's really going in the world outside your business community. There is a professional organization for just about every business field. Find an organization and sign up. Not only will it keep you better informed of actual events and news, but you will expand your professional network and build relationships that may afford you the inside track on future opportunities around town!
- 5. Landing the “next” perfect job** – You've worked long and hard, mastered your craft and have become an "expert" in your area of specialty. After reflecting on your career, you realize that it's no longer aligned with your purpose in life. Now what?  
Because a career is a journey, planning your career should include a marketing plan as well. Maintaining marketable skills is essential during your career for both advancement within your current company, and to help you excel when you decide to take that "next step" and venture out!
- 6. Time for yourself.** - A recent survey conducted by Harris Interactive and Ipsos Reid for Expedia revealed that 41 percent of workers in Western states don't take all their vacation, compared with 33 percent nationally. Being part of the “overworked, vacation-deprived” workers is not a good

thing. When you don't take your time off, or take less time than you need to "recharge your batteries", you are less ready to do your job mentally and physically.

7. **Bouncing back** – A lay off can be devastating, but there are things you can do to take a healthy proactive approach to leaving your company and hunting for a new job. According to the National Association of Female Executives (NAFE), you should; 1) protect your benefits by understanding your rights before signing a termination agreement, 2) develop a methodical process for job-hunting and beware the urge to take an extended vacation unless its actually a part of your job-hunting strategy, 3) get the word out and tell everyone in your network that you're interested in finding a new position, 4) consider hiring a career coach or consultant to help you market yourself effectively in a marketplace that may have gone through significant changes in your area of expertise.

*About the Author: Lorraine Rinker is a Real World Careerist with Rinker and Associates, a career consulting organization. Possessing in-depth Fortune 100 experience and a 25-year Information Technology career culminating at the executive level, Lorraine now applies her passion for helping others find their "next step" through career and business consulting. For more FREE tips on how to "get on your way", visit [www.rwcs.biz](http://www.rwcs.biz). © 2005-2007 Rinker and Associates.*