

[A LETTER FROM VALERIE]

The 21st Century Lemonade Stand, Part II

Dear Friends:

A few months back, as you may recall, I wrote about my grand experiment in workplace flexibility: How I had moved Valerie Frederickson & Company out of our big, plush offices and into a series of lofts in a small building that I (and BofA) own in downtown Menlo Park. This focus on what's really necessary to get the job done, as opposed to what's really only necessary for the purposes of an ego boost, led to a surprisingly large increase in productivity, even though most of us are now spending less time than ever chained to our desks.

The problems so far have been minor: The new building doesn't have much parking, which means complaints on rainy days as people burn gas and time driving around looking for a space. And the lofts don't have much privacy, which means a limited amount of places where we can do candidate screening and conference calls with clients, and the ensuing need to regularly ask people, in the nicest possible way, to shut the hell up. Frankly, we're a lot noisier than I thought we were, and—thanks to the usual summer doldrums having been preempted this year by a big surge in demand for HR executive search—there's a lot more of us than I anticipated. I'm sure that most startup companies (and teenagers whose parents are out of town) feel the same way: Yes, you decided to throw the party, and yes, you put out the word, but did everyone have to show up?

As a partial solution to the feeling that a flash mob has invaded our offices, we're looking into creating soundproof cells where we can ensconce ourselves for Skype interviews—sort of like phone booths, but large enough to have a table for a laptop. As things are now configured, we're constantly creating "Skype Zones" by hanging a painting or a curtain behind wherever the call will be made and telling everyone else in the room to be quiet. I often arrive in the morning with a smile on my face, wanting to say hello to everyone, but am greeted by panicked faces and waving hands and everyone screeching under their breaths: "Julia's Skyping!" The focus that the whole team needs to have when "Julia's Skyping" or "Michele's Skyping" or "Mathilde's Skyping" is a strain, and I can't help but feel that the emotional energy that goes into it has to cost us something.

Similarly, a guy I know has a friend who just joined a startup after many years at Fortune 500 companies and is experiencing a bit of culture shock, particularly around the phone system. The way the system there works is that, when you receive a call on your cell phone, you have to immediately ask the caller to hold, and then you have to walk outside to resume the conversation. And let me tell you, standing on the curb trying to speak to a customer is no easy task. Taking notes or firing off an e-mail means balancing your laptop on one knee while you perch on your other leg. It's like a new yoga pose called Standing Stork (or perhaps Standing Dork?).

Another enlightening, phone-related startup story is something we recently discovered about one of our clients, a 350-person, rapid-growth tech company in Southern California. One day, we couldn't reach

any of our regular contacts and needed some timely information. So we got on the Web and tried to look up the main number. Well, it turns out this 350-person company—which, by the way, received a huge capital infusion last spring and is by no means poor—doesn't have a telephone. That's right: there is no phone number whatsoever. You can only reach them via e-mail or on an employee's cell.

Of course, not all the issues that come with workplace flexibility are amusing. A few weeks ago I helped put on an event for large Silicon Valley-based employers, including Netflix, Twitter, Genentech, and Cisco Systems, in which we met with the head of the U.S. General Services Administration. I viewed it as a great time to share with the government all my concerns and complaints about the lack of flexibility caused by the antiquated employee classification system of Exempt versus Non-Exempt, as well as its equally unhelpful progeny, 1099 contractor versus full-time employee. I let the GSA know that, while it's great that everyone can work from home and have Blackberries and laptops, most employers are not thrilled to pay two hours' overtime because someone got an e-mail on a Saturday. And that we feel similarly stymied by the lack of flexibility that prevents us from hiring the types of employees we need when we need them.

During this workforce flexibility session, I did hear some novel ideas, including something at Twitter called "meeting buddies." (Sadly, I don't remember exactly what these are, and my notes weren't very good, so I Googled it and the only "meeting buddy" I could find involved a purple dinosaur. But a number of people spoke passionately about how unproductive meetings tend to be, which was music to my ears.) Twitter has also bought a bunch of ergonomic desk contraptions that go up and down and can hold two monitors, a laptop, and a keyboard. They've put these all over the place so that employees can plug in and work at any height.

