

27<sup>th</sup> June 2015

One of the new items I found worth noting this week is that oil companies that are drilling shale plays in the US are having to pay large amounts as interest payments for the money they have borrowed. With oil prices plummeting by 45% in the last 8 months, the interest payments for these oil companies are eating into their shrinking revenue. By the end of the first quarter this year, according to one estimate, the debt for these oil companies has risen to \$235 billion. So, an interesting question here is, for how long will this last?

In other gossip, a topic that will be of interest to some of the youngsters is about *moving up the ladder*.

We all like to rise up the ladder in our careers, whether it is in the same company that we are working in or by switching companies. The latter is more common in the west. Of course the job market in India has also changed over the last three decades. Earlier, getting a job in the public sector was attractive. With the liberalization or globalization that has taken place in India, the private sector has now become more lucrative and competitive. Whatever the types of jobs, employees love to get promotions. The two types of promotions are, those that are time-bound (based on seniority), and others that are decided on merit. In the public sector this has been the norm, but in the private sector, the focus is different. Private companies can relax company procedures in the interest of business and operate efficiently. But the one big difference is that they employ people who can deliver or succeed under different circumstances, who are supposed to be smart at their work, and excel in their positions. Such companies have a short pyramid type of an organizational structure in place of a hierarchical one. How can employees make themselves suitable candidates for promotions, so that they rise up the ladder fast? There are few things that some youngsters today like to do and for good reason. But before we go ahead and discuss some of the things that could be helpful here, let me say this:

The first and foremost thing an employee can do is to make himself/herself worthy of the position he/she is working in. This implies developing technical competency in what is being done, developing communication skills, and carrying out the assigned work in a responsible and accountable manner. In geophysics, one can strive to keep learning the technical stuff and become good at it, meet other colleagues and engage in technical discussions, learn to write and publish some of the performed work, or talk about it at Conventions or workshops. All this requires time and effort, but the ambitious folks work hard so as to achieve this in the shortest time possible, by putting in their best foot forward as far as the effort part is concerned. Once that is achieved, then the playing level gets raised, as everyone else may not do all that.

- From here on the employees seeking some reward promotions look for what it is that could take them to the next level. In fact, this should always be a habit.
- For the next level what it is that this employee is lacking, and that is pursued vigorously.

- Such employees could identify work that could demonstrate their organizational skills, apart from their technical competency. Much of this effort could be voluntary for which one has to be mentally prepared.
- If one or more positions now come up within the company, such shining employees become prime candidates for promotion.
- In case such promotion opportunities do not exist, then employees with potential and ambitious drives like to explore outside the company, and find a challenging opportunity for channelizing their energy.

Needless to mention, one has to develop a passion for one's job, which will never come if the job is considered a duty for which one has to come to office at 9:30 am and stay there till 5:30 pm. An employee who is passionate about his/her job will automatically become dedicated. Private sector companies love to employ such people and will go out of their way to retain them and encourage them.

One small but more professional initiatives that I have seen around lately is that of youngsters preparing infographic resumes for their next job. These are one-page resumes that employ graphics to summarize their complete bio-data. Somewhere on such a resume they do mention that more information/detail can be sought by contacting them. I have noticed such efforts giving the candidates more visibility than others.

So, to sum up, your *credentials* are the first important requirement that you bring to the table. Next is *credibility* that you will gain through your work, and finally *visibility* that you have to earn through your communication channels.

This in my mind is the path up the ladder to success.

More next week. Stay well and happy.

Nirmal Arjun

Hi chopra....the concept of infographic resume seems a new trend. Can it apply in most cases or in some specific cases only? Public sectors provide footboards to greenhorns to gain experience and take lateral /diagonal jumps to higher positions of responsibilities. This can alone address quicker rise along career ladder. Competency stands at the core but it must mean demonstrated ability to deliver the product with an attitude to passionately honing up the skills in time and space. Networking and visibility have to be understood in the spirit you have outlined in the scalability and marketability of the skills and abilities of the candidates. In the softer skillsets, trustworthiness, integrity, loyalty, character, morality and ethics are silent drivers of hard skills that shall always be pivotal. Abilities to respond to and account for challenging circumstances shall be the defining elements of a responsible and accountable candidate. Today there seems to be a growing downtrend of morality and ethics in business and professional pursuits. what's your observation?

Hello Arjun,

I cannot agree with you more in terms of the softer skill sets you mention. Besides that, to build one's integrity in the industry one has to function with morality and ethics in what is in the interest of the employer company. However, if this path of morality and ethics seems to deviate for some reason, then it should signal trouble. In North America, to be called a professional geophysicist, one has to obtain registration/certification with the provincial or state governing bodies. For example in Alberta we have an Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta (APEGA) that certifies practicing engineers and geoscientists. In Alberta, anyone practicing geophysics cannot call himself/herself a geophysicist unless that person is a member of APEGA. Similarly in Houston there is this Texas Board of Professional Geoscientists (TBPG). Such memberships ensure that the members act professionally and if any instance of unethical practice is reported, the member is blacklisted and that can virtually be the end of a practicing career. I am for these kinds of practices.

With regard to loyalty of the employee to the employer company, it was the norm several years ago. Now it is different and an individual is supposed to take charge of where his/her career is going. If it is getting stagnant or is not growing/evolving, then there is no harm in making a change. The same is true of the oil companies. Today if the company is doing well, it needs the services of employees. Tomorrow if it is not doing well, it needs to downsize it will let the people go. That is the way it works in the oil industry, or may be outside the national oil companies.

I hope this answers your questions.

Sorry, I forgot to mention about the infographic resumes. The idea originated from the IT industry, but is now being used by many others. I have seen a couple of such resumes by geophysicists, and I like the idea of making all the information concise and put just on one page.

*Good Morning Chopra.* Thanks for your views. It is already accepted and accommodated in my horizon of perception. But I continue with my observation 'morality & ethics are on the slide and this is going to cause more & more disaster.....' You are possibly aware that in the follow up of economic recession in 2008 following sub-prime loans etc. in which great American Institutions were involved, the B-schools came out with a kind of ethical code at par with Hippocratic oaths in Medical profession. That reflected on the acceptance of this downtrend amongst the great business professionals. Hard skills have natural technical limits but soft skills as such have no limits though it is very essential to constrain it for a greater interest of the society. Today whatever corruption is being talked about is nothing but an ill effect of this downtrend in value perceptions. I don't confine my observations in G&G where aberrations, if any are parts of ignorance or factors not necessarily of this sliding trend alone. This is an issue that can't be brought on negotiation table. So there comes various codifications, policies, frameworks, regulatory bodies etc. Hope you disagree now to agree later, may be, disagreeably

on further deliberations and introspections. Anyway thanks.... continue to provide food for thoughts.....

Good morning, Arjun,

No, I was not disagreeing with you on any count. I was restricting myself to the geosciences of course, but that is not to say that no unethical practices are happening. Sometimes, the ones that are reported, do show up, but there may be others that go unreported. But otherwise also, I guess, value perceptions are slowly going downhill and you have elaborated on them as well.

So much for now.