

[A LETTER FROM VAL]

## **5 Reasons to Start Hiring Now**

Dear Friends:

History is filled with examples of those who found success by zagging while others were stuck doing a zig. This is especially true at the tail end of recessions, where the forward-looking and bold have a rare opportunity to pick up everything—and yes, I do mean everything, from equipment and office space to other companies' customers and talent—on the cheap. Those who take advantage get the jump on the next upturn and are far better equipped to capitalize when it arrives, ready to focus on the needs of their clients instead of their own need to ramp up.

Though Mark Zuckerberg is only 25 and looks like he just started shaving, the founder and CEO of Facebook seems wise to this history. Over the past couple of months, Zuckerberg and Co. have reportedly been siphoning off talent from their industry and beyond, snaring people from Yahoo, Google, Six Apart, and Genentech, among others. As Zuckerberg succinctly explained to Bloomberg, "The recession presents an opportunity for [us] to scoop up talented engineers and managers."

Certainly this scooping opportunity exists in HR too. Talented people are on the sidelines. Many others are dissatisfied but hunkered down, waiting out bad situations because they're happy to get a paycheck in this economy even if they're unhappy with their current job. And if you're aggressive, they could be yours, filling crucial but empty slots on your org chart or replacing poor performers with whom you were willing to make do when talent was harder to find.

Still not convinced? Need me to spell it out for you? OK. Here are the 5 reasons why now is the time to beef up your HR team.

Reason 1: HR executives are on sale.

I've spoken to countless unemployed HR executives over the past year, and I've noticed an interesting trend: Last September, most were demanding compensation packages comparable to what they made at their last job. Fast-forward to 9 of '09, and these same top-tier execs are willing to take on new roles for 20 or 30 percent less. That makes them affordable even in today's tough times and gives you room to reward them with sizable merit-based bumps as the economy improves, thus gaining their loyalty and ensuring they stick around even after the job market loosens up.

Reason 2: HR executives are unhappy.

Here's another interesting trend I've gleaned from encounters with HR folk from across the nation: Many of those who are currently employed have had a miserable time during the downturn, and as a result have reevaluated their priorities. Job satisfaction now seems to have overtaken compensation as the leading factor in choosing their next role. For these folks, a new, happier environment—one where they didn't just preside over round after round of layoffs, or where they haven't had to spend the last year focused almost exclusively on efforts to boost employee morale—can be a big draw, even if it means a slightly lower salary.

Reason 3: The right people can save you so much they'll pay for themselves.

Fresh eyes can do wonders. New HR leaders can reevaluate all the ways you spend money on HR services and infrastructure, both directly and indirectly, without the baggage of your history. Their recommendations—be it renegotiating contracts to take advantage of today's economic realities, switching vendors entirely, or using new technologies to upgrade your HR service levels—can save you money that you can then put toward higher value items like training.

Reason 4: You'll have a huge head start when the market bounces back.

You may or may not have seen a pickup in your business quite yet, but most economists seem in agreement that we've either reached the bottom or are getting close, and that we should start to see real growth by the middle of 2010. Already, in many industries, once-formidable inventories are quickly being depleted, which means that production will soon have to ramp up. Greater production means more workers, and the need for more workers inevitably means more demands on HR. But while everyone else will still be busy trying to find good HR folks to handle their hiring, your cream-of-the-crop HR folks will already be in place finding cream-of-the-crop talent for the rest of the company.

Reason 5: Upgrading your team now can keep you from getting upgraded out of a job.

CEOs and executive teams are well aware of the glut of talent on the market today, and the smart ones are evaluating all of their departments and functions, looking for ways to improve. And trust me, if you're fed up with the performance of your team, chances are the bosses are too. So before they get the bright idea to clean house and start over, you need to beat them to the punch and start cleaning house yourself. Especially with key positions like Comp leaders and Directors/HR Business Partners, there's a huge difference between good performance and mediocre. Fix your problems now, and your internal clients will have a better chance of getting the support they need. If you don't, their dissatisfaction with one or more of your staffers might make you the one on the unemployment line.

This month, our executive search team would like to thank Robyn Meltzer of Otis Spunkmeyer and Ed Martin of Atheros for their referrals.

Take care,  
Valerie Frederickson

### **Ask Valerie**

Dear Valerie:

Lately I've been getting countless LinkedIn requests from people asking me to "introduce" them to other people in my network. I don't want to alienate these people, some of whom I've known for years, but I also don't want to alienate the rest of my network by bombarding them with introductions that likely won't help them at all. How should I respond to these requests?

