

Hirable for Life™

A Consultant's Perspective on Finding and Keeping Work

Carnegie Mellon University

ECE Senior Banquet

May 12, 2010

Presented by

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Source:

[HTTP://XKCD.COM/630/](http://xkcd.com/630/)

WHILE IT'S TECHNICALLY TRUE,
I WISH SHE'D STOP PREFACING
EVERY SENTENCE WITH THAT.

No Illusions



OHM NEVER FORGOT HIS
DYING UNCLE'S ADVICE.

Source:

[HTTP://XKCD.COM/643/](http://xkcd.com/643/)

Lesson of the Steel Mill



Source: Pennsylvania State Archives

South Works, Carnegie Steel Company, South Sharon, PA, circa 1910

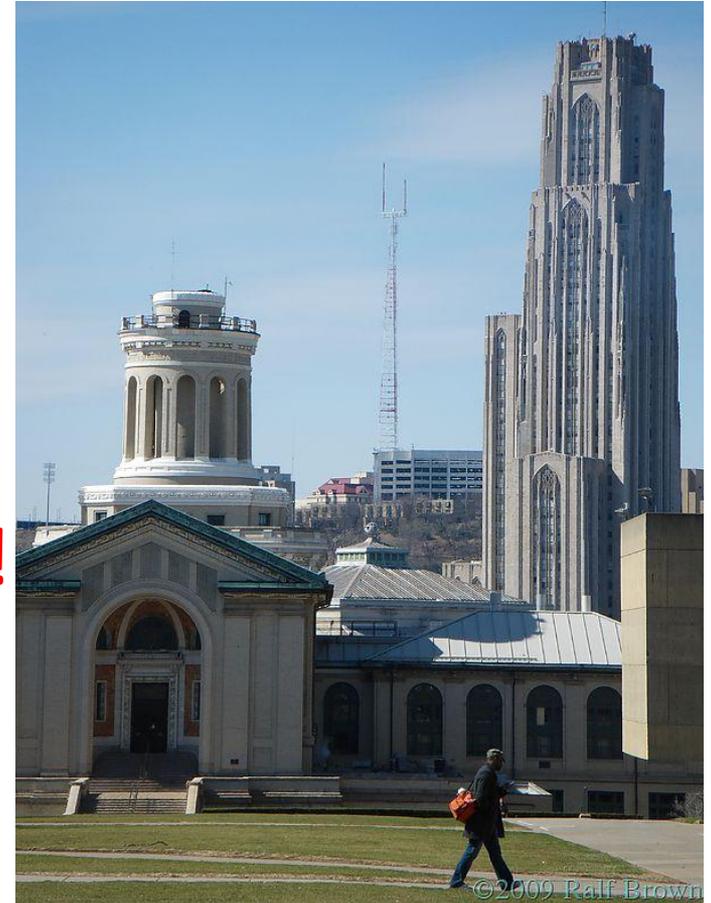
Getting Advice in the 70s (one word, ... “computers”)

- Learn a skill/trade
- Get into computers (repair)
- Go to college
- Become a professional, get a “career”

**“You Are
FIRED.”**

CMU (circa 1980): “The Professional Choice”

- The education was fierce!
- Carnegie Mellon’s reputation goes with you
You have done the right thing!
- Remember the lesson of the steel mill



Source: © Ralf Brown,
March 13, 2009

1984: Very Hirable (Thank You, CMU!)

Interviews

Follow-up site visits

Summer job at IBM, Research Triangle Park

Scholarship to UC Santa Barbara



Why “Very Hirable?”

- You have up-to-date skills
- You are a good value
- You have been “recommended” (GPA) by someone they trust (CMU)
- You have demonstrated results (graduation)
- They can find you

The Truth

- Nobody owes you a job
- What you love to do must be relevant to those who will pay for it

Your College Education's Shelf Life

- A lifetime?
- About 10 years?

When is “mid-career?”

A Recent Job Posting on the Web

Location: San Diego, CA

Job Type: Full-Time/Regular

Level of Education: BA/BS

Salary: Negotiable

Job Level: Mid Career (2+ years of experience)

Date Updated: 06-23-2009

Number Of Openings: 1

From the Other Extreme

- 10 years from “retirement”
- Vice Presidents, Directors, Fellows
- The best experimentalist I ever met



Source: http://www.geospectra.net/kite/la_veta/la_veta.htm

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What's After "Very Hirable?"

- Very hirable again, 3-7 years out
- Industry experience
 - Results
 - Contacts
 - Know-how
- Skills: mostly up-to-date
- You are still a good value
 - But, you are competing with the WORLD
- Harder to find

After That?

