



German American  
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## Career planning - from Theory to Practice

(Transition from University to industry or from job to job)

Addressed to the Alumni of the TAP (Trans Atlantic Program)

February 6, 2010

By Herb Haessig, Managing Partner at J.R. Bechtle & Company, Oak Brook, IL

### **About the TAP Program**

The Transatlantic Program is organized by the German American Chamber of Commerce of the Midwest from Chicago in cooperation with the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) and InWEntg GmbH. The German Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology (BMWi) generously co-finances the TAP with funds from its European Recovery Program (ERP) together with corporate and other sponsors.

Since 2005 the Transatlantic Program has annually offered a select group of U.S. students the opportunity to gain practical work experience in a total immersion environment in Germany, Europe's largest economy.

### ➤ **INTRODUCTION:**

My name is Herb Haessig, I am Managing Partner at J.R. Bechtle & Company.

We are an Executive Recruiting Firm focusing on European companies doing business in North and South America since 1979.

We have specialized in a market with specific bi-cultural differences and needs in how to conduct business and how to be successful. Our goal is to provide solutions and find people with the ability to be successful in either the European or the U.S. setting. You might say we are building bridges between the two worlds.

- When I was approached by Daniela Daus to discuss
  - Career planning
  - Job hunting
  - Chances in the job market
  - Expectation in the interview process

I had three questions which I wanted to ask you:

- **Why is there a Trans Atlantic Program (TAP)?**

*Please give me some ideas and inputs from your side*

- Is there a need
- Is there a beneficiary

- **Why did you participate in such a program:**

*What was the particular reason for your participation?*

- Need in industry and service
- Globalization
- Faster adaptation of new situations
- Flexibility, tolerance and openness

- **What did it actually bring to you?**

*Looking back what has this program changed in your life?*

- Exposure to something different and new
- Escape of the “same old, same old”
- Explore the good and bad things in other parts of the world
- Creation of opportunities
- Had fun

*But now let's go to actual theme of the day*

**And really how can you now transition from job to job or how do you find your first job?**

Before a job search actually can be done, you have to know where you want to be in the future with your job and your life and what steps you can take to get there. This is not rocket science and will also not be cast in stone, but it will serve as a starting point! So let's start with the

- CAREER
  - You can either look for a **Job** (work) **versus Career** (love and excitement), so let's ask a few easy questions with not so easy answers:
  - Where do I want to be long-term (Career Plan)
  - Do I want to be
    - a specialist
    - Technical
    - Sales
    - Support

- Do I want to be in management
- Do I like to be in industry or service or government or.....
- Domestic / international
  - **To demonstrate how twisted a career can be let me share with you my career:**
  - *I was born in Switzerland and started my career as a Civil Engineer in project management with the goal to manage construction projects in Switzerland. For this position (in Switzerland) you typically need to have a grip on tools, theoretical matter and management processes yes and you need to know “Italian” or “Spanish” to communicate with the people on the jobsite.*
    - *A few years into the job I was sent to England to manage a project; I did not speak the language and needed a translator which really frustrated me right away. With 30 years of age I started to finally get it, I need to learn “English” to be independent and to create new opportunities for my own career.*
    - *I did exactly that and learned English and soon thereafter my first international assignment was offered to me: two years U.S.A. as a Project Manager;*
    - *after that six years responsible for the same company for all facility projects globally with travel (wow 90%+) what a deal; after six years of doing that and tired of traveling so intensive I wanted a change, stay home and see my kids grow up. After approaching my boss with my desire and some creative thinking on his side I was offered the position as VP of Human Resources at the HQ of the same company.*
    - *A career change, a surprising change with new challenges and a lot to learn. I was interested and took on this responsibility, after continuous education and successful handling of the job for six years.*
    - *I was offered a new assignment in the U.S.A. to become the Head HR and member of the executive committee of a company at that time with about 2000 employees in North America. This assignment was for five years.*
    - *After that I was again ready to make a step into a new world, I had a chance to become a partial owner of J.R. Bechtle & Company.*
    - *Every step in my career gave me challenges and I was forced to learn constantly. Some responsibilities I liked some I did not care so much and with every step I wanted to eliminate the dislikes and enlarge on the things I like.*

- >> **Today** I can say I love what I do and this was only possible due to the fact I was open, never stopped learning and trained myself to be flexible and movable!
- YOU SHOULD **HAVE A DREAM** BUT YOU ALWAYS HAVE TO HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY, TOO

Assuming you have come to conclusion what you want to do and in what industry or field you like to become a contributor. I leave that part completely to you.

I am focusing now more on the practical and operational steps to get to the actual job. I have selected four areas to explore and I am asking you for actual contributions and suggestions as we go on.

The four areas are:

- **How do I find an opportunity?**
- **Preparation for interviews**
- **What do the different parties expect from an interview**
- **Do's and don'ts**
  
- **HOW DO I FIND AN OPPORTUNITY**

**Remember, make sure that:**

**YOU KNOW WHAT YOU WANT TO DO AND OR WHERE YOU WANT TO BE or see yourself IN THE FUTURE**

Typically the positions are not immediately visible and there is effort necessary to find the opportunities, it depends in what stage you are in your live, this can be a job on the side or even a fulltime job; How would you go about finding this opportunity?

**Through what channels, actions and means can you find a job opportunity?**

- Network with family, friends, colleagues, industry people, people in a target sector/company
- Read newspaper ads
- Check various web postings (e.g.: monster.com)
- Talk to recruiters
- send applications to companies and recruiters
- visit trade shows
  - *finding a job is a job by itself it requires dedication and sweat*
- reach out and establish multiple opportunities
- you get invited to an interview

While you are looking for the opportunities you have to be aware of what will happen next and what you need later on in order to really get a job offer.

