

## **A New Year's Resolution about CAVE BEHAVIOR...AND HOW TO STOP IT**

Happy New Year! I can hear it now..."How did 2005 roll around so fast? This is the year that I need to DO SOMETHING about my career. But I'm not sure how to get the ball rolling. Everyone says you need a good job listing source, and Netshare takes care of that for me. But I also know that networking will be important, and I'm terrible at that."

Do those words sound familiar? Do they sound like you? For more than 16 years, I have coached senior managers and executives in job searches. We talk about the importance of contacts and referrals, and clients get nervous. Many say, "I have been with (pick your favorite company) for over 15 years, and the only people I know are from the company. I call this **Cave Behavior**.

You probably know how it goes. You take a good job with a great firm; a company that hopes you will be productive and stay a long time. Every morning you climb down a figurative ladder to 8,000 feet below the surface of the earth. It's a very nice cave...the company makes sure it is so that you will want to stay there.

The rest of the staff is friendly and so professional. There is a cafeteria, maybe a bank or credit union branch, and the dry cleaner picks up and delivers. There are picnics, holiday hams, and a childcare center which parents can use. Toastmasters may have a chapter. Some places field a soft-pitch baseball team in a league, or have a full gym like one corporate headquarters I know in Southern California. What a great place to be!

So you work with company people, eat with company people, and make the cave your home. What happens, even though you don't think about it at the time, is that your lifelines to the surface start to atrophy...and eventually break.

At some point, unless you literally DIE there, you will need to emerge from that cave. The company may ask you to go, or you may make the decision yourself. As you reach the top of the 8,000-foot ladder, it will occur to you that you don't know anyone on the surface. And it is your fault for letting that happen.

So what do you do when you are working? What will build and maintain the lifelines to the rest of the world? If 2005 is the time to start making a move out, here are some things you can do.

**First...**Pay attention. Do you know what is going on in your industry, your local economy, your competitors? Find out...via Internet and other media. The more you are aware, the smarter you will sound.

**Second...**Get involved.

Which professional associations should you know...and who should know you? Do something more than work in your cave.

If you like to write, contribute an article to your association newsletter, or publication.

If you like to talk, volunteer to show up at Career Night at the Community college and present how to become whatever job you do.

If you are a member of an association, volunteer for the membership committee, or be an officer.

**Third...** A good rule of thumb is to dedicate at least one hour per week to your own career. The pay off is that when you decide to leave the cave you will have lifelines in place, lines you set and have maintained. People will know your name, and what you do.

**It's not who you know, but who knows YOU** that makes all the difference when it is time to find a new position. So come out of that cave! 2005 is a good time to make a resolution to end cave behavior.