Look to the Derivatives

- College: Rate-of-change of knowledge is extremely high
- Typical employee
 - Rate-of-change of knowledge decreases
 - Rate-of-change of experience is high
 - This decreases, too
 - Rate-of-change of productivity (efficiency) increases
 - But, it can level-off
- If the rate-of-change of knowledge, experience, efficiency goes down
 - Future value to the company, relative to newer-hires, goes down

Daniel Pink: The 3 A's

- Abundance
 - Competing with free
- Asia and Automation
 - Can what you do be reduced to a sequence of steps?

5 Keys to Remaining Hireable for Life

- Continue to rapidly acquire new knowledge
- Continue to gain new experience
- Demonstrate your capabilities and share them
- Be easy to find
- Remain a good value

Hirable to Whom?

- A different group within your company
- Another company
- Another industry
- A venture capitalist (to invest in your new business idea)
- Your same group – would they re-hire you?
- Yourself

5 Actions to Take to Remain Hireable for Life

- Be really good at what you do
- Focus on the customer
- Network effectively
- Make people want to find you
- Be financially able to wait for the opportunity of your choosing

Be Really Good at What You Do

- Continue your formal education
- First Job choice
 - Options, training, mentor, and resources
- Maintain or increase the rate-of-change of your knowledge and experience
 - Become an **Expert** in your field
 - Experts can explain things clearly (*e.g.*, to a bright high school student)
 - Experts don't know EVERYTHING!
 - Experts know the “4 corners” of a field
 - Experts know the **right questions** to ask
 - Expand what you consider to be “your field”
 - Narrow core expertise, but broad application

Be Really Good at What You Do

- **Actions You Can Take Now**
 - Ask better questions
 - Identify and analyze everyday experts around you
 - (Grad school) Write up one homework problem each week as if it were for your best customer

How Can You be Sure You're an Expert?

- Explain such that others can explain
- Know the next step (specific action) to take

Focus on the Customer

- Internal Customer
 - Boss, co-workers, other departments

- External Customer
 - The one who **pays money** so you can keep working

Customer Realities

- Do what they ask for, but ALSO do what you believe they need
- In the Good Ol' Days
 - We were asked, “What have you done for me lately?”
 - Now it is, “What will you do for me next?”

Understand the Customer's Point-of-View

- **Actions You Can Take Now**

- You are a customer every day

- How could the seller have made the process, service, or product better for you?
- Why do you think they aren't doing it?
- Over time, pick a few owners/supervisors to ask and compare your reasons with theirs

- Pick a Dilbert comic strip

- Find some GOOD reasons for the pointy-haired boss to take whatever seemingly ridiculous action he does
- Discuss this with your friends and colleagues

Set a Reminder: Customer

- 6 months from today
 - Friday, November 12, 2010
- Customer
 - Who is it?
 - What have you done that they would pay for again?
 - Derivative: How will you increase the value you provide?

Networking

“Network, Network, Network!”

Network Constantly.”

“Network Everywhere.”

WRONG!

Be the laser pointer, not the torch of the angry villager

How to Network Selectively

- Seek out people in whom you have a **genuine** interest
 - Fake sincerity is obvious and rude
 - Find people who already do what you want to do next
 - Teach your mentor
 - Be a mentor
- Make connections **for** others
- Specific Questions: Ask and Answer
- **Participate** in technical conferences and industry events

Network Selectively

- **Actions You Can Take Now**

- Know your classmates

- What do they want to do? What are they good at?
- Stay in touch!

- Expand your circle of friends

- Include new people in your conversations
- Go to events at other schools/groups/organizations
- Ice breaker: Talk to them about this presentation

- Establish contact with me

- Ask for specific advice (not resume critique or job openings)
- Let me know how it turns out

Set a Reminder: Networking

- 12 months from today
 - Thursday, May 12, 2011
- Your Network
 - Who have you helped for free?
 - Who has made the biggest impact on you?
 - Have you joined the CMU alumni association?
 - Have you joined the IEEE?
 - Derivative: How can you increase the number of “big impact” contacts?

Make People WANT to Find YOU

- Offer value for free
- Provide clear, concise explanations that are useful and actionable
- Publish in refereed journals and trade publications

Make People WANT to Find YOU

- **Actions You Can Take Now**

- Be easy to find (safely)
 - Start to build your PROFESSIONAL on-line presence
- Write detailed, clear, reproducible worked examples
 - Can bright high school student follow them?
 - Post them (and provide PDF downloads)
 - Translate them into every language you speak
 - Offer MP3s of them
 - Record them for YouTube, etc.
- Google yourself this week
 - In 1 year, compare the results from a new search

In the mid-1980s ...



