

# Taking control of your IT&T career

Kylie Hammond

*Implementing a successful career management strategy in the IT&T industry has been anything but easy in the last few years. Changing market conditions, mergers, acquisitions, redundancies, retrenchments, and pay reductions have become the common mantra.*

It is an interesting time in Australia at the moment where although there is a strong economy, a significant number of companies are actively looking for ways to reduce their costs. Some companies still see human capital (their employees) as the largest cost line item on the balance sheet instead of as a company asset. Some large companies are restructuring and downsizing as a way of maintaining the profitability levels and staying competitive in the market. Towards the end of 2003, the first signs of a recovery and an upturn in the IT job market began, with many cautiously optimistic of a return to better market conditions and consequently increases in executive salaries, and executive recruitment specialists are predicting that salaries are poised for the sharpest increase since 2000, due to a significant shortage in top talent in critical business areas.

Uncertainty within the IT&T industry over the past few years has resulted in executives seeking to leave the industry altogether, whilst others operate independently or have opted to work on the "client side", versus working for IT vendors or professional services firms. There is a growing trend amongst many IT&T senior executives seeking a new position in the industry to take a more proactive stance to the overall management of their career path in a bid to undertake more successful career transitions. This is not surprising really. Richard Landolt, managing director of executive search firm Horton International, says: "High fliers are people who are used to managing and leading, they want to take control of their career management."

A more structured approach to career management and, more recently, the widespread adoption of executive career coaching is a noticeable trend amongst IT&T executives. It is similar to leveraging your financial adviser to help develop a comprehensive financial plan. For IT&T executives structured career management and planning sharpens your focus.

## *Five tips to take control of your career*

- Undertake a full inventory of your major career accomplishments, achievements to date, and identify how you specifically contributed to those results
- Identify your personal core competencies and skills, and note which of your talents are currently underutilized  
Take the time to really understand what is important to you, what are your core values and develop a value proposition to communicate to prospective employers
- Develop a detailed career vision for yourself into the future, setting yourself short- and longer-term goals
- Define the "perfect" job that would fit with your values, skill set, expectations and requirements. Covering these key issues will allow you to develop the foundation for a much more focused and powerful career plan and job search program.

Kylie Hammond 28/06/2004

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Phone: 1300 669 139  
Direct: +61 2 9922 6175  
Email: [info@amazingresults.com.au](mailto:info@amazingresults.com.au)  
Web: [www.amazingresults.com.au](http://www.amazingresults.com.au)

  
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