

A Search With No Surprises

BY PAUL POMPEO

In a recent column, I wrote about ways for companies to get the most out of working with executive search firms. This month, we flip the coin and offer some suggestions to candidates on how to best utilize a search firm. Here are four pieces of information that a search firm should know about a candidate *before* he or she accepts an interview:

1. Your reason(s) for leaving your company/companies. Search firms don't like surprises. If you've been laid off by a company, it's best to "tell it like it is." It may feel better to say that you chose to leave, or you felt frustrated by a lack of advance-

If you've been laid off by a company, it's best to 'tell it like it is'

ment potential, but if you were laid off from the lighting ballast manufacturer or electrical design firm for whom you worked, call it straight and let your headhunter know. And there is strength in numbers to some degree, especially for technical people. For example, if you're on the engineering or manufacturing side and your company closed a plant and/or division, providing statistics as to the number of people laid off at the same time can help

a recruiter support your case that the decisions were based more on company issues than (your) individual performance (or lack thereof).

2. What makes you so special?

Probably many things, but the more you share these achievements with your recruiter, the more it helps a recruiter present you to the hiring company. Professional, documentable, measurable achievements are most helpful in this area. If you're the national sales manager for a solid-state lighting manufacturer, talking about your *specific* sales increases or the accounts you've secured (and the results in actual sales) has more impact than saying you have a great

network of rep agency relationships throughout the country. Don't get me wrong, the latter is important, but it carries more weight when backed by the former.

3. Compensation.

Be candid. Candidates with little experience working with headhunters (and/or candidates in their first job out of college) may be taken aback by some of the personal information they're asked to share with an executive recruitment professional—

especially the first time. Two things that can be the most difficult to share with a seeming stranger are the details of compensation (base and incentive/bonus, if applicable) and the reason for leaving a job.

Being truthful about compensation is important. Candidates often give a very broad sense of actual compensation and/or even sometimes inflate the figure to position themselves for the best possible offer.

However, this can work to a candidate's detriment for a couple of reasons. First, you want a recruiter to present you in the most effective way possible. If the compensation history you're providing a search firm is inconsistent (remember the old saying that the problem with lying is it makes it hard for you to keep your story straight), it can cause concerns (from a potential company and your search firm) as to your veracity—not a good thing. Second, lies can catch up to a person. Some companies in their background check or reference process will try to verify a candidate's compensation history. Giving false information during the application and/or interview process can be grounds for termination in many companies.

4. Have you double-dipped? If a recruiter approaches you about interviewing with a company that you've already contacted, let the recruiter know immediately. Whether it was an interview you had at the company four months ago, that call you put into a manager that wasn't returned, contact with another search firm about a position with the company or one that sounds identical—let the recruiter know then and there. It


doesn't make you (or the search firm) look good to be "double-presented" to the same company. The recruiter may wrongly appear to be trying to "pull a fast one" in presenting you to a company where your name has already been put in play. And it can make your name a "commodity," leaving the impression that your résumé is out everywhere and leading to assumptions (rightly or wrongly) that you're either out of work or desperate to make a change. Neither is a good impression to convey to a potential employer.

DON'T WITHHOLD

The bane of the recruiter's existence is surprise—information deliberately or accidentally withheld that a search professional should know upfront in order to best represent you to a potential employer. The more you can minimize those surprises, the more effective a search firm will be in assisting the move up to the next step in your lighting career.



Paul Pompeo is principal with The Pompeo Group, an executive recruiting firm in the lighting and electrical industry working on a global basis with both lighting companies and design firms. He is past president of the IES Rio Grande section. He can be reached at paul@pompeo.com or through the TPG website, www.pompeo.com.



LD+A
FOR BACK ISSUES
 Call Leslie Prestia
 212-248-5000
 ext 111

It is difficult to pick up a newspaper without finding an article on health or healthcare. In regards to healthcare, the one thing that we should all be able to agree on is that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. For most people over age 65, their healthcare is provided by Medicare. To control the cost of this program, we should all be motivated to promote an agenda of prevention.

How can we help? One big way is by bringing forth the importance of providing the quantity and quality of light to support an aging population. This includes light for vision and adequate light exposure for seniors to ensure that their photobiological needs are met. In doing so, we might prevent falls, reduce hip fractures and improve sleep disorders. This would have a huge impact on the quality of life and independence for seniors, and may help to keep Medicare costs from skyrocketing.

The quantity and quality of light might help prevent falls, reduce hip fractures and improve sleep disorders

As the eye ages, the pupil gets smaller and light is absorbed all along the visual pathway. As a result, by age 60, only 1/3 of the light reaches the retina as compared to what occurs for those in their 20's. Older eyes are much more sensitive to glare than younger eyes and adapt much more slowly to changes in brightness. Light scatter within the eye results in a loss of contrast sensitivity. Therefore, older eyes require higher light levels without glare, uniform lighting and greater contrast in the visual environment.

PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

Falls. Impaired vision is an important risk factor for falls. In an assessment of fall hazards in the home, dim lighting, shadows and glare were found in 44 percent of the rooms. Improving the lighting in all rooms, and especially the stairway, is an important safety measure.