My southern California financial advisor looked something like this

Financial Flexibility

Engineering Margin

Achieve Financial Flexibility

- Live on less than you earn
 - Keep your monthly fixed-expenses low
- Avoid “bad” debt
- Spend effectively – enjoy your money
 - Buy “luxuries” out of money you have saved for the purpose
 - A bargain is not a bargain if you don’t LOVE it
- Prioritize learning how to put your money to work
- Consider investing in yourself (wisely) as one of your investment options
- It can take months (~1 month/\$10,000 of yearly salary) to get a new job
- **A long-term goal is not to be retired, but to be self-funded!**

Achieve Financial Flexibility

- **Actions You Can Take Now**
 - Learn about personal/business finance at your university/job
 - Write a personal-finance simulation/model (share it!)
 - Goal for the next year
 - Build one month's cash reserve of your typical expenses
 - Start with one day's worth this week!
 - When you get your first full-time job, continue to live like a student for several months
 - Don't get into credit card debt!

Fitness is Part of Financial Flexibility

- Build up a reserve of healthy living
- The fixed costs you don't incur!
- Spend less on medical bills
- Spend less on long-term care
- Build a reserve of mental acuity

Set a Reminder: Financial

- 24 months from today
 - Saturday, May 12, 2012
- Financial flexibility
 - Are you improving your health and fitness?
 - Are you able to live on 50% of your after-tax income?
 - Derivative: How does the increase in your expenses over the last 12 months compare to your increase in income?

“Can this Work for Me?”

- It is a process that takes time and thought
- A mentor helps a lot
- It becomes a way of life
- Add the reminders to your calendar

- An extreme example
 - He’s not even a **high school** graduate

2 Hireable-for-Life Principles for Your First “Real” Job

- Be able to answer this at any time
 - What are you doing, and why?
 - (Why is it worth paying you to do it?)
- Always know what is the next specific action to take on each project
 - If you had that information or result, what action would you take next?

What is YOUR Steel Mill?



Source: [HTTP://WWW.HUDSONVALLEYRUINS.ORG/YASINSAC/ANON/STEEL03.JPG](http://www.hudsonvalleyruins.org/yasinsac/anon/steel03.jpg)
copyright © 2007 by Robert J. Yasinsac

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Listen to Yourself, and Take Action

- I saw the end of an era
- What are you seeing?
- Act on it, and be ready to change course
- Bounce your ideas off me

TartanTrak Professional Ne... x

http://www.studentaffairs.cmu.edu/career/tartantrak/pronet/

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CarnegieMellon Search Only Career and Professional Development Center SEARCH GO

STUDENT AFFAIRS | THE WORD | TARTANTRAK | CALENDAR

| CAREER AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CENTER | > TartanTrak Online Recruiting System > TartanTrak Professional Network

Student Affairs Career and Professional Development Center

Students and Alumni
Employers

Events
TartanTrak Online Recruiting System
TartanTrak Policies and Guidelines
TartanTrak Professional Network
Professional Network: Student Information
Professional Network Volunteers
Last-Minute Interview Opportunities

TartanTrak Professional Network

Purpose

The Carnegie Mellon Professional Network program connects its network of active alumni, parent and university partner volunteers to Carnegie Mellon current students (and alumni who use TartanTrak to support their job search) in support of their career exploration and academic development. The Professional Network will increase the numbers of students who take advantage of TartanTrak and gain the knowledge and tools to market their strengths to employers and fulfill their own career and life goals.

Launch: August 2010

Please note we are currently soliciting volunteers for the TartanTrak Professional Network. Our goal is to reach 500 volunteers before August 1, 2010, when we plan to make the Professional Network available for all student and alumni job seekers in TartanTrak.

Need Assistance?

Volunteers: We hope the [Professional Network Volunteer Information](#) section of this site will provide the answers to most of your questions. If you have any questions or concerns about the Professional Network, or need assistance with a Professional Network relationship, please contact:

Rebecca Florey
Career and Professional Development Center
rflorey@cmu.edu
412-268-1317

Students: You will be able to start using the Network in August 2010. For advice on how best to take advantage of the TartanTrak Volunteer Network, please make an appointment with your career consultant. For help with using TartanTrak, please contact:

Gerry Marnell
Career and Professional Development Center
recruit@andrew.cmu.edu
412-268-1646

Ready to become a volunteer?
Take a moment to [create a username and fill out your profile](#). You will receive a welcome email with further instructions upon approval of your registration.

Already have an "employer" username/password for TartanTrak? Log in and click on the Shortcut for "Professional Network Profile." If you do not have the Quick Link, please [contact us](#) so we can turn on the Professional Network service on your account.

