

News You Can Use

by Haidee E. Allerton

LOOK, NOT WALK, THE TALK

TELEPHONE representatives—called, *specialists*—in the new AT&T Solutions Customer Care Clairol Call Center in Jacksonville, Florida, receive Clairol makeovers before going to work. AT&T thinks that the makeovers help call center reps answer customers' questions better because the reps have used Clairol products.

REVENGE OF THE NERDS

THE NUMBER of college graduates with a B.S. in computer science has fallen 43 percent in the past decade. Yet, the demand for computer programmers is soaring.

Here are some of the reasons highly skilled techies can pick and choose job positions.

- ◆ Companies worldwide spent an estimated \$42.5 billion in 1996 to link computers so that managers can monitor inventories and finances in real time.
- ◆ The Internet has made techies highly sought-after workers. About 760,000 people work for Net-related companies, and corporations are on the lookout for people to run their intranets.
- ◆ Thousands of business programs aren't set up to function using dates after 1999, so companies need people to reprogram computers to avert huge and costly crashes. The cost to reprogram may reach \$600 billion just in the United States.



In another example, each year MCI sends about 40 people through its special computer training program at a cost of about \$50,000 per trainee, only to find the high-tech talent heavily recruited by other firms once training is completed.

And if that weren't enough evidence for high techie demand, a study by the Information Technology Association of America estimates that 190,000 "info-tech" jobs in U.S. companies are currently unfilled. *Source: Business Week.*

TREND WATCH

SOME BIG COMPANIES are getting together to tackle human resource issues, reports the *Wall Street Journal*. And some experts are calling the move, "unprecedented."

The newly formed Talent Alliance includes AT&T, GTE, Johnson & Johnson, Lucent Technologies, and NCR. In addition to addressing HRD issues, the privately funded, not-

for-profit group aims to match skilled workers with employers that are alliance members. The group will also provide training and career assistance for workers at member firms.

At press time, companies were still being recruited for membership in the alliance.

SURVEY SAYS

THE FIRST-QUARTER edition of the ASTD National HRD Executive Survey for 1997 focused on intellectual capital, which includes people, technology, culture, and intangible assets.

The top findings:

- ◆ Most respondents are familiar with the topic and think it's an important issue in which HRD can play a variety of roles, including developing support systems and raising senior management's awareness.
- ◆ *Intellectual capital* means different things to different people, but most respondents agree it includes human and struc-

tural capital, a recognition of the uniqueness of those assets, and an understanding of their potential to contribute to organizational success.

- ◆ Companies lag behind in leveraging intellectual capital, assigning people to have responsibility for it, and having people whose work is related closely to it.

EXPATRIATE GAPS

THE AVERAGE three-year international assignment can cost \$1 million, with a failure rate of 50 percent, according to Robin Schoen & Associates of Langhorne, Pennsylvania.

One way that failure is manifested is expatriate attrition: an estimated 15 to 40 percent of expatriates leave their employers within 12 to 18 months of returning from overseas assignments. Despite such figures, only 30 percent of companies have repatriation strategies.

Robin Schoen & Associates recommends that an expatriate support program include these elements:

- ◆ self-assessment tools that measure a candidate's intercultural adaptability
- ◆ predeparture and in-country intercultural training
- ◆ such in-country communications as newsletters with company news and information targeted to the needs and interests of overseas assignees, timely access to industry news and changes in the expatriate program, and access to the company's computer networks

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- ▶ a home-office advocate, preferably an HRD professional, to provide information for assignees and help them keep their skills up to date
- ▶ ongoing career management to prevent "out of sight, out of mind"
- ▶ assignee mentor programs to help expatriates use their international experience to develop their careers
- ▶ proactive repatriation a year before the end of an assignment
- ▶ cultural reorientation covering the home country, industry, company, and changes in the corporate culture for returning expatriates.

A 66-page report on the expatriate policies and practices in more than 300 multinational U.S. and Canadian companies is available from Organization Resources Counselors of New York City.

The highlights of the 1996 survey include staffing patterns, conditions of employment, remuneration, housing, and benefit plans. For a copy of the 1996 North American Survey of International Assignment Policies and Practices, call Maneesh Limaye at 212/852-0308. The cost is \$250 US per copy

KIDS TODAY

IN JAPAN, GENERATION X is called the Bubble Generation.

After reading the *T&D* article, "Can Generation Xers Be Trained?" by Shari Caudron (March, 1997), a Japanese manager e-mailed to say that there is a similar situation in Japan with the generation that began their careers during Japan's economic down

How To

Here are some ways to rev up your speaking, training, or consulting career:

- ▶ Apply the givens.
- ▶ Be clear about what you are selling, understand the market, "niche" your industry or services, and be good at what you do.
- ▶ Have quality materials.
- ▶ Don't print in large quantities at first until you get people's feedback, and look at other consultants' materials to see what you like.
- ▶ Join associations and become active.

- ▶ Volunteer to write for the association or company newsletter, don't over-commit, and practice speaking at meetings.
- ▶ Become a resource for your clients.
- ▶ Research information you don't know, always come back with an answer, be truthful, and have a list of colleagues who can help your clients or prospective clients when you aren't able to.

The tips are adapted from *21 Ways To Springboard*, by Marjorie Brody (Career Skills Press, 1997).

period in which the "bubble burst." Speaking about the Bubble Generation, he said, "They are thought to be lazy, disloyal, and arrogant because elder businesspeople work harder. And they focus more on their personal lives than business lives."

that's what we have become," says CEO Mitchell S. Fromstein.

In response to constantly changing skill requirements, Manpower's training programs try to keep pace. The newest addition is training for information technology. Says Fromstein, "The need for qualified IT professionals, from application developers to systems implementation specialists, is booming."

Manpower is based in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

REALITY CHECK

A MAJORITY—74 percent—of executives polled by OfficeTeam of Menlo Park, California, say that it's "very important" for administrative assistants to have advanced computer skills.

MANPOWER'S NEW MISSION

MANPOWER, known for years as a staffing firm, now considers itself to be a training organization.

"Back in 1980, I don't think anyone thought of Manpower as a trainer, but

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