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Flat World Careers and Career Imprints

You can't help but think, "What does this mean for my career?". Tom Friedman's book, *The World is Flat*, is sobering, not just because of the global economic changes he describes, but also because of the speed with which the changes are happening. No one who follows what has been happening in the US economy can fail to agree with him.

Friedman asserts that it will all work out for the best. As more work goes to India, wealthier Indians will buy more American products, etc. From the big picture point of view, that's probably correct. But as Americans begin to lose their huge advantage in global jobs and careers, real people are impacted as individuals and don't know what to do.

As a recent college graduate put it, "What's a safe career for me? Or even a safe industry now?". For an experienced IT professional in an outsourced world, what does "re-skilling" mean? Is "re-education of the workforce" a practical idea? And if it is, what should we re-educate people to do?

The job market is certainly a lot better right now than it has been for some time. But as our individual clients take new jobs they aren't always at an increased salary or responsibility. Our corporate clients are posting new jobs but remain concerned that they are hiring too many people too fast. Both our individual clients and our corporate clients are concerned about the future.

Into this atmosphere of uncertainty, comes a new book which will give you a new perspective on what individuals, companies and the American economy can do best. *Career Imprints: Creating Leaders Across an Industry*, by Monica Higgins, tells the story of how a group of managers recruited to Baxter Laboratories in the '70s and '80s ended up building a whole new industry and a whole new set of careers, not just for themselves but for thousands of people.

This book is interesting for the individual success stories, for the story of the impact of a particular corporate culture, and for the story of social capital - the glue between the entrepreneurial people - that culture created.

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For most of us Americans, *The World is Flat* isn't good news. It's essentially about squeezing out costs, competing hard in a tough environment, where not being successful during this transition is a real possibility. And people who aren't super-bright or super-educated or super-flexible can easily end up losers.

Career Imprints, on the other hand, shows a different world, but still a global one, in which people work hard, make a real contribution to their employer, build something, generate creative options, and create a new industry as well as new careers. Let's hope that there are many more companies creating career imprints that build new careers for our future. ■

Ask Us...

New Mergers Impact Boston Jobs

Question: What is the impact of all the mergers on the Boston job market?

Answer: It's true that many of the big companies in this area - banks, department stores, insurance companies, and others - are no longer "local" companies. In that case, there can be an impact on "core services" jobs like finance, human resources, and IT. Bob Gatti, the president of the premier national search firm for HR professionals, Gatti & Associates, describes the impact on HR jobs:

"I believe there are fewer senior jobs here, but the drop off is only about 3-5% over the past five years. The top jobs are going away a little faster. The new jobs are with start-ups which have begun to re-emerge, but these, too, are not that senior, at least at first."

We agree with Bob. We saw a very active job market this summer for both our individual and corporate clients, but it's slower and more competitive at the senior levels. ■

Ask...

How to Get What You Want and Need at Work

The book by Priscilla H. Claman

Available directly from Career

Strategies at 617.227.5517.

Success Stories

Names of clients and some facts about them have been changed to maintain confidentiality.

"Real Shoe People Have Global Careers"

Megan wants desperately to work in Italy. "I took Italian in college and studied in Milan for a semester. When I graduated, I moved to Boston and got a job with an athletic shoe company."

Megan did really well there. She learned a lot about sourcing products overseas and the global supply chain. "What I want now is to be in the fashion shoe industry, and a good job in Italy would be great for my career. But it's just as tough for Americans to get authorization to work in European Union countries as it is for people from the EU to get work authorization here."

But Megan did her homework. She emailed potential employers. She visited Italy twice and networked with old college friends there and with her email contacts. If she were an EU citizen, it would be easy to get a job. Then, someone told her about dual citizenship.

Turns out Megan had an Irish grandmother who never became an American citizen. Now, Megan's mother can apply for dual American/Irish citizenship, and after that, so can Megan. Then, Megan can work in any part of the EU she likes. She can get that job in Italy. As Megan's mother says, "Now, it's 'If you are Irish, please apply'." ■

Place Your Bets...

John got his MBA from MIT during the dot com boom. Coming from the horseracing part of Kentucky, he was prepared to gamble. Two start-up companies wanted to hire him. To his credit, John selected the right one. "One company offered me \$15,000 a year more, but the other one offered me the chance to learn from one of the best entrepreneurs. I chose the learning not the money, although that was tough, owing MIT as much as I did."

When that firm didn't survive, John decided that the next job he had should be at a company everyone knew and respected. He had plenty of opportunities to back another start-up horse. John held out. "I know I need experience in a brand-name company to have my choice of start ups. I need to work for a company with a name all the headhunters respect."

Now, with seven years' experience with a "brand-name" employer, John is at the point when he can choose a new start-up. "I'm able to bet on a sure thing now. That's my strategy - to help my new company go public and to make enough money by age 50 so that my family is secure no matter what happens in the economy. What brand-name company can promise that?" ■

We Recommend... Books!

Career Imprints: Creating Leaders Across An Industry.

by Monica C. Higgins

A fascinating description of a corporate culture and a group of star managers who made a whole new industry possible. This book has implications for how we manage our careers as well as how a corporate culture is created. A great example of creating economic value through "social capital".

Get Off Your Rocker Before You Go Off Your Rocker.

by Barry Bograd

A good read! Stories of dynamic people you may know and how they handle retirement.

The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century.

by Thomas L. Friedman

A provocative book on the declining competitiveness of the American economy in the global business era.

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