So who is at risk? One in three adults 65 and older fall each year; and 30 percent of those will suffer moderate to severe injuries. The risk of being seriously injured in a fall increases with age. Due to the growth of the older population, the annual direct and indirect cost of fall injuries is expected to reach \$55 billion per year by 2020, up from \$19 billion in 2000, according to the Center for Disease Control.

Hip Fractures. A possible remedy for limiting hip fractures is to improve lighting while adding a dose of sunlight. The rate of fall-related hip fractures is higher for those with reduced depth perception and low-contrast visual acuity. Providing adequate light and value contrast will help to mitigate these problems. In addition, greater direct exposure to sunlight containing ultraviolet B (UVB) for vitamin D synthesis has been shown to reduce fractures if a fall does occur.

As mobility declines, so does exposure to sunlight. However, a study in Japan reported that with just 15 minutes per day of sunlight exposure on face and hands during clear weather (averaging 236 days per year), elderly subjects in the experimental group had 84 percent fewer hip fractures than the control group, even though both groups experienced a similar number of falls. It should be noted that during the winter months at latitudes above 37 deg, UVB radiation is not strong enough to drive the synthesis of vitamin D. A winter vacation in the sunbelt might be justified as hip-fracture prevention.

Former U.S. surgeon general Dr. Richard Carmona warned that by 2020, one in two Americans over the age of 50 will be at risk for fractures from osteoporosis or low bone mass. His recommendations to decrease the likelihood of developing osteoporosis and preventing falls included getting adequate amounts of calcium and vitamin D and improving lighting. His call to action states, "Everyone has a role to play in improving bone health,

and this report is a starting point for national action. Let's take action today in homes, health care settings and communities across our nation."

Circadian Rhythm Disruption. The prescription here is bright light by day and darkness at night. Without sufficient exposure to bright light during the day for entrainment (stimulation) of the biological clock, older people experience a high degree of circadian disruption, problems with sleep being the most observable aspect.

Sleep disorders are a problem for many older people; in fact, only 20 percent of older people report that they have no sleep problems. The age-related changes to the eye that reduce the light on the retina impact both vision and circadian rhythm. In addition, the age-related changes to the body clock require a stronger light input. As people age and their mobility decreases, they experience less bright daylight which adds to the problem. Long-term use of sleeping pills or other pharmacological treatments are not recommended for older people in that they contribute to mobility problems and daytime drowsiness—all risk factors for falls.

Among individuals with dementia, age-related circadian dysfunction is more severe. When people are placed in a nursing home their light exposure diminishes significantly during the day from that of people living in the community and studies indicate that institutionalized dementia patients receive very little bright light. A common complaint in nursing homes is too much light and noise at night to promote a good night's sleep. With the combined problem of the disease, very little bright light exposure during the day, and light and noise at night, it is not surprising that they experience even greater problems.

A recent study in The Netherlands aiming to reactivate the biological clock of subjects with dementia randomizes the use of bright light (93 footcandles, measured in the direction of the gaze) during the day (9 AM-6 PM), and a low dose of melatonin before bedtime. The results were published in the leading clinical journal *JAMA* (2008;299:2642-55). A brighter environment reduced nocturnal restlessness by 9 percent per year; cognitive impairments by 5 percent; and depressive symptoms by 19 percent. Although melatonin without the bright light did improve sleep by 6 percent, it also increased agitation and withdrawal.

Subjects receiving both high light levels and melatonin did not experience the agitation and withdrawal, plus their sleep duration increased by an additional 2 percent for a total of 8 percent (37 minutes). The higher light levels improved the visual environment for performing activities of daily living, thus reducing the deterioration in functional abilities by 53 percent. Even though the improvement in cognition may seem modest, it compares well with pharmaceutical treatments designed to slow the progress of the disease.

HEALTH PER WATT

At the 2008 IES Annual Conference in Savannah, GA, Joan E. Roberts used the term health per watt, rather than lumen per watt, during her presentation on "Light Effects on Human Physiology," as the way we should be thinking about light and energy. When we consider all the ramifications of inadequate light and light exposure for older adults, plus the negative impact to their health and well being, it is hard to justify a one-size-fits-all approach to energy regulations. There is clearly more at stake than energy conservation. However, greater use of daylight is an energy-saving strategy and would be a good first step.

Those of us in the lighting industry should answer former surgeon general Dr. Carmona's call to action and vigorously promote lighting to support the health of older adults, including our own. Dr. Roberts referred to light as a drug; I just wish we had a fraction of the advertising budget of the pharmaceutical industry to promote the health benefits of light. But since we don't, we should try the grassroots method: write articles for your local newspapers, raise the issues at service clubs or community groups, but most of all talk with your friends and family.



Eunice Noell-Waggoner, LC, is president of the Center of Design for an Aging Society, a not-for-profit organization, dedicated to raise awareness of age-related issues and the role of the built environment in maximizing the abilities of older people. She serves on the IES Lighting for Aging and Partially Sighted Committee.