- Between a Rock and a Hard Place

Dear Between:

Not trying to have a whose-problem-is-bigger contest, but let's just say that, given the work I do, I feel your pain and then some. I recently had someone I don't even know ask me for intros at 10 different companies. 10! I know that we're increasingly moving toward an It's-Who-You-Know world based on

social-networking connections, but c'mon, this is getting ridiculous. Unless these requests are coming from your best friend, feel free to treat them like spam.

Dear Valerie:

My entire HR team has been laid off, and I'm now a one-woman show. How should I prioritize HR initiatives?

- Last Woman Standing

Dear Standing:

Now that's a rock and a hard place. You're so busy doing recruiting, payroll, and answering benefits questions that you don't have time to add value in strategic areas. My suggestion is to outsource whatever you can, and to focus on training the department heads and other managers to be self-sufficient. Once that's done, you'll have a bit more time for value-adds; pick some key areas around strategic planning, performance management, or sales training—things that the executive team will notice and that give you the most bang for the buck.

Dear Valerie:

I finally got the budget to get my HR team together for a retreat, and after speaking to a couple of team members and consultants, I don't know how to prioritize the myriad issues we should deal with. Plus, some of the HR Business Partners from overseas don't speak enough English for us to do any meaningful team building. What are your tips for these types of meetings?

- Confused VP

Dear Confused:

You raise a lot of points, so let's take them one at a time. 1) First you've got to separate urgent from important and determine the outcomes you really need from the meeting. Is your HR Business Partner team performing at par? If not, and they are the problem, you can focus on training them and inspiring them. But what if you're the problem, or the system? Have you done an HR Audit lately? What were the results from your most recent 360? Once you get to the root of the problem, you'll have an easier time knowing what to address. 2) If you have team members whose English is really poor, that will hold back the entire team. ESL tutoring isn't expensive, and even a few sessions can make a difference in someone's ability to get her point across. Look into it before spending a bundle to fly people around the world. 3) No matter what language you speak, team building for the sake of team building is, pardon my French, merde. Come up with a relevant activity that has an outcome you can actually use, like HR Strategic Planning drilled down to individual accountabilities, and have this be the focus of the week.

- Valerie

### [VF&Co HR On Demand](#)

Would you like to have access to an at-a-glance feature of HR professionals who are pre-screened, pre-interviewed, highly motivated, and ready to go? Check our website for updated profiles on a variety of candidates from HR Managers and Vice Presidents of Human Resources to specialists in the areas of compensation, benefits, and M&A.

Candidate 210 – Senior Benefits Analyst

- Expertise in employee benefits with an insider knowledge and network of brokers and a true passion for employee wellness
- Experience in implementing and communicating HDHPs and HSAs
- Exposure to both self-funded and fully-insured programs

For more information on this candidate and to view the rest of this month's featured candidates, [click here](#).

### [HR Consultant & Contractors' Corner](#)

What's Up in HR At Successful Companies?

Each month you can check out what's critical to our clients by seeing what kinds of HR projects we're doing.

Cool Contracting & Consulting Assignments:

- **Ready, Aim...** Working with a mid-sized company's management team around focus and alignment of business and individual goals
- **Keeping Them Happy** Researching, preparing and delivering incentive compensation alternatives to very engaged board members
- **Fingers crossed** Providing interim VP of HR support to an exciting and growing company going for its next round of funding
- **Can I Take It Back** Helping a tech company bring their outsourced HR function back in-house at a lower cost and higher quality
- **Keeping the Seat Warm** Filling a seat on a major employer's compensation team to provide job grading and salary structure support
- **Help is At Hand** Working closely with a major Native American tribal organization to improve their support organizations' capabilities and performance
- **Door #1 or Door #2** Providing expertise to a major food chain company who are evaluating the self-funding/self-insured options
- **Gone But Not Forgotten** Providing career counseling to multiple employees as part of the company's restructuring program

Consultant/Contractor Alert! Sometime during the 4th Quarter, Valerie Frederickson & Company will be sponsoring an in-person and an online "open house" for HR professionals who are or interested in becoming contractors or consultants with our firm. This will give you a casual opportunity to meet our team and other interested or currently active contractors/consultants and share experiences. We will also discuss how we work, what it takes to be one of our team and how to move forward.

Keep reading the newsletter for details!

Needed an HR contractor yesterday? You will be guaranteed one qualified candidate within 24 hours, or two within 48 hours. This includes Compensation & Benefits, M&A, HRIS, OD, Generalist, and all other areas of expertise. All our contractors are personally supervised by Partner & Principal HR Consultant

James Holland and have access to our entire consulting staff and its resources. Immediate needs? Contact our HR Contracting Team at 650-614-0220 or [contracting@vfandco.com](mailto:contracting@vfandco.com).