Students: watch your email for the launch of the Professional Network in August!

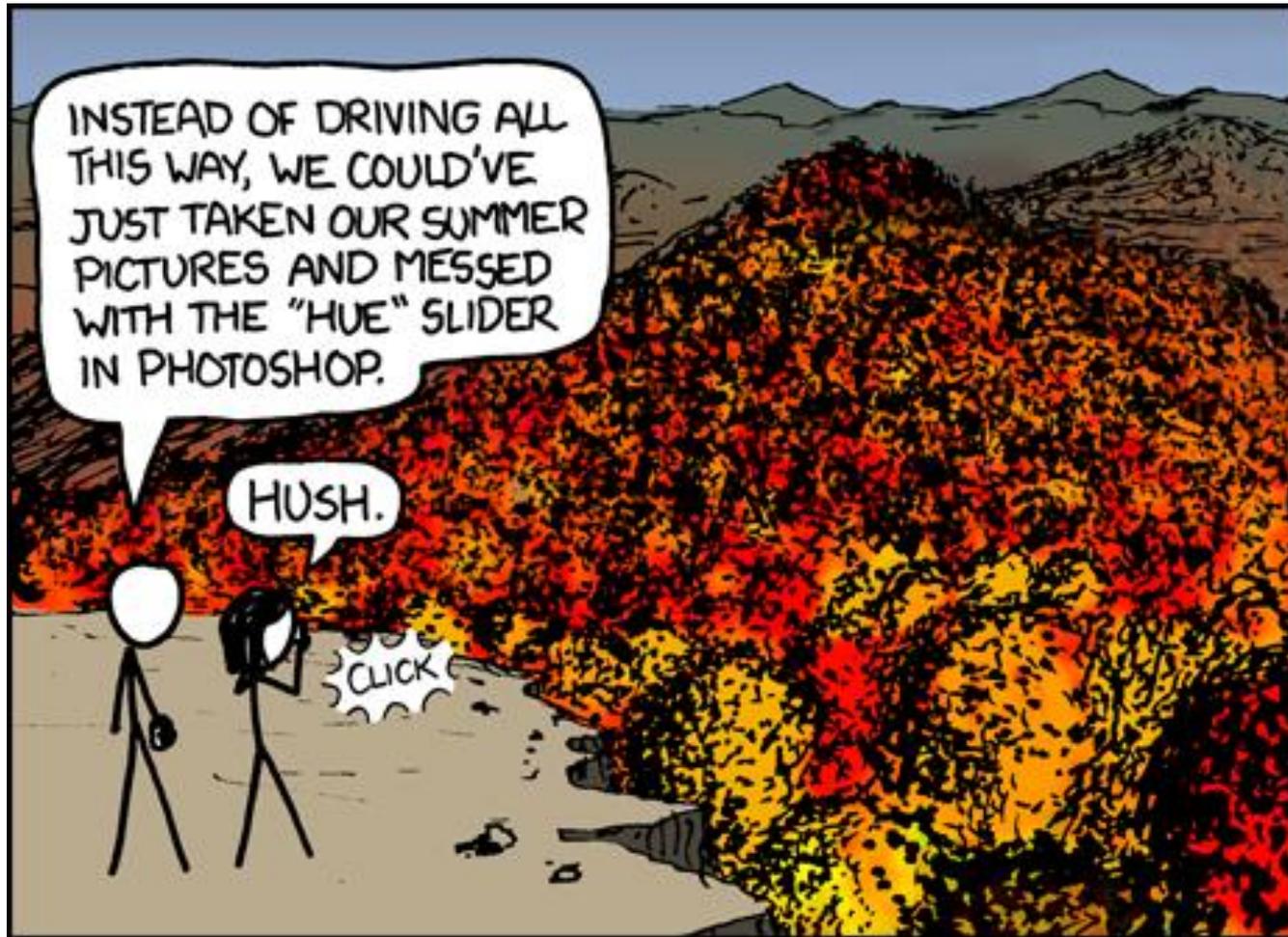
register today!

Career and Professional Development Center | 5032 Forbes Avenue Pittsburgh, PA 15213 | (412) 268-2064
Student Affairs | [Carnegie Mellon Home](#)

Could Any of These Be the Next Steel Industry?

- Video games?
- The Internet?
- Google?
- Computers?
- Oil?
- Credit Cards?
- ... ?
- Poverty?
- Disease?
- Natural Disasters?
- ...?

You will Lead Trends, Not Just Follow Them



Source: [HTTP://XKCD.COM/648/](http://xkcd.com/648/)

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Life is Long, Time is Short

After thousands of years, ...

