

[A LETTER FROM VAL]
The Year of the Career

Dear Friends:

Last week, as I walked back to my car in the pouring rain after lunch with someone from a public technology company that has come out of the recession quite well—one of many I've encountered recently, their stock price soaring and ready to start hiring again—I saw a huge white scratch and deep dent on my Lexus. It looked like someone had backed my car into the wall of a parking lot while also managing to sideswipe the rear panel. I started trying to figure out how this happened and how much it was going to cost to fix it, wondering if my day nanny did it when she took the babies to the pediatrician, or if the au pair did it when she borrowed the car to go meet her au pair buddies at the cafe. Then, to my profound relief, I realized that it wasn't my grey Lexus sedan, but another one parked in an entirely different row and facing a different direction. Yeah, it's 2:00 p.m. and I don't know where my car is. Yeah, I've got a lot on my mind these days.

What does this have to do with what I'm calling The Year of the Career? Think of it this way: Just as I narrowly avoided having to pay big bucks to the Lexus dealer to fix my car, you have probably avoided paying the price for your management missteps, blessed for the last couple of years with sky-high employee retention rates that masked all manner of ills. But before you break your arm patting yourself on the back, ask yourself this: Aren't you really tired of hearing HR executives taking credit for the low voluntary turnover rates at their companies these days, when everybody knows that turnover is so closely correlated with economic indicators such as consumer confidence and unemployment? To quote my ever-parsimonious controller, the basic philosophy of employee retention has been this: "You don't need to pay them bonuses. They should just be happy to have jobs."

Thankfully—at least for those of us who value people above all else—that's about to change. A study just revealed the most telling statistic I've seen in a long time: 36% of the gainfully employed top performers surveyed said they were looking for a new job. Yes, you read that right: 36%. An excellent article written by Scott Flander in *Human Resource Executive*, called "Recovery Bound," does a great job of synthesizing all the factors that are coming together to create the Big Bang that's about to shoot your low turnover rate to hell. Scott's research, and Deloitte's, and everyone else's, basically confirms a lot of what I talked about in my December newsletter: People are tired, pissed off, disengaged, and ready to move on. And in my opinion, the only thing that might convince them to stay put is good, old-fashioned career development.

Of course, in response to the ginormous game of Musical Chairs that corporate America seems sure to be playing this year, the large consulting firms are recommending the usual make-'em-happier stand-bys: increasing pay, conducting employee surveys, making sure managers are getting their performance reviews done, etc. In fact, one of my clients has concluded that all he'll need to keep the troops happy is for each manager to spend three hours a year with each direct report discussing their job performance. But I feel certain that, this time, it's not going to be that easy. The real problem is more existential: people are feeling unhappy, unappreciated, and unfulfilled. And no matter what path they're on, they're pretty sure they're on the wrong one. Take this call I received last week: "Valerie, my company's doing fine and my job's secure, but I really think that this is the year for me to make a change, so I wanted to call you and get started on a job search. No rush, but please let me know if anything interesting comes in." Now multiply it by a hundred or more, every week, and you'll have some sense of what I see coming down the pike.

So what does career development have to do with this, and why bring up existentialism? Because every time I try to tell my husband that our four-month-old twins have brought up existential issues for me and my career, he laughs it off and tells me to call Jean-Paul Sartre. But the truth is that when people have a choice, as they soon will, they choose to do work that they enjoy, work that fulfills them. The statements they make to themselves are existential ones: "I'm working 50+ hours a week, but I'm going nowhere. I'm working so damn hard, but I feel so unhappy. I don't care about the title or even the money—I just need to find a job that I'll enjoy that will pay me enough to take care of my family. I just want to contribute and keep learning."

For me, I've decided at age 46 that I want to be more hands-on, take on more consulting projects myself, because it will energize me and keep my brain fresh. I personally love consulting, especially executive coaching, career development discussions, compensation consulting, and closing candidates for searches, so I'm tweaking my role to allow me to do more of that. I'm also repositioning my firm for growth, which means a new corporate look, new product offerings, and moving our Menlo Park headquarters into a building I own, in addition to some other changes you'll be hearing about shortly.

Employees at all levels are now ripe, even desperate, for a little self-assessment and career guidance. My recommendation is to look at offering some form of career planning to your employees; to everyone if you can afford it, but at the very least your high performers. It doesn't have to be a full-blown program like the ones that Sun Microsystems and other large employers threw money at in the '90s, but it also shouldn't be something half-baked where overworked managers struggling to get their own jobs done are asked to put on yet another hat. Many organizations now seem ready to invest in training and retaining their employees, and I hope that, while they've got their checkbooks open, they revisit the old-fashioned yet novel idea of career development.

