

Landmen 'Rig Up' During the Economic Lows

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With disappointing second quarter earnings for oil companies, uncertainty among landmen appears to be increasing. Anxiety and fear at times dominate most conversations. For the past year, the topic of dropping oil prices has become the focal point. It is easy for landmen to become uncertain, negative, paralyzed, and even afraid for the future. Maintaining a positive, goal oriented attitude and building business skills for landmen is like a “rigging up” to maintain value and continue the upward momentum in the oil and gas industry. To quote Winston Churchill, “One should never let a crisis go to waste.”

“Rigging Up” defined by OilGasGlossary.com” is “to prepare the drilling rig for making a hole; to install tools and machinery before drilling is started.” During this economic downturn, landmen can “rig up’ by honing professional skills to stay in the lead and ready for the

increase in business. The focus should be on future success not the fear of the downturn.

Oil executives are “rigging” up as well focusing on strengthening companies. Ben Van Beurden, CEO of Shell said, “We have to be resilient in a world where oil prices remain low for some time. These are challenging times for the industry, and we are responding with urgency and determination.”

Mark Berg, Executive VP of Pioneer Natural Resources Co., said, “We think this is an opportunity to upgrade. We believe we can improve service quality in this environment because we are going to be migrating to the best partners we have on the service side.”

While oil executives are “rigging up” standards and processes, landmen are “rigging up” their professional skills to be more valuable in the workplace. Several surveys show that employers are looking for the following skills that set landmen apart to make a difference in the oil industry:



Effective communication: Oil companies seek landmen who can listen to instructions and act on those instructions with minimal guidance. They want landmen who speak, write, and listen effectively, organize their thoughts logically, and explain everything clearly.

Computer and technical literacy: Almost all jobs now require an understanding, ranging from

basic to advanced, of computer software, word processing, e-mail, spreadsheets, and Internet navigation. Youtube offers a variety of “how to” lessons for software and for building a professional social media image. Reading books or listening to audio books such as the updated version “How To Win Friends and Influence People in the Digital Age” by Dale Carnegie give landmen the leading edge to use modern technology to stay professionally connected.

Problem-solving/Creativity: Oil companies look for landmen who can resolve sticky situations. Problem-solving ability can aid landmen with making transactions, processing data, formulating a vision, and reaching a resolution. Oil Companies need the assurance that landmen can conquer job challenges by thinking critically and creatively.

Interpersonal abilities: Relationship-building and relationship-management are high priorities with many employers. These skills confirm that a candidate can relate well to others, both co-workers and customers.

Teamwork skills: The ability to work well with others while pursuing a common goal is a long-running favorite of oil companies. But so is the ability to work with minor supervision. Reading books or listening to the audio book, “How to Win Friends and Influence People” by Dale Carnegie has helped many including landmen climb the ladder of success.

Diversity sensitivity: In today's world, cultural sensitivity and ability to build rapport with others in a multicultural environment is highly valued by oil companies.

Planning and organizing: Workplace life requires prioritizing and organizing information. Oil companies value people who plan ahead and present ideas for the future.

Leadership and management: Leadership consists of a strong sense of self, confidence, and a comprehensive knowledge of company goals. These are qualities that motivate and inspire, providing a solid foundation for teamwork. Reading books or listening to audio books such as John Maxwell's "Developing the Leader Within You" provide solid guidelines to lead.



With the need to focus on the bottom line, oil companies continue to look to landmen to make money for them or save money for them. Skills useful in saving money are universally desired, by all companies.

Oil companies also look for the following personal qualities of landmen that add value:

Adaptability and flexibility: Nearly half of employers in a recent survey gave a high rating to "openness to new ideas and concepts." They also

like landmen who can work independently or as part of a team, changing gears when required, whether multitasking or adapting working hours and locale.

Professionalism and work ethic: Oil Companies seek productive landmen with positive work ethics who stick with challenges until they meet them.

Positive attitude and energy: The last to be picked and promoted are landmen who show gloomy outlooks and emotional immaturity. Portray a jolly, confident outlook and energetic, organized behavior.

During slow periods, "rig up" by learning and growing. Steer clear of worry, stress and fear which can cause long term mental and health problems for landmen.

According to WebMD, "chronic worrying affects your daily life so much that it interferes with your appetite, lifestyle habits, relationships, sleep, and job performance. Many people who worry excessively are so anxiety-ridden that they seek relief in harmful lifestyle habits such as overeating, cigarette smoking, or using alcohol and drugs."

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) reports, "Chronic emotional stress can affect virtually every organ system in negative ways. Prolonged stress has been shown to cause numerous health problems, including:

- Weakening of the immune system, making you more likely to have colds or other infections
- High blood pressure
- Upset stomach, ulcers and acid reflux
- Anxiety
- Increased rapid heartbeat and heart palpitations
- Panic attacks
- Cardio-vascular problems
- Increase in blood sugar levels
- Irritable bowel problems
- Backaches
- Tension headaches or migraines
- Sleep problems
- Chronic fatigue syndrome
- Respiratory problems and heavy breathing
- Worsening of skin conditions, such as eczema

Although it is good to stay up to date on oil prices and the economic future, keep the negative reports at a minimum to maintain positive health and business.



Fixating on dropping oil prices can increase stress hormones in landmen. Daily oil price reports vary day to day and can put landmen on emotional highs and lows if not grounded. It is important to gather enough news, not oversaturate with negative news, and then landmen can work on strategies for business and focus on the positive.

The unclear current economic status is not that different than other volatile seasons faced by businessmen and entrepreneurs. American Businessman Executive Jeffrey R. Immelt, CEO of GE who said, "I have learned that nothing is certain except for the need to have strong risk management, a lot of cash, the willingness to invest even when the future is unclear, and great people."



Looking to model others who have succeeded during an economic downturn can keep a landman's momentum and focus on business energized. "Fortune 500" spotlighted companies that succeeded despite a struggling economy: "During the recession, Kraft created Miracle Whip in the early 1930s in response to lagging sales of Mayonnaise. It premiered nationwide at the 1933 World's Fair and gained popularity thanks to an intense advertising campaign and even a two hour radio show devoted to the product (a lesson that advertising in a recession pays off). By the end of the decade, Miracle Whip was selling better than all other brands of Mayo."

Fortune 500 highlighted "Steve Jobs and Co.as they introduced the iPod less than two months after the Sept. 11 attacks and the economic downturn that followed. The product was an expensive luxury, and yet it sold modestly. As the economy picked up, and the design changed from year to year, the iPod became a staple for music listeners everywhere. Well over 100 million iPods have been sold to date."

Another company, "Henry Heinz invented Ketchup in the early 1870s by adapting an old Chinese recipe (pickled fish sauce). The company didn't release the product until the tail end of the recession in 1876. It has since become the dominant condiment in this country."

Landmen can maintain motivation and "rig up" by reading positive reports, studying innovative companies, and even imitating successful people who have turned a seemingly tragedy into a triumph. Look to messages as those found by Mike Tweedy, procurement manager at the integrated oil firm Eni U.S. Operating Co., who said, "The drilling slowdown means oil companies and services companies will see more compressed profit margins, which in turn forces companies to focus on best practices. OK, it's going to be a very rough year, but it's an opportunity ... to capture that standardization. We've challenged a lot of our oil field service suppliers to come to us with creative commercial options."