



# Connections

Insights into the Workplace of the 21st Century



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## Face Time

### Tough Times Call for Tough Questions



Look all around you and you'll hear the sky is falling. And without question, things are uncertain, to say the least. But let's look on the bright side.

Cable remains in better shape than a lot of other industries, and consumer demand for our products remains very strong. Our advertising revenues are holding steady. And some competitors are suddenly finding it more difficult to finance their assault on this industry's market share.

But that's not so say you shouldn't remain vigilant. As a worker in this volatile climate you must keep your eyes open. And you must continue to ask yourself important questions – the kind of questions we at Carlsen are constantly asking one another. For example:

- How will the fact that so many Boomers suddenly lost big chunks of their retirement funds and might have to rethink retiring, impact opportunities for those of Generations X and Y?
- Outside of admirable traits like loyalty, dependability and integrity, what skills do you possess that make you singularly valuable, even indispensable,

to either your current employer or to a prospective one?

- Given that companies still need to get work done even as they downsize, is it possible that contrary to conventional thinking, this economy might actually represent a great time for temporary executives, freelancers, consultants and part-time specialists?

We don't have all the answers. No one does. But I promise you this; we at Carlsen will keep thinking of questions, and asking them – tough as they may be.

Enjoy this issue of *Connections*. And please remember that, despite all this economic turbulence, you still have ultimate control over your career. For more on that, please turn to Terri Thompson's terrific editorial on page 3.

And always, should you have any questions (or answers) you'd like to share, please drop me a line. ☺

*Ann Carlsen*

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# Obey Interview “Rules of the Road”

By Renee Hauch | Senior Vice President of Search Management and Research



Invariably, a job interview will venture into territory that requires you to discuss some part of your personal life. I recently found on CareerBuilder.com the following checklist of

interview topics to discuss freely, ones to approach with caution, and ones to avoid at all costs, and thought I'd share it with you:

## Green light



*Go ahead with the following personal info.*

**Goals.** It's OK to talk about what you want in your next assignment and what inspired you to apply for the position. This is the “what you want,” “why now,” “why them” conversation.

**Growth.** You can and should talk about the things you've done up to this point to invest in yourself and your professional development.

**Highlights.** Relate the highlights of your greatest professional achievements to date without exaggerating or pontificating.

**Motivations.** Talk about what motivates you, excites you, what brought you to the industry and what attracted you to that specific employment opportunity.

## Yellow light



*Discuss with caution.*

**Vacations.** If you can chat about a past vacation in relation to the company, it might be OK for your interview. For example, if you know the employer is a big supporter of Habitat for Humanity and you vacationed in the same spot where a new housing initiative was just built, it could work for you. But if you're bragging about the six month trip around the world you took during your unemployment, you should probably refrain.

**Allergies.** If the interviewer is suffering from allergies and you do too, it could be a bonding moment. But if you use the

moment to declare you're allergic to high maintenance people, the opposite just might happen.

**Pets.** Talking about your furry friends at home can work for or against you. Dogs and cats shouldn't get you into much trouble, but exotic or high-maintenance companions can be perceived as an issue.

**All skills.** It's not necessary to possess every quality the employer has put on its wish list. If you mention only a couple of skills, it shows you have both initiative and growth potential. This also lets the interviewer feel there's something the company can offer you as well, and reciprocal relationships are the strongest.

## Red light



*Do not delve into these personal topics during your interview.*

**Lifestyle choices, politics, religion or family plans.** Controversial topics may make for stimulating conversation but have no place in a job interview.

**Endless name dropping.** You can establish that you know some of the same people as the interviewer to build rapport, but don't think you're upping the ante by upping the volume.

**Health history.** Stay away from your health history, mental and otherwise. You're supposed to be positioning yourself as dependable and reliable; not as a candidate who brings more liabilities than assets to the table.

**House problems, nanny drama or crazy in-laws.** Employers don't want to know about your life except as it relates to what you've done professionally and what you're likely able to do for them.

**Bosses from hell.** Simply put, no prospective boss wants to hear a litany of boss-from-hell stories. ☹

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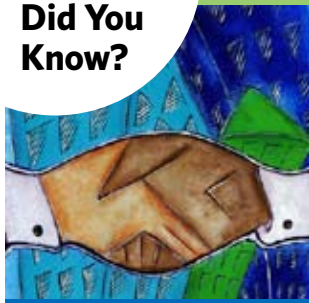
## QUOTABLE

“They're electronic diaries that you're willing to have the whole word look at, any time, anywhere. They remind me of ‘The Emperor Has No Clothes’ story. People seem to forget that everyone can see what you're really not wearing.”