Here's a way to get some good ideas: Join us at the year's premier Corporate Leadership Development event hosted by the Korea IT Network. There are two highlights of this all-day event: an afternoon career management workshop worth thousands of dollars in private career coaching, and an evening panel of top executives from the most successful companies in technology discussing how you can revitalize and energize your team, and keep the best among them from walking out the door. You'll find the details for both events here.

Take care,
Valerie Frederickson

Ask Valerie

Dear Valerie:

I keep hearing that large companies like Google are hiring a lot of contract recruiters. Can you confirm this because they sure haven't gotten back to me? Have you seen a pick in your searches, too?
- HR candidate anxious to go back to work

Dear Anxious:

I've heard that Google is hiring anywhere from 200 to 400 contract recruiters, and I do know HR people who have started there recently as contract recruiters. A quick survey of Monster.com shows almost 900 recruiter openings, and I'd hazard a guess that less than 20% of recruiter openings are posted on

Monster, so there are probably at least 5,000 recruiter positions open in the US right now. Most of our clients hiring; some are bringing on 20 or 40 or 100 contract recruiters; most are revisiting how to handle staffing; and most of them are now saying that they can't find enough good recruiters.

Dear Valerie:

I just graduated in December with an MS in Math from Stanford and have some interviews lined up with a couple of start-ups. How should I dress? Last time I went to an interview for a start-up they were all in jeans and T-shirts and I felt ludicrously overdressed with my shirt.

- Recent Grad

Dear Recent Grad:

You're interviewing for some pretty hot engineering/analytical openings at the hottest ventured funded companies in the world. It's tough to say what you should wear. Normally, I'd say grey or khaki slacks, a Façonnable button down shirt, and a blue blazer. This will be way overdressed unless you're going for a finance job. How about a Billy Idol t-shirt and ripped jeans? How about jeans and a North Face fleece jacket? How about designer jeans and a sweater and some cool boots? These days it's more about looking clean, high energy, and sophisticated than what you're wearing.

Dear Valerie:

How can I get my hands on one of those recruiter jobs?

- Desperate

Dear Desperate:

It's as if I said that there was a shortage of experienced female movie stars over 40 who haven't had Botox and how could I get considered for television roles. It's just not that easy to morph yourself into a recruiter, let alone the next Julia Louis-Dreyfus. You have to have expertise in defining job specs, creative sourcing techniques, Internet search, interviewing skills, project management, and a ton of energy and professionalism. Somehow you have to break out of feeling desperate no matter how difficult it is, because no one wants to be around that kind of negativity.

- Valerie

[VF&Co New Offerings](#)

Give Your HR Team a Makeover!

Does your HR team need a boost? Do you need a little help coaching your direct reports on their communications skills? Or do you just want to show them that you care about their career development? Email right away! We are offering three free hours of team coaching with Valerie for the first two executives who contact us.

Upgrade Your HR Team's Partnering Skills!

This Business Partner stuff is really important! We have been bombarded with requests for private presentations of Valerie's award-winning How to Be an HR Business Partner presentation at internal HR meetings and internal global HR conferences around the US. In response to these inquiries, VF&Co is now offering on-site training modules for your in-house HR Team. Specifically, we'll teach your team

the valuable skills necessary to be successful in the HR Business partner role, and share with your team four business partner case studies, and the strategies and skills needed to solve them.

For additional information, contact Michele Li at 650.614.0220 or michele@vfandco.com.

[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 222 – Impressive Up-and-Comer

- Hands-on experience in dealing with European work councils and unions
- Solid HR generalist with depth in talent acquisition and change management
- Managed M&A projects in Europe and South America
- Presents great; high energy and very positive

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:

- **Partnership Gone Bad** — Helping a major employer revamp the role of their HR Business Partners to one more focused on talent management
- **Creative Solutions** — Working closely with a business to help them revamp their work model to one of more mobile, flexible and efficient incorporating Gen X and the millennial work/life styles
- **Se Habla** — Assisting a European based engineering company find a bi-lingual critical hire to ensure accurate communication and translation support
- **This is IT** — Working with a major IT organization to help their members understand what career opportunities are in the Bay Area and how to get them
- **State of The Union** — This President does not lead the nation, but as a former leader of a major company, we are helping him re-enter the workforce and remake his image
- **Dream Assignment** — Interim VP HR support for venture-funded startup
- **Green is Golden** — HR start-up support with a global wind energy company new to the US
- **Taking It Back** — Bringing outsourced HR function back in-house at a lower cost and higher quality
- **Focus** — Working with a mid-sized company's management around focus and alignment of business and individual goals

- **Keeping the Seat Warm** — Filling a seat on a major employer's compensation team to provide job grading and salary structure support and board presentations
- **Back to the future** — Helping employer get survivors engaged and productive

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 Michele Li at 650.614.0220 or michele@vfandco.com.

