

About the Authors



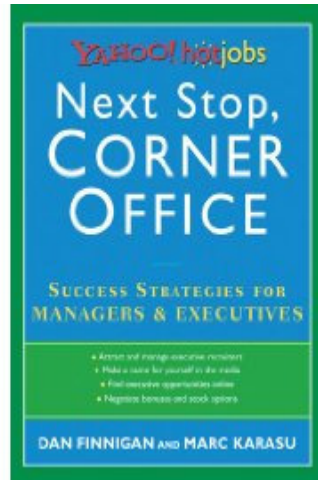
Dan has spent his career launching and growing Internet businesses with a focus on the recruitment market. Previously, Dan served as Senior Vice President of Yahoo! and General Manager of Yahoo! HotJobs, doubling revenue between 2002 and 2007. At Yahoo, Dan established Yahoo and HotJobs' partnership with a consortium of over 700 newspapers, today representing 41 percent of total Sunday circulation in the U.S.



From creation of Super Bowl television commercials to Google adword media buys, from brand architecture to digital strategy Marc Karasu has proven hands-on brand, media, and digital marketing experience and a resume that includes some of the world's most well known and admired brands. He is regularly quoted in industry publications including the New York Times, Advertising Age, AdWeek and BrandWeek, among others. Marc also co-authored and published three books on careers under the Yahoo! publishing banner.

Next Stop, Corner Office

Success Strategies for Managers & Executives



Authors: Dan Finnigan and Marc Karasu
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■ The Big Idea

You've put in the time. You've exceeded your quotas, launched top-selling products, managed difficult people under impossible deadlines, and boosted the bottom line. It's time for all your hard work to finally pay off. Whether you're looking to move up in your current organization, take the helm someplace new, or find the perfect position after a period of unemployment, you're ready to assume the high-paying, high-level position you deserve.

You're no newcomer to the game of job hunting. You need advice tailored to your unique needs. The experts at Yahoo! HotJobs – the most trusted destination for job seekers and hiring companies on the Web – have created a job-hunting guide specifically for you.

Why You Need This Book

Packed with tips from successful business leaders and essential facts and resources, this book will help you advance your career and achieve the recognition you've earned.

THE MARK OF LEADERSHIP

What are the most important leadership qualities? The answer largely depends on whom you're asking. As far as those you will lead are concerned, polls have found that the most important qualities are things like honesty, character, and integrity. On the other hand, those you will report to – whether it's the company CEO or a board of directors – want somebody with vision, a proven performance record, and the ability to handle a crisis.

So where do the following qualities fit in?

- Creativity
- Knowledge
- Initiative
- Risk-taking
- Collaboration
- Accountability
- Forcefulness
- Flexibility
- Persistence
- Innovation
- Adaptability
- Optimism

- Experience
- Problem-solving ability
- Communicative skills
- Confidence
- Drive
- Motivational ability

These traits – and others – all play roles in effective leadership. Want to enhance your attractiveness as a corner-office candidate? You'll need to work on developing all of the above skills and more, focusing the greatest attention on those qualities you believe will pay the biggest dividends in your particular job search.

CHALLENGES MET

If you stay aware of the challenges you'll face as your job search proceeds, you should be able to survive the ordeal in good shape. It will take a long time. It will expose areas of your life (both professional and personal) that you'd rather forget but can't afford to ignore.

It will foster feelings of inadequacy in your abilities (particularly as the process becomes more drawn out and arduous). In the end, however, successfully negotiating all these hurdles could leave you positioned exactly where you want to be – atop the short list of candidates for the leadership position you've coveted for a long time. Once you receive the key to your new office, you'll find that all of the above unpleasantness will have been worth it.

MATCHMAKER, MATCHMAKER, MAKE ME A MATCH

By now, you may be asking yourself, "How do I get an executive recruiter of my very own?" To paraphrase an ancient proverb: You do not find him. He finds you.

If recruiters aren't contacting you, you need to grab their attention. The most effective way to do this is simply to become better known in your field. As your visibility increases, your chances of attracting the interest of a recruiter will increase as well.

To increase your visibility, try some of these strategies. In addition to gaining the attention of executive recruiters, many of these tactics may get you noticed by key decision makers in your current organization, if you're presently employed.

Your Action	Possible result
Publish papers in an industry trade magazine.	Good recruiters are very knowledgeable about the industry. Your name atop an impressive article could be all it takes to get you noticed.
Speak at conferences or, at the very least, take part in panel discussions.	While a recruiter may not attend the conference, it won't hurt to have your name (and, along with it, your biography and qualifications) listed on the conference Web site and printed materials handed out to conference attendees.
Make yourself available to local/national media as a source of information in your industry.	This is free publicity! Plus, you may be surprised at how quickly your name becomes identified with your field of work. Media outlets have launched entire careers for "experts" who were unknown until they were tapped over and over again as "knowledgeable sources" about their industries.
Diversify yourself by broadening your skills base.	CEOs (even corporate VPs) wear many hats and respond to a variety of shareholder concerns. Prove that you are capable of handling everything thrown at you. If your entire career has been in sales, try your hand at marketing. If you've spent many years in operations, it wouldn't hurt to add budgeting to your skills.
Increase your network of professional colleagues.	Word of mouth goes a long way in helping a recruiter find you. Recruiters are in the people business, and they have a wide range of contacts. If your name keeps popping up in their conversations, you'll have no trouble attracting one.
Join every professional organization for which you qualify – and take a	This works for many of the reasons already specified above. As a plus, it

leadership role in one or two of them.	also shows that you are passionate about (or at least dedicated to) your field, and concerned about the possible direction in which it is headed. The key: Don't just join. Lead.
Self-promote.	Many people have a hard time with this concept, no doubt as a result of no-nonsense upbringings aimed at ensuring humility. Blame your parents later. For now, recognize that it's okay to blow your own horn, as long as you can back it up.

