



CAROL KLEIMAN

## Don't lie about past drug use

**Q:** I want to be a state trooper, but they give a polygraph test and ask about drug use. I've never abused drugs, but years ago, when young and dumb, I tried marijuana.

**A:** Should I lie during that part of the test or tell the truth and hope they forgive it as a stupid mistake in my past?

**A:** Don't even try to lie. Tell the truth. You're not alone.

**Q:** Recently, my boss gave me an unexpected, decent bonus. He then told me to remind him in four months about my salary review. Because that time is now, I wonder what is the best way to bring up the subject.

**A:** The best way to bring it up is with confidence. After all, he suggested it. In a very professional way, just remind him of the promised review.

**A:** And tell him you're looking forward to it!

**Q:** My sister has told me about openings at the company where she works. I have applied there for several jobs that have become available, but I've never gotten a reply, much less an interview. Should I continue to apply or job-hunt elsewhere?

**A:** I think you know the answer. If you don't get any response, you're just spinning your wheels. Direct your energy elsewhere.

**Q:** Is it OK to tell my new boss she's doing an absolutely sensational job? We're a tough bunch to handle, but she has very quietly stepped in and has taken control. Will it sound too much like sucking up if I praise her in this way?

**A:** Whatever it sounds like, a pat on the back always feels very good. Tell her what you've observed in a very businesslike way: Make it brief, don't gush — and then change the subject.

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# UW program engineers managerial success

## Technology professionals learn business management

By John Buchel  
For the State Journal

Overseeing a team of employees may be a no-brainer for an experienced business executive, but for an engineer whose skills and education have focused on technical subjects, making the transition to a supervisory role can be daunting.

"A lot of engineers and scientists are successful in college when you crank out great reports and numbers, and you don't always necessarily have to work on a team," said Jan Kucher, senior project engineer at the Madison engineering firm RMT.

But meeting a client's needs in the working world, Kucher said, necessitates cooperation and delegation. "It's a good way to have a nervous breakdown if you think you can do it all alone."

To help provide technology professionals with business management skills, UW-Madison's School of Business and College of Engineering have partnered to develop a new certificate program.

Carl Vieth, director of corporate education for the College of Engineering's Department of Engineering Professional Development, said creation of the program was very much like the development of a product that fits the needs of a target audience.

In their interactions with businesses and government agencies, Vieth and Scott Converse, director of technology and innovation for the business school's Executive Education program, found a



John Maniaci - State Journal

Jan Kucher, right, a senior project engineer at Madison engineering firm RMT, looks over plans with project director Joe Schittone. UW-Madison has started a certificate program to help tech professionals develop their management skills. Kucher and Schittone are not involved in the certificate program, but Kucher said he sees a need to help engineers transition into management roles.

theme: As technology workers advanced in their careers, they would inevitably face management problems they were not trained to solve.

"One of the issues we found with this target audience, which is technical professionals, is that for developing their skills in their particular area, there are plenty of avenues to get the technical information," Converse said. But when they needed to take the next step up the career ladder, the opportunities were very limited.

Vieth and Converse combined mostly existing short courses from their departments in putting together the program. They also de-

signed the coursework to be flexible to accommodate working professionals and their employers.

Bruce Kieffer, program director for the Department of Engineering Professional Development, said this flexibility is needed for those who have already been placed in a management position and are learning leadership techniques through trial and error.

"Invariably, most of them are probably already project managers, and they've learned this stuff on the fly, by the seat of their pants," Kieffer said. "That's really the eye-opening experience on the first day — it's the realiz-

ation that (the program) can make things a whole lot easier."

Buck Joseph, associate professor of management for executive education, said the courses, which are often intensive training sessions spanning several days, can be arranged to take place in Madison or elsewhere. The transition to middle management, Joseph said, is often the most difficult transition of a technical professional's career.

"Moving away from a technical job to a management job is huge, because you have to change your identity," Joseph said.

Darren Fortney, project

manager with the Minneapolis engineering firm Short Elliot Hendrickson, said client service is the most important aspect of managing, and some engineers aren't ready for it. He's not involved in the certificate program, but he sees its benefits.

"As you move up into a leadership position and as you've grown in your career, the things you like doing versus what you get paid to do may be consistent or they may not be consistent," Fortney said. "For some people it's hard, and some people are threatened, because they think 'I used to do this, and now I've had to train someone else to do it.'"

## CHANGES

**David Marks** has been hired as chief investment officer of the Members Capital Advisors affiliate of CUNA Mutual Group, a provider of financial services to credit unions and their members at 5910 Mineral Point Road.

**Melissa Hase** has joined Heritage Credit Union, 1212 Huxley St., as marketing coordinator.

**Glenn Choroszy** has joined First Weber Group Realtors, Reedsburg, as a sales associate.

**Amy Washa** has joined Cost Cutters of Madison, a franchise of hair salons at 1001 Fourier Drive, as a receptionist.

**Kyle Dumbleton** has joined the design team of The Renschler Co., a building design and construction services company at 3 Point Place.