It's ironic that, a year ago, our move to a small, loft-like building was considered uncouth by a certain percentage of our staff, who missed having artwork-filled offices with which to impress candidates. Now this sort of thing is becoming mainstream—even a mature giant like Cisco is moving its people toward portable officing, and encouraging them to only come in if they have a good reason. Lots of people I know are working in converted houses, basements, upstairs bedrooms, funky little buildings where they share the space with a cobbler and an audiotherapist, or something else equally strange. It's a bit like the dotcom days, when people in San Francisco were setting up shop in rabbit holes. One of our clients there, ShipServ, began life at a small round table they rented from another startup that had taken over the building's former janitorial closet. Another was sandwiched between two strip clubs. And while some might argue that it's always been this way in techland, I don't actually recall Dave Packard's garage being next door to the Bada Bing! By this time next year, we'll probably all be working on converted barges out on the bay. More productive than ever, in all likelihood, but also wrestling with interesting new challenges we could've never imagined.

On that final note, I'd like to thank Judy Madden, VPHR at Grass Valley, for her friendship and support.

Take care,

P.S. For the latest information on VF&Co's searches, events and news, follow us on Twitter, network with us on LinkedIn, and Like us on Facebook.

Ask Valerie

Note from Valerie: these are real questions that I was asked in the past month.

Dear Valerie:

I missed your recent panel on the HR*Art of the Start. Can you share any tips from the panelists, especially around recruiting for startups in this tight market?

- Seeking Inspiration

Dear Seeking:

This is such an important and hot topic right now. Here it goes:

1. Don't let recruiting problems become HR problems: keep them as business issues and discuss the resources needed in that light.
2. Keep management involved and focused on what each hiring manager and team member can do to get their own req's filled. They should participate in decisions around allocating resources, get trained in employment branding and how to sell the company, and use their own LinkedIn and Facebook to market their open positions to their networks.
3. Keep yourself in a consultative role and don't over-promise or take on more than you can deliver.
4. Something that I brought up at the panel was using Blue Ocean strategies in recruiting to out-recruit the competition.

The concept: these days, good candidates get into multiple interviews very quickly. If the average time a candidate is "in play" in your industry is 45 days, if you cut that to less than 14 days, you can hire people literally out from under the competition, even if you've started late. If candidates don't respond to your LinkedIn requests, develop a way to have candidates find you.

How does this work practically speaking? My firm's website is optimized for HR executive search and consulting. A recent grad with HR experience wanted to move back to California to be near her family, and found us on the web. She emailed us her resume asking for advice on a Thursday and we called her the same day. Within 24 hours she met us in person, and because we were all in agreement of what we needed, she was really good, and she had other interviews with competitors in play, we hired her on the spot, even though both her direct supervisor and the next level of management were out of the office and couldn't meet her. This way, she started on Monday, before the other firms could even get her into second rounds.

Her supervisor's response when she came back to the office the next week and found that she had a new employee: "Oh, I'm so glad that you went ahead and just hired her. We really need the help and there's no reason to put her through rounds and rounds of interviews."

HR Professional Development Events

*Valerie Frederickson will be speaking at these events

PIHRA 2011 Annual Conference*

August 29–31, 2011 — Anaheim Convention Center, Anaheim, CA

Valerie will be presenting on Corporate Life Cycles and how HR can best lead at each phase.

NCHRA 2011 Compensation & Benefits Conference*

September 22, 2011 — San Francisco Hilton, San Francisco, CA

"Competing With the Big Guns: Compensation Strategies for Every Budget"

Learn firsthand from a panel of total rewards executives who collectively set pay strategies for approximately 300,000 employees in over 100 countries. Moderated by Valerie.

2011 HR Technology Conference

October 3–5, 2011 — Mandalay Bay, Las Vegas, NV

2011 HR People & Strategy Fall Forum

October 23–25, 2011 — The West Arlington Gateway, Washington D.C.

