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Strong managerial and professional hiring ahead

By Cheryl Silver, Career Source

A recent survey forecasts continued strength in the hiring of mid-management and professional level personnel for a broad array of industries.

The survey is the latest in a series of semi-annual hiring projection surveys conducted by Management Recruiters International (MRI), an Ohio-headquartered firm with several offices in the Atlanta area. According to the survey, 52.5 percent of the 4,900 executives surveyed plan to increase their mid-to upper management and professional hiring. This projection comes on the heels of the 49.6 percent increase projected for the first half of 1997.

Of the latest projections, Alan R. Schenberg, president of MRI, said, "These new hire projections are the highest we've seen in more than 16 years of polling. I believe they are a true reflection of today's economy. Opportunities have never been greater for managers and professionals, and in my opinion, there are not yet any signs of diminishing out there."

Although the percentage of executives fore-

casting additional hiring was highest in the Mid-Atlantic region at 69.9 percent, hiring projections were over 45 percent for all regions of the country. Commenting on the regional data, Schenberg said, "What stands out most significantly is that the employment situation is strong in every region of the country. There is literally no weak spot."

Planned hiring appears to be strong in a broad cross section of industries as well. Telecommunications and information technology executives forecast the highest levels of new hires at 74.7 percent and 70.6 percent respectively. Not far behind were the pharmaceutical, construction and retail trade industries where over sixty percent of the companies surveyed projected increased hiring of management and professional level staff. Even industries farther down the list are planning relatively high levels of increased hiring: from financial services to health care, more than forty percent of the executives in twelve other industries, reported plans to add management and professional staff during the next six months.

Of these findings, Schenberg said, "An

industry increase of even 40 percent is a buoyant increase. With but three exceptions, the range from that substantial level to almost 75 percent in the telecommunications industry." Reflecting on the pace and intensity of hiring generally in the information technology (IT) arena, Schenberg added, "What is going on today in the entire information technology arena is not to be believed. It is a frenzied area with tens of thousands of unfilled positions."

Larry Cooper, general manager of the corporate office of MRI and Sales Consultants of Atlanta, is seeing the same trends highlighted by the survey in the positions he's being asked to fill. "Demand right now is better than we've ever seen it," said Cooper. "The problem now isn't finding enough job orders. It's finding enough qualified candidates to fill all the positions we have."

Matt Albanese, president of MRI of Glendora, California specializes in recruiting logistics and supply chain management personnel. Albanese says he's seen consistently high demand in that field across a broad range of industries for the last eighteen

months. "In fact, we've seen a wave develop off," he said. "First you start seeing growth in the hiring of engineering and lower management staff. Now, we're seeing that wave moving toward middle and upper management."

Albanese also noted that MRI colleagues around the country who recruit for other fields have told him this is the strongest hiring trend they've seen in ten years. As to what's fueling the hiring, Cooper commented, "Companies feel confident about growing and companies that slipped down are now hiring. Some demand is also coming from start-up companies, particularly in the technology area."

With qualified candidates hard to come by in many industries, Cooper added, "High-skilled candidates are worth more now than they ever have been." Indeed, he says salaries are on the rise for those with proven records of success in their fields.

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Work Wise®: Humor contributes to management effectiveness

By Mildred L. Culp, Passage Media

Office cut-ups, appearing adolescent or childish, rarely gain respect because of their obvious insecurity. But managers with a non-offensive sense of humor can go a long way in the workplace, according to research by Wayne D. Decker, Professor of Management at Purdue School of Business, Salisbury State University, Salisbury, Maryland. Analysis of 359 questionnaires returned from 217 men and 135 women (7 didn't mention their gender) of the Business School's alumni reflected that, both for men and women, humor contributes to effective management. Decker discovered that, among the alumni, men used humor more than women. They seemed to have a greater sense of humor, enjoying and telling jokes of all kinds—non-offensive, insulting or sexual. Men also seemed to respond to various forms of humor more than women did. They laughed more at humor in advertisements, disparaging remarks against enemies, insulting jokes and sexual jokes. In the arena of racist and sexist humor, men didn't become offended as easily as women did.

Decker also found that women tend to be overly sensitive or humorless? No. They just laugh at other forms of humor. Decker found that by comparison with men, women enjoyed what he calls

"nonsense or absurd humor," as well as self-deprecating humor. However, women 25 years and older apparently didn't like the use of sexual humor by supervisors, but younger women and men didn't seem to mind. Overall, male supervisors seemed to create environments with more humor, often discussing information about work with humor.

Humor may not appear to have a role in today's fast-paced workplace, because it can be viewed as a time-waster. However, studies have shown that humor contributes to good health. It reduces stress, gives a breather from pressing issues, even provides perspective on sometimes difficult, complex issues. In other words, non-offensive humor improves health.

Offensive humor can be another matter. Sexist or racist jokes can get you and your employer in trouble, even if the recipient isn't offended. (Someone else may be.) In addition, such jokes cloud over the workplace, perpetuating a tradition of denigrating others at their own expense.

Clearly, humor has its place at work. Decker's research showed that it's particularly beneficial to women supervisors, who he perceived as better leaders if they use it. Overall, however, it makes work easier.

Whether you're a man or woman, supervisor

or employee, you can clearly improve your mood and your work, if you use humor. People will enjoy working with you more, they'll feel that they, too, can brighten the atmosphere when it needs it; and you'll be diminishing the stress level of everyone around you.

The safest jokes you can tell are ones aimed at yourself rather than another person, who may be overly sensitive and may find your humor offensive, one particularly overscheduled and free-wheeling busy business owner says every morning by referring to himself as "The Late Mr. X."

The remark always gets a chuckle and evades tension. Marshall Hryciuk of Toronto's MHW Distribution, a book distributor company, said that self-deprecating humor has little sense of humor about themselves, because they identify too closely with what they think, believe and possess. "They also lack self-confidence."

But beware of using this kind of humor if you haven't established your competence with the people at work, either because you're new at the organization or working on a new project that is overwhelming you. You don't want people to believe that you're incompetent at your self-deprecating humor may suggest.

Avoid insulting humor, whether you're a man

or woman. Remarks that jab at put others people off. However, if someone else is too seriously, take this as an opportunity to depersonalize the humor. Focusing humor on work can redirect the sword before the situation becomes untidy.

Not all humor has to be spoken. Be careful about silent imitations of people. What you may think humorous, another may not. Imitating a person can draw a wedge between the two of you when you were really trying to cement a relationship.

If the last time you told a funny story or a joke was a year ago, or if you habitually tell jokes that other people don't "get" or think cruel, look around for someone with an excellent sense of humor to emulate. Then, practice. Join Toastmasters, where you can be open about your inability to communicate with humor, and receive solid feedback as your skill improves. you may find that just being in comfortable surroundings brings out the sense of humor you thought you didn't have.

Dr. Mildred Culp, author of *Be Work Wise: Retooling Your Work for the 21st Century*, is a syndicated columnist and radio commentator.

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