Current Executive Searches

[Contractor] Interim HR Manager (San Diego, CA)

One of the largest global law firms needs a Human Resource Manager to support their Southwest offices. This contractor will have a generalist background, be extremely proactive, and thrive under high stress situations. Political savvy is crucial. Previous experience working with legal staff will be helpful.

[Contractor] Recruiter/Sourcer (San Jose, CA)

A multi-billion dollar software company in rapid growth mode needs multiple contract recruiters and sourcers with 1 to 2 years of experience in technical sourcing. The ideal contractor will have great communication and presentation skills, be energetic, polished, and a team player. BA degree preferred. This contract role has the potential to turn into a full-time position. [\$25–35/hr]

Vice President of Human Resources (San Francisco, CA)

An early stage, venture-funded, biotech start-up needs their first VP of HR to build their HR function from the ground up. The ideal candidate will have a hands-on generalist background with the ability to influence executives with very different styles. The candidate will need to be high-energy, persistent and passionate. Experience in the biotech industry is required.

Senior Director of Talent Management & Talent Acquisition (Irvine, CA)

A rapidly-growing pre-IPO high tech start-up needs a Senior Director of Talent Management and Talent Acquisition with experience in both start-ups and public companies in the high-tech industry. The ideal candidate will have held roles in the staffing function and as an HR Business Partner.

Director of Compensation (Chicago, IL)

A fast-paced, high-tech, public company with a major share of operations in Europe needs a Director of Compensation to lead their global compensation team. The ideal candidate will have expert-level knowledge of sale and global compensation and significant experience presenting to the Compensation Committee and Board of Directors. It is crucial that the candidate has excellent Board-level communication and presentation skills, and is flexible, politically savvy, and detail-oriented.

Human Resources Manager (San Diego, CA)

A major professional services organization needs a Human Resource Manager to support their Director of Human Resources in managing three crucial office locations in California and Arizona. The ideal background should encompass extensive experience in the following areas: employee relations, full-cycle staffing, benefits, performance management and talent management. The individual will serve as a

leader in the distribution of corporate values and should have proven experience organizing winning teams. Previous experience in a professional services setting is a plus. Travel will be approximately 20%.

Industry Events

Career Management/Job Search Workshop

February 5, 2010 from 1:00PM–5:00PM — San Jose, California

Ready to find a new job but concerned about the increasingly competitive employment market? Come meet John Motroni, CMF, Valerie Frederickson & Company's Senior Career Management Consultant, at a half-day interactive workshop hosted by the Korea IT Network. John, a certified Career Counselor and expert job search coach, will share with you his top tips and strategies on critical job search information including pragmatic career self-assessment techniques, building differentiated resumes, aggressive online networking, and modern interviewing tips. The Career Workshop has limited space and is available on a first-come, first-serve so register early to save your spot!

Career Development Expert Panel:

The Year of the Career — and What Employers Must Do About It

February 5, 2010 from 5:00PM–9:30PM — San Jose, California

As employers fight to recover from the recession, the sprint has become a marathon. Studies show that up to 91% of employees are secretly looking for a new job. How can managers stop the brain drain and re-engage their most critical asset? Join us at the year's premier Corporate Leadership Development event, hosted by the Korea IT Network, and featuring an evening panel of top executives from the most successful companies in technology discussing the strategy and details of how you can revitalize and energize the careers of your team, and keep them from walking out the door. Panelists include:

Steve Cadigan, VP of People Operations at LinkedIn

Massimo Carli, Director of Talent Management at Comcast

Thomas Ezrin, VP of Global Compensation, Benefits and Mobility at Flextronics

Valerie Frederickson, Founder & CEO, VF&Co (Keynote and Moderator)

HR Star Los Angeles 2010

March 17, 2010 – San Francisco, California

Join VF&Co for a day of learning, sharing, networking, benchmarking & community building at the Los Angeles Convention Center. Valerie will be speaking on the topic of workforce revitalization for the recovery. The session will provide a brief overview of the major Talent Management issues facing organizations today; a step-by-step plan for diagnosing what's at risk in your organization; and models for how to shift your organization from Survivor Mode to Market Leader and create a more engaged workforce.

NCHRA: 2010 HR West Conference

April 26–28, 2010 – San Francisco, California

Come hear Valerie speak at the 26th annual NCHRA conference in San Francisco. Additional details forthcoming.

HR Star San Francisco 2010

July 15, 2010 – San Francisco, California

Come hear Valerie speak at the annual HR Star San Francisco conference at the South San Francisco Conference Center. Additional details forthcoming.