**Matt Keeley** has accepted the position of director of customer service at Royle Printing, Sun Prairie.

## AWARDS & HONORS

**Don Moen**, safety director for Associated Builders and Contractors of Wisconsin, 5330 Wall St., was recently selected as a winner in the organization's 2005 BuildersEdge program.



Marks



Hase



Choroszy



Washa



Dumbleton



Keeley

## NEW BUSINESS

**Midwest Paralegal Services** recently opened an office at 16 N. Carroll St.

**Pam Kaufman** recently opened A Perfect Setup, a business organization consulting company, at 4420 Stone Wood Drive, Middleton.

— Nathan Leaf

# Many ways to play exit interviews

It's an opportunity to give constructive criticism — or burn bridges.

By Jared Sandberg  
The Wall Street Journal

After three years of working 80-hour weeks as an advertising copywriter, Chris Goldschmidt couldn't take it anymore. So he tendered his resignation and sat down for an exit interview with his managers.

But it was pretty hard for him to be frank about his two bosses, considering that they were married to each other.

"I couldn't have said to him that his wife was a harpy," Goldschmidt said. "And I couldn't have said to her that her husband was an ineffective, spineless nitwit."

Still, the two wanted a detailed explanation of why he was leaving. It was his job's last little minefield, and he was long past wondering how he got into it, focused instead on how to get out. So he dodged.

"I took the easy route and said, 'I enjoyed my three years at this hellhole.'"

The two bosses laughed, thinking the use of the term "hellhole" was a joke, he says, while in reality he was choking on the word "enjoyed."

Exit interviews are many things, but when one is trying to extract oneself from an unfortunate job, they are often the wobbly tightrope strung between constructive criticism

and a badly burnt bridge. Ideally, they can improve a company's inner workings and maybe even help colleagues. After all, you're jumping ship, but your office mates may be the ones who need a life vest. The problem is that to achieve that positive outcome, so much has to go right with the exit interview when so much can easily go wrong.

One frequent problem is that employees often walk away with the impression that the company values them more now that they're leaving. When Dave Reyburn left his former job eight years ago, he had never had access to the top brass.

"This is someone who, if you got 10 minutes of face time with her after a month of re-scheduling meetings, that was significant," he said.

But once he was on his way out, she met with him four times, with some meetings lasting as long as an hour. The company even offered to double his monthly salary if he would postpone his departure by another 30 days because there was so much work.

"Suddenly, not only did they want my opinion but they were actually paying for it," he said.

On the other hand, employees, who have to sift through criticisms real and completely made up, sometimes have to face departing employees who have an inflated sense of how much their opinions are worth.

During Joe Michael's final

week at a high-tech company, the head of his division graciously asked the young intern to lunch to solicit his opinion of the business. During lunch, Michaels said he "got up on one of my many soapboxes." "I explained how we needed to improve the product and where organizational dynamics were suboptimal. At the time, I was at business school, so of course I knew what all of that meant."

So puffed up was he, he said, that he even sent follow-up messages saying things like, "and furthermore."

Some supervisors try to suppress criticism or rationalize that a departing employee wasn't worth holding on to anyway. But it's a mistake to miss this opportunity, said Richard Kilburg, senior director of the office of human services at Johns Hopkins University.

"If the organization refuses to look at the information or interpret it, those are the organizations that do worse over time, simply because they don't test reality."

As a result of information gleaned from exit interviews, Amy Jantz, who formerly managed employee relations at a nonprofit health-care company, was able to help win remaining employees a pay raise and streamline some inefficiencies.

But a manager at the company also retaliated against an employee who gave a frank exit interview, providing a less-than-stellar reference to

the employee's prospective employer. Jantz's department eventually intervened, persuading the employer to call a few more of the employee's prior colleagues and supervisors.

"It wasn't really pretty," she said.

Cathy Fingerman prepared for her exit interview in her head for months, planning to suggest cost-saving and employee-retention measures. Then she got a letter from the company that offered an 800 number tied to an automated system to receive her prescriptions, rather than a face-to-face interview.

"I read that over and over and over again and I was just astounded," she said.

She never made the call, and if she had by that point, "I think it would have taken me out of the employee-in-good-standing category," she said.

Sometimes it's just too late to clear the air.

"It's obvious this hasn't been a great fit," Jim Kirk told his boss in his exit interview. "It's clear that you haven't been thrilled with me."

"Whaddya mean?" asked his boss, stunned. "I thought we were sparring. People I like — sometimes I give them a hard time and it's just my way."

"No," Kirk responded, "you were smacking me around, and sometimes I smacked back." Then he added this zinger: "It's not that I can't work with you anymore. It's just that I don't have to, and I don't want to."