



By G.A. "Andy" Marken

About the Author

G.A. "Andy" Marken is president of Marken Communications, Inc. in Santa Clara, Calif. He may be reached at andy@markencom.com.

You've been in the field now for five to seven years. You've just hit your stride with a good title on your business card, a roster of subordinates and a healthy paycheck.

You're good. You know it. Problem is that doesn't make you a leader in the industry. That's going to take some more planning and work on your part.

Obviously it's important to be considered a leader in your present organization. That's what keeps you employed. It's also valuable in your company's industry. In these days of consolidation, downsizing and mergers and acquisitions, you need to be viewed as a person whose leadership qualities transcend your present firm and gives you value in the marketplace.

We're not inferring you're looking for a new job. But in today's climate of economic uncertainty you can be certain only of yourself.

The only people the CEO wants on his team are leaders or people who are focused on being leaders. The same is true of executive recruiters and prospective employers.

As a result, it's important to focus on improving in key areas: vision, listening skills, education, personal public relations, professional involvement and appearance.

Vision

The true leader possesses vision: the ability to see beyond the short-term gain

Enhancing Your Leadership Skills

Leadership Image

when choosing a solution. He can see with reasonable certainty how something that is done today will impact success tomorrow. He doesn't look for the easy answers but those that will reap long-term results for the organization even if the firm moves in a totally new and more profitable direction.

More importantly, a leader is able to communicate this vision to executives and subordinates. He is able to empower subordinates to work as a cohesive team. He has that unique ability to inspire the team to take a project to even greater heights of achievement and make his people feel they have true ownership in the success of their firm.

Listening Skills

A leader knows that it is just as important to listen to subordinates as it is to talk to them. An executive who listens to employees' professional and personal concerns and takes them to

heart can keep expectations and planning at realistic levels.

For example, some of the people on your staff are young and ambitious. They enjoy, even thrive on, the late nights and weekends spent pitching in to complete a project. At the same time you have employees who have family responsibilities. Whether it is voiced or not, they resent these schedules. They prefer long lead times where they can carry out the work within the framework of their total lives.

Weigh the individuals' needs because it will help improve employee retention, lower the resentment levels and build loyalty to the company and to the executive. Building longevity with your team makes it easier for projects, the company and you to succeed.

While it is important to remain accessible to your staff members, a seasoned

leader doesn't become one of the gang. He doesn't take part in excessive gossip or outlandish entertainment.

Education

The innovative and effective leader keeps his knowledge up to date to ensure he stays one step ahead of the competition. The leader also expects/encourages staff members to do the same. To make certain it happens, the leader hosts in-house workshops or seeks out local educational venues. He also is a voracious reader and clipper of print and online articles. He reads business, trade and related field publications. He constantly clips and files articles that will immediately help him or may possibly assist him in the future.

Follow these steps and you will grow to become a leader your CEO wants on his team. You also will be the leader all of the best people want to work for and with.

Personal PR

It is equally important to enhance your image and reputation outside your organization. That means concentrating on your own personal public relations program.

Position yourself as a solid and reliable resource for local, regional and national media. In the public relations field, that means knowing your company, your competition, related organizations, industry facts/figures and industry resources inside and outside of firms. It also means knowing how the industry's product cycles work from concept to customer support as well as how related and potentially related companies, technologies and products can impact your industry and your firm.

While many recruiters say job-hopping doesn't hurt your chances for the next growth/leadership opportunity, firms still want people who show some stability, which means keeping a job for at least a year, if not three. A resume that is filled with job changes every eight months still puts you at a disadvantage.

Finally, your personal public relations program should include the ability to extend yourself even when there's no short-term benefit to your company or you. Members of the media have huge databases of company contacts but relatively short lists of people they regularly contact. *Be on that short list.*

If they contact you for information and assistance and it can benefit your firm/client, follow thru immediately. Obviously you need to be certain you have your facts straight before you

continued on page 36

Industrial Controllers

The Hanna line of panel mount controllers have been designed to give outstanding performance with the latest innovative technology. Hanna controllers are precise, rugged, easy-to-use, economically priced & reliable.

pH 500/mV 600 Series

- Fail safe alarm system
- Fully programmable microprocessor memory
- 3 month backup power supply
- Removable terminal modules for simple wiring

HI 700 Series

- Extensive range for both conductivity & TDS
- Completely programmable through menu-driven display
- Selectable isolated output in mA & volts
- On/Off, Proportional, PI & PID controls

HANNA INSTRUMENTS

4300 Business Park Drive, Suite 1-201, Denver, CO 80239, Tel: 303-426-6222, Fax: 303-426-6225 / email: sales@hannainst.com

BUSINESS

continued from page 32

speak to the press and that you've properly briefed other executives before they speak to the media.

If they contact you and it can't help your client, point them in the right direction or help them find the information.

Recently I was working with an industry technical analyst and a client

providing product, technical data and background material for her project. She mentioned she still had some "holes" in related areas she had to fill. I sent e-mails to people I knew in other firms, some of them competitors, spelling out what the researcher needed and how they could possibly get favorable coverage in the final research report.

Everyone won all the way around. The client received the favorable coverage it wanted. The other firms knew we were on top of industry activities. The analyst views us as more than just PR "flacks."

Professional Involvement

It also is important that you participate in professional and industry associations and societies. In addition, it is important

to network in these organizations. Select your personal and professional activities carefully. Choose those that you're not only interested in but those that will benefit you in the long term.

Invest your time wisely to become a leader in the organization(s). Volunteer to be a guest speaker at meetings and conferences. Intelligently recommend members of your firm to speak on subjects and areas where they are experts. If you're not a good speaker, take a public speaking course to improve your performance. Whether it's you or a member of your company make certain the presentation is one that reflects a clear view and shows industry leadership.

As we move into the 21st century and video conferencing is becoming an increasingly common form of one-on-one and one-to-many meetings, the written word still is extremely powerful. Write great reports. Write great presentations. Write great e-mails. Constantly work to develop, refine and perfect all of your communications skills.

Appearance

Now we come to the final, but equally as critical, area in developing and maintaining your image as a professional leader. Granted it should be enough that you are a visionary, have state-of-the-art/state-of-the-industry expertise and keep your staff at peak performance and loyal and are sought out by and quoted in the press, but unless you're one of the very few, very rare true geniuses of the century, you also have to look the part. It is still true that we never get a second chance to make a good first impression. Like it or not, grooming and attire do quite a bit in shaping that first impression.

While almost every organization has relaxed or eliminated its dress code, and dressing down is commonly accepted, no one ever gets laughed at for dressing up. Fortunately (for men) starched white shirts, black pinstripe suits and rep ties have given way to a wider array of professional attire. Women also have greater dress freedom including slacks. It's okay to blend in with your staff, but casual doesn't mean sloppy. Being neat has never gone out of style.

Develop your leadership skill roadmap using these guidelines and you will earn the reputation you want and deserve as a true leader.

That's the person your boss wants on his team. It's the person your firm's competition wants on their team. It's the person the executive recruiter aggressively seeks and woos for the next big opportunity/challenge you're going to want to consider. **WQP**

For more information on this subject, write in 1014 on the reader service card.



LearnMore!

For more information related to this article, go to www.waterinfocenter.com/lm.cfm/wq040304