– Kay Stout

*Advisor at Oklahoma Professional Job Search and author of the blog Another Point of View, on the growing use of My Space and Facebook for professional networking*

## Did You Know?



The University of Iowa recently conducted a study on the importance of a good handshake. They enlisted a group of “handshake raters” to rate the quality of the handshake of each one of 98 candidates brought in for mock interviews. A second set of people was then secured to interview the candidates and rate their performances. Their findings? Those with the highest rated handshakes were the exact same candidates rated by the interviewers as the most hireable.

## QUOTABLE

“Your earning ability today is largely dependent upon your knowledge and skill and your ability to combine that knowledge and skill in such a way that you contribute value for which people are going to pay.”

– Brian Tracy  
Author

## Ask Carlsen

### Career advice from another of the Carlsen experts:

Jeannine Sommer | Senior Vice President of Search Management

**Q.** I am in an IT position and am very technical. Given the migration of jobs overseas and the uncertain economy, should I try to move into a management position?



This question requires you to consider many factors before making a career change, not the least of which is: are you happy in IT? Because if so, I might urge you to stay put and simply broaden your skills. Management may sound like a good option, but understand that in IT you may have career flexibility that you might not find in management. Many industries like to hire managers with “domain knowledge” and background in their specific industry. In IT such is not always the case. I also believe that while many U.S. companies continue to off-shore technical positions, there will always be a need for hands-on work in this country, especially if you become a recognized expert in one or more areas of IT. However, if you have the requisite people skills and won't miss the nature of the work you're doing now, certainly a change to management might make sense. Just do it because you want to do it; not because you're afraid of becoming irrelevant in the workplace. ☺

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## OVERHEARD

Some of the more PG-rated quips from our favorite site for amusing slices-of-life from the Great American Workplace, [www.overheardintheoffice.com](http://www.overheardintheoffice.com).



> **Coworker asking about wireless:**  
I know absolutely nothing about wireless here; my computer is very wireful.  
*Overheard in New York, NY*

> **Annoyed boss, barging into cubicle:**  
You ignored my call?

**Worker, glancing at phone:** Huh?  
Oh...yeah, a little bit.  
*Overheard in Morris Plains, NJ*

> **Young naive office girl:** Oh look! We're all here for lunch! It's time for some good company bondage time.

**Jaded male co-worker:** That's bonding time.  
*Overheard in Colorado Springs, CO*

> **Portly manager:** I need to lose some weight.

**Blunt manager:** How about you quit eating like a twelve-year-old whose parents aren't home from work yet, chunk-style?  
*Overheard in Indianapolis, IN*

> **Sad boss:** I'm sure there are a lot of normal people here, just not in this department.  
*Overheard in Hartford, CT*

> **Interviewer:** How do you feel about ambiguity?

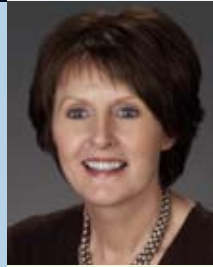
**Interviewee:** Can you be more specific?  
*Overheard in Seattle, WA*



# My View

## You and the Global Economy

By Terri Thompson | Senior Vice President of Executive Search



If you don't think the shifting economy has an effect on you, your job, and your salary, the late economist Milton Friedman would look at you and shake his head.

Friedman understood as well as anyone the laws of supply and demand and how they impact everything, from the price of cotton to human behavior.

And if he were here, Friedman would tell you that even though you may work in a healthy industry, it does not exist in a vacuum. The greater the number of unemployed talented workers, both here and abroad, the greater the downward pressure on management and executive salaries – even yours.

So what can you do? You can do what Friedman would do. Apply the rules of supply and demand to your career. Increase the demand for your services. Add to your marketability by broadening

your skills and expanding both the depth and breadth of your expertise.

How do you do this? Read voraciously and ask questions, even if you think you know the answer. Become a lifelong learner and take classes and/or go back to school. Don't run from new technology; embrace it and find new and meaningful ways to apply it to your professional life. Study both recent trends and best practices from across your area of expertise and add them to your own personal index of solutions. And most important, remain as flexible and dynamic in the workplace as possible.

In short, protect both your job and your earning power by training yourself to become the kind of person employers will always pay top dollar to retain; someone to whom they can turn when they want not just any answer, but the right answer. ☺

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### QUOTABLE

**“Smart individuals don't do surgery on themselves, pull their own teeth or represent themselves in legal matters. They defer to professionals who have the training and expertise that gets the best results. Smart employees do the same with their careers.”**

– J.T. O'Donnell

*Co-author of syndicated workplace column “J.T. and Dale Talk Jobs”*

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