➤ **PREPARATION FOR INTERVIEWING**

- Consider what the **employer** is looking for and what does he want:
  - Experience
  - Competence
  - Potential?
  - Stability
  - Continuation and logical progression
  - Personality
  - Financial framework
  
- Consider what a **recruiter** is looking for:
  - Background
  - Experience
  - Potential
  - Personality
    - Honesty (among other things)
    - Presentation
    - Thoroughness.....
  - Progression
  - Initial impression (on the phone, face to face)
  - Consistency
  
- Consider **your strength and weakness**
  - What do I like / dislike
  - Where can I make a difference, what is my strength or weakness (*in general or relative to an opportunity*)
  - What is my story in a few words

*Remember also here a strength often can be a weakness*

- Make **your due diligence**, *this extremely important and it helps you to generate questions and gives the hiring party an impression of being prepared and interested:*
  - What is the company doing
  - What is the image
  - What are the products
  - Visit the web information
  - How do they position themselves
  - Who is the competition
  - Who is who in the company
  - Who do I know who works or worked there
    - IN OTHER WORDS BE PREPARED FOR THE INTERVIEW; IT IS NOT A SOCIAL DISCUSSION

- Have a number of questions prepared
- Why am I interested in this opportunity
- What is my motivation to change jobs
- Who will be the interviewer

*Now last but not least*

- Have **your documents** updated:
  - Newest and correct resume (have a copy at hand)
  - *Check the grammar avoid mistakes (spelling)*
  - No gaps between jobs
  - Explanation why changes were made
  - If you are in between jobs, be open (this happens to most of us in a career)
  - Do you have a portfolio (designer), but careful don't bring a binder full of forms and plans from former employers
- Have a short version of your career history memorized
- Have reference contacts in mind; don't brag with them and don't offer them prematurely
- Have the references prepared that someone may contact them and get their commitment for a positive reference
- **Dress** for success!!! (never be under or over- dressed)

**Now you are ready to go and have your interview with the new employer or the recruiter who works for the potential new employer, but what do the different people actually look for in this process????**

*Before you go to the interview think about*

➤ **INTERVIEW (WHAT DO THE DIFFERENT PARTIES EXPECT??)**

- **Recruiter** (*often hired by a company to find and preselect candidates*) / **HR professional:**
  - Is checking employment steps - gaps, college completion, logical progression, growth in accountability, etc.
  - Motivation for the job changes, selection of the career path
  - Particular industry and functionality match
  - Appearance and body language
  - Articulation
  - Listening and communication ability
  - Overall behavior
  - Compensation history
  - Mobility, ability to relocate
  - Checking on the references

- **Line Manager (decision maker):**
  - Specific subject matter knowledge
  - Job / function related attributes
  - Do I like the person (so called gut feeling)
  - Could the person be a threat
  - Checking references and potentially background
  
- **Yourself:**
  - Be yourself (don't act)
  - Be aware of meeting participants (address all, but focus on decision-maker)
  - Don't be a used car sales person:
    - Focused
    - Brief
    - Clear
    - Follow up with open ended issues and come back to them to finish
    - Watch your manners
    - Do not waste time
    - Be prepared with questions
    - Take notes
  - Do not talk money
  - Ask for next step
  - Have a good argument why you were in the TA-Program

**And always remember:**

➤ **IN THE INTERVIEW:**

- **DO**
  - Be truthful and honest
  - State your education accurately
  - Listen
  - Always come back to fully answer a question, don't drop it
  - Turn off your cell phone, laptop or Blackberry, better leave it outside the room
  - Be upbeat
  - Smile
  - Have a good posture
  - Send thank you note immediately

- **DO NOT**
  - Interrupt
  - Present a book about what you have accomplished
- Speak bad about a former employer / person
  - Talk forever
  - Correct / critique your interviewer
  - Use text book arguments
  - DON'T BE LATE!!!!

➤ **YOU GOT AN OFFER** *does that mean **you got the job??***

- **NOT YET.....**
- If the offer is verbal, ask if you can get that in writing
- Make sure it meets your expectations. *Some companies may not be too keen in negotiating around a contract, so be sensitive when you try to negotiate; negotiate (within reasons) or compromise*
- Reply promptly (confirm acceptance, questions)
- What do you have to do before you start (drug test etc.)
- Where and when is my first day
- Who do I meet
- What do I have to bring
- What is the dress code

➤ **FINALLY AT WORK**

*Before you go to work in the first place make sure you know where, when as well as who do you meet!!!!*

- What is expected in the first day, week, months, etc.
- What can I expect from my boss / employer (ask if not obvious)
- Earn your reward (promotion, pay increase etc.)
- Ask, ask and don't assume
- Be ready for periodical performance review and discussions
- Be open for constructive criticism
- Apply what you have learned through TAP

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*This brings me to the conclusion of today's information exchange a lot may sound like a bunch of baloney, but remember,*

- You will be evaluated continuously also while employed
- You are always being interviewed
- You constantly build on your career (positively or negatively)

*I would like to thank you for being so active in the discussion and I also like to thank Mrs. Daus and the German American Chamber of Commerce for their commitment to providing opportunities for young people to become better "players" in the international business world.*

***Good luck in your career!!!***

*I am happy to answer any open questions you may have.*

February 2010

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