Wright brothers' first flight

December 17, 1903

Man landing on moon

July 20, 1969

~66 years from first flight to landing on the moon
(look to the derivative!)



Thank You!

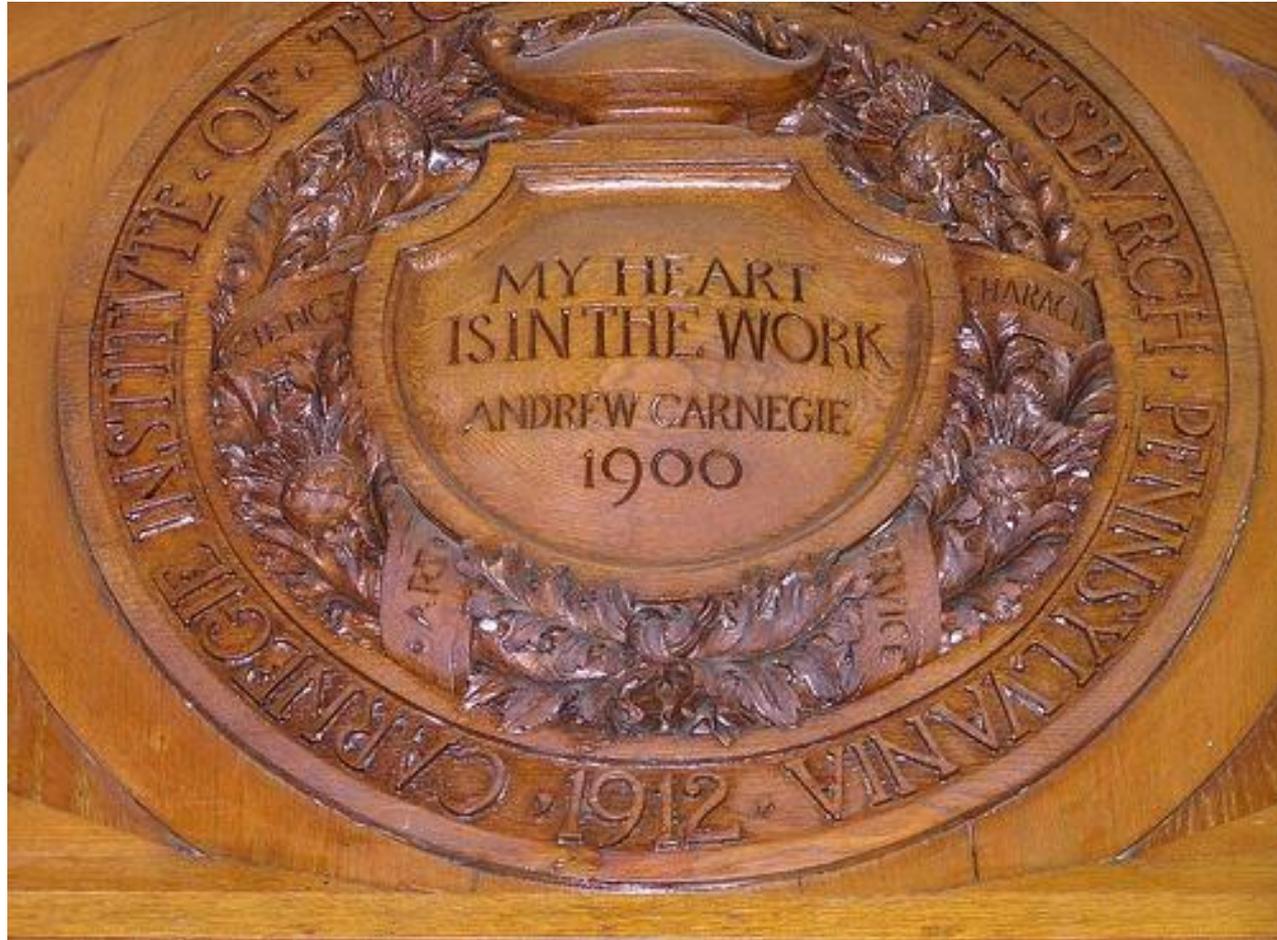
- Your future is bright!
- Enjoy your life and your work
- Economic cycles come and go
- As we say in Texas, ...

Dig your well before you're thirsty

To the 2010
Carnegie Mellon University
Graduates of ECE

A Toast

Congratulations and Good Luck!



Source: [HTTP://FARM4.STATIC.FLICKR.COM/3098/3838644873_AE7C353D6C.JPG](http://farm4.static.flickr.com/3098/3838644873_ae7c353d6c.jpg)

Joen Gallery's PhotoStream on Flickr

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