FOCUSING ON SOFT SKILLS

Hard skills involve a mastery of concrete tasks. However, it's the soft skills that most accurately predict your future success as a leader. You can be a tremendously polished public speaker, but if you can't effectively communicate with those around you – and get them to buy into your vision – you won't be a productive leader.

Here's a sampling of some soft skills you should be acquiring as you inch your way toward the corner office:

- **Quiet confidence.** This has a double meaning. You should project an air of calm, collected self-assurance regardless of how dire a situation may get. If you do, you will instill a quiet confidence in the people around you that things are not as bad as they seem – as long as you're in charge.
- **Team-building and consensus-building.** It's so much easier to lead when those being led want to follow. Avoid the "my way or the highway" stance; instead, strive to convert the nonbelievers to your way of thinking. If you get them to buy into your plan, you've paved a smooth path towards your objective.
- **Communication.** Every person on your team needs to feel as if he or she is "in the loop" at all times. Make it a point to let those around you know exactly what's happening, as soon as it's happening. Uncertainty breeds fear, and fear breeds paranoia. Paranoia, in turn, breeds paralysis and divisiveness. And no company wants those.

- **Attention to detail.** This is not the same thing as micromanaging. Very few staff members appreciate being micromanaged, because it makes them feel as if they aren't trusted to do their jobs or to make responsible decisions. Know what those around you are doing, but trust them to do it right and hold them accountable for producing results.
- **Diplomacy.** You are free to dislike anyone and despise every aspect of the workplace around you. However, keep it to yourself if you want to get ahead.
- **Creative problem solving.** Otherwise known as "thinking outside the box." Times change, and so, too, do solutions. Cultivate the capacity to find innovative ways out of challenging situations.
- **Motivational ability.** You can't fake this on a long-term basis; without results, even your most gung-ho attitude will soon fall on deaf ears. The best way to increase your knack for motivating people is to develop the other soft skills previously listed. Most staff members will be motivated to follow a leader they believe in.

QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD (AND SHOULDN'T) ASK

Interviews are dialogues, not inquiries. Yes, you are the star attraction, and most questions are directed toward you. But remember: You're also expected to pose some questions of your own.

However, you can't simply dive headlong into a cross-examination. There's an art to handling this aspect of the interview:

Rule # 1: Never, Ever Bring Up Salary

There is a proper time for talking about your compensation package, and that time isn't now. A time will come – after they've determined that you're the right person for the job – when compensation becomes a primary topic. It's not a topic for the interview process, and it's your job to make sure that it doesn't become one.

Rule # 2: Get a Realistic Lay of the Land

Find out what the expectations are, because it will help you determine if the job is a good fit for you.

Rule # 3: Show Them What You Know

Ask questions that demonstrate your knowledge of the company and its mission. This is a golden opportunity for you to show your interest in taking a leadership role in the company; the worst sin you can commit is to passively answer questions and offer nothing in return.

WIN THEIR HEARTS AND MINDS

Whether you've entered a good or bad situation doesn't really matter once you're installed as the new leader. You'll have your share of naysayers and critics, no matter what the circumstances are, and you should be extremely surprised if you don't.

The idea of small successes is worth repeating: Plan to accomplish something, and then accomplish it. These achievements will be building blocks for more important successes down the road. More important, you'll win converts over to your side.

This is where "eating the elephant" comes into play. The answer to the well-known riddle "How do you eat an elephant?" offers sound advice. Take things one bite at a time, and celebrate the fact that it's one less bite to worry about as you move forward. Eat the elephant by grappling with individual problems rather than groups of problems. Here are some of the benefits of this approach:

- *It will help you get a better grasp of your staff's capabilities.*
- *Results, however small, will occur more quickly.*
- *Employees will tackle a single problem more eagerly than a lengthy to-do list of items that need attention.*

Adopt a positive attitude to achieve your goals, even if it goes against your "taskmaster" nature. Remember: you're in the early stages of elephant-eating; negative reinforcement will cause your employees to focus on the size of the beast that remains to be eaten instead of the forkfuls that they've already consumed.

Be generous in your praise for accomplishments, no matter how small they are. Be cautious in your criticism over setbacks, and never criticize publicly. If you must reprimand someone, do it in private and as diplomatically as possible (try offering an alternative solution), and follow up to ensure eventual success.

As your success rate grows, you will find it easier to increase the demands you place on your employees. They will see that not only do you have a plan in place, but it's actually working. The elephant is growing smaller. Success not only breeds more success, it breeds believers – and a team full of believers will perpetuate the cycle of success.

ON YOUR WAY

One final thought, as you plunge forward into your new leadership role: Your first executive position likely will not be your last. Make your mark. If, having done that, you discover that your position will last a lifetime, savor your extraordinary good fortune. If not, remember that most leadership positions last less than five years – and virtually all leaders move up in their careers.

You've worked hard to get to where you are, and you deserve to enjoy the fruits of your labor. But avoid growing stagnant. Continue to grow professionally and evaluate where you are as opposed to where you want to be. If you've made it this far, you should feel confident that you have much to offer any organization.

Never stop striving for fulfillment, professionally and personally.

Good luck!