### [Upgrade Your HR Team's Partnering Skills](#)

Training Module available for your in-house HR Team

This Business Partner stuff is really important! We have been bombarded with requests for private presentations of my award-winning How to Be an HR Business Partner presentation at internal HR meetings and internal global HR conferences.

You can now take advantage of a new service offering. Invite VF&Co on-site to train your staff in these valuable Business Partner skills. Specifically, we'll present four HR Business Partner case studies, and process through the strategy and skills needed to solve them.

For scheduling and copies of the handouts, contact Michele Li at [michele@vfandco.com](mailto:michele@vfandco.com) or 650.614.0220.

### [Current Executive Searches](#)

[Contractor] Staffing Director (Silicon Valley, CA)

A world renowned growing software company needs a staffing director to provide leadership for the company's staffing activities and manage the full-cycle recruiting process across multiple business units. This staffing executive will report to the head of Human Resources and will be the second-in-command within the HR organization. The ideal candidate will have a hands-on staffing background within high-technology companies. The abilities to multitask and to communicate at the executive-level are critical to succeed in this role. Experience in other areas of HR is highly preferred.

Compensation Manager (San Francisco, CA)

A rapidly-expanding high-technology company needs a compensation manager who will support the Director of Compensation & Benefits in developing, implementing, and supporting an international compensation system that will drive the organization's strategic objectives worldwide. The ideal candidate will have an extensive background in executive and international compensation practices and will be familiar with SEC regulations. Experience in sales compensation is desired.

HRIS Implementation-Compensation Specialist (Bay Area, CA)

An extremely large technology employer needs an HRIS implementation specialist with a compensation background. The role is responsible for supporting the Director of Compensation, Benefits & HRIS in the design, implementation, management and oversight of the HR Information System for this global company. The ideal candidate will have had experience in developing an efficient HRIS system and be extremely detail-oriented. Excellent communication skills and the ability to work closely with the IT department are essential.

Sales Lead Manager (Menlo Park, CA)

Valerie Frederickson & Company is looking for a Sales Lead Manager! This individual contributor will be responsible for direct and indirect sales of all products and services, business development efforts, and

customer relationship strategies. The acquisition of new customers and the development of leads while maintaining and expanding our ongoing relationships is a top priority. The successful candidate will have 3–5 years of proven history of success in B2B sales to senior–level executives. They should thrive in an independent yet team–oriented environment and should be able to sell independently with little supervision. Experience in selling consultative services in the HR, insurance and financial services sectors is highly preferred.

#### The Best of the Rest

Given the current difficult climate, we feel that it's imperative to do whatever we can to help companies find the best HR talent and to help everyone in the HR community find appropriate employment. So in that spirit, in addition to our own active searches, we've put together a list of the most interesting HR openings we know of today. Spread the word to your friend and colleagues, and of course, if you land one of these positions, please drop us a line and let us know!

#### Starbucks

Head of HR – Seattle, WA

#### VeriSign

Head of HR – Mountain View, CA

#### Yelp!

Vice President of HR – San Francisco, CA

#### GreenVolts

HR Director – San Francisco, CA

#### Sun Power

HR Director – Manila, Philippines

#### Cablevision

Vice President of HR & Administration – New York, NY

#### ProLogis

Vice President of HR, North America – Denver, CO

#### Sodexo

Vice President of Compensation & Benefits – Gaithersburg, MD

### **Industry Events**

#### 2009 Pacific West HR Conference

September 14–16, 2009 – Palm Springs, California

Join Valerie and the VF&Co team at the annual Southern California regional conference in beautiful Palm Springs. CEO Valerie Frederickson will be presenting on How to Become a Strategic HR Business Partner II, a follow-up to last year's popular The Emerging Role of the HR Business Partner. This is one of Valerie's favorite SHRM conferences because of all the charming and smart attendees. Plus, we can party in some cool swimming pools and have a good time the week before the twins come.

CIPD: Organisational Development Conference 2009

September 24, 2009 – London, United Kingdom

Organisations nationwide are recognising the benefits of OD. In times of change it's crucial that your organisation is flexible enough to respond to a changing business environment. OD has the power to transform the behaviours, attitudes and beliefs of your workforce. The CIPD Organisational Development Conference will focus on real life examples of OD at work offering expert insight and advice to all attendees.

Bangalore HR Summit 2009

December 18–19, 2009 – Bangalore, India

Hosted by the Institute of HRD, the Bangalore HR Summit is an international convention for Human Resources Professionals aimed at bringing together HR professionals, academics, researchers, and management professionals to deliberate on this year's theme Innovation in HRM. This two-day event will include presentations eminent speakers of national and international repute, who will share their expertise in enhancing organizational effectiveness through innovation in human resources management.