

Executive **EDGE**

WANTED: BUSINESS "BONE BREAKERS"

Companies seeking effective managers should look for candidates who can make big, painful decisions. Marketing, technological, and other skills are secondary. What is needed most is the character trait that enables managers to lay off workers and close factories.

So claim Adrian J. Slywotzky and David J. Morrison of Management Decisions of Boston. The two consultants see the 1990s as a revolutionary era, a time in which corporate leaders must always be prepared to change, not just details, but the basic design of their businesses.

But few managers have a talent for "breaking bones," Slywotzky and Morrison say. That is the reason why, during a single 18-month period in the early 1990s, the CEOs of General Motors, IBM, Westinghouse, American Express, and Kodak suddenly lost their jobs. Although talented in other ways, they could not make the hard decisions their companies needed most.



Michael Jensen, an economist currently studying human behavior at Harvard, believes he knows why most managers fail to make the tough calls. Rational most of the time, humans are gripped during periods of stress by what Jensen calls the Pain Avoidance Model (PAM) of behavior. PAM, Jensen says, is a chemical reaction in the brain that causes threatened people to focus almost

entirely on survival. In such a state of mind, most managers behave just like other people. They cannot learn from their errors. And, obsessed with avoiding psychic pain, they cannot think about "breaking bones."

To recruit those who can, companies should look for managerial candidates who function well in PAM-inducing situations—handling personnel problems, for instance. Or companies could train managers to deal with PAM by placing them in artificially created crises; Campbell Soup forces its leaders to buy large amounts of company stock, even if it means

borrowing money to do so.

In any case, an ability to withstand PAM should be a highly prized trait in a managerial candidate, especially since the business revolution is likely to last at least another decade.

From Geoffrey Colvin, "The Most Valuable Quality in a Manager," Fortune, December 1997, pp. 279-280.

WAVING YOUR OWN FLAG

To many the idea of self-promotion for career advancement sounds distastefully self-aggrandizing. But in these days of pared-down organizations in which everyone is working to the limit, you cannot assume your accomplishments will always be noticed by others. It is up to you to carry your own career banner.

The art of self-promotion is tricky, however. The object is not to boast, but to make sure your contributions and skills are noticed in an appropriate way. It can help to use a basic public-relations approach: Define your objectives, what message you want to send, who you intend to reach, and the best channels to use to get your message across.

If your goal is to establish yourself as a company spokesperson or industry expert, for example, consider joining business and trade groups and taking on committee positions or officer

posts. Such credentials can help establish your credibility as a commentator.

Writing is another avenue you can take. Writing books and trade-publication articles will help bring your name to the attention of others in your field. Even letters to the editor on industry issues will help establish you as an expert. Don't overlook in-house publications, whose readership includes the people whose notice can be the most valuable to you.

The key to successful self-promotion is to make sure your efforts are supported by solid accomplishments. Getting ahead is not a matter of politicking and positioning; it is a matter of real contributions.

From Hal Lancaster, "How to Make Sure You Get Noticed but Not Seem Pushy," The Wall Street Journal, February 23, 1998, p. B1.