The 2011 HR SouthWest Conference

October 30–November 2, 2011 — Fort Worth, TX

HR Consultant & Contractors' Corner

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 James Holland at 650.614.0220 or james@vfandco.com.

Current Executive Searches

Current Human Resources Executive Searches

Head of Compensation & Benefits Search (San Francisco, CA)

1,400 person global tech company, recently spun off private with private equity, needs a Head of Compensation & Benefits to partner with the executive team and the HR team to build from scratch the global total rewards function and help impact huge growth and transformation. The ideal candidate will be a sophisticated, polished and hands-on compensation expert competent at managing a small team. International background is preferred.

Vice President of People Search (Human Resources) (Santa Monica, CA)

Extremely hot, well-funded, pre-IPO online gaming company. 180 employees and growing fast. Stunningly bright, sophisticated, and inspiring executive team who care tremendously about hiring and developing the right employees and protecting their awesome culture. Needs a hands-on, results-

driven, extremely smart HR executive to rebuild the function from the ground up. The ideal candidate must be fast thinking, confident, honest, knowledgeable, metrics-driven, independent, proactive, and able to work in a collaborative environment where everyone talks openly about their successes and failures and what's blocking execution.

Vice President of Talent Acquisition Search (Santa Monica, CA)

Extremely hot, well-funded, pre-IPO online gaming company. 180 employees and growing fast. Needs a Director of Talent Acquisition to handle exponential growth and embrace and promote the culture of awesome throughout all talent acquisition activities. This role will need creative recruiting methods to find and successfully compete for extremely bright, collaborative, and results-driven employees, and to on-board them and foster their careers. The ideal candidate will have previous experience building an aggressive and creative recruitment function in a start-up environment.

Director of Talent Acquisition Search (South San Francisco, CA)

Rapidly growing, public biotech is looking for a talent acquisition leader to define the talent strategy and revamp the function. The role reports into a fabulous and highly collaborative HR leader who joined the organization last fall. The person in this role will closely partner with business leaders as well as the director of organizational learning & development on defining the company's employment branding and talent management strategy. The ideal candidate will be a highly mature, sophisticated, and collaborative leader with exposure to best practices in HR and recruiting.

Director of Human Resources Search (San Jose, CA)

One of the world's most respected scientific companies requires a strong, promotable, hands-on up-and-coming HR executive to lead the HR function for a 2,000-employee division. The person in this role will contribute significantly to the business through internal strategic consulting across a wide variety of functions. The ideal candidate will possess solid experience in international HR, OD and M&A.

Senior Manager, Human Resources Search (Livermore, CA)

Growing semiconductor company needs an extremely strong business partner and HR generalist to support a 350 employee population in both Livermore and Fremont. The role will involve a hybrid of employee relations, change management, workforce planning, and performance management. Background in manufacturing and tech environments is highly preferred.

Human Resources Business Partners Searches

Calling all business-minded HR professionals! HR Business Partners needed for multiple clients in a variety of industries. From \$80,000 to \$175,000 in locations around the world, including both East and West Coast US, Taiwan, Canada, and England.

Internal VF&Co Searches

Yes, along with the rest of the world, we are hiring and have been all year. We're currently looking for a marketing associate: someone with really strong writing and thinking skills, preferably a degree in Liberal Arts, who is good at foreign languages, loves to travel, and wants to get involved in a consulting

firm. Should be outgoing, positive, collaborative, able to follow directions, multi-task, and self-manage. Anyone have any off-spring with 0-5 years of experience? Email your resumé in MS Word format to brittany@vfandco.com.

Submit Your Profile

Due to the high volume of candidate submissions and the relatively quick pace with which we're filling our current searches, we recommend that all qualified candidates, whether you are a Board Director, CEO, CFO, or HR Executive, make sure that we have your updated information in our database and are aware of what you're looking for. That way, if we get something, be it RFT or contract, we can slip you in right away! For the most up-to-date information on our searches, you can follow us on Twitter, network with us on LinkedIn, and Like us on Facebook.