



Posted on Sat, Jul. 26, 2008

How to be the last one standing

Let's talk about keeping a job in a tough labor market, said Mary Civiello.

The Kansas City native, who went to New York City and won six Emmy Awards as an NBC reporter and anchor, now works as a "presentation coach" and author.

Her new book, *Communication Counts*, contains some of the advice she's delivered to executives at the likes of Citigroup, PepsiCo and Pfizer.

In an interview at Kansas City's Central Exchange, Civiello shared pointers to stay employed. She noted that we tend to show our can-do attitudes for job interviews but forget to do the same on our jobs.

"When the economy is bad, we tend to focus on the bumner stuff," she said. "But it's absolutely critical to stay positive. If you have to, write down a list of things you like about your job every morning before you leave for work."

At work, she advised, "remember the 'birds of a feather' rule. Don't hang out with the complainers. Don't let the boss see you with the bad-attitude crowd. It sends a message."

In downsizing environments, it's important to stand out as a contributor. "But it's all about being the ones left standing," Civiello said.

Far beyond schmoozing, it's important to be a valued contributor and to frame comments in a positive light.

"Nobody wants to hear criticisms, even if they're valid," she said. "And be aware of the 'open door' policy. That doesn't mean you're really welcome to go in and offload any concerns. Pick your battles well, and then use a two-positives-for-every-one-negative rule."

If you have to complain or point out a problem, first compliment an aspect of the project that's working well, then offer to "help kick it up a notch," she said.

And do self-promotion. Her rules: Smile. Be succinct. Be specific. Don't *tell* your boss you have good people skills. Share specific examples to illustrate; it primes the pump for your annual review.

And, she recommends, be visible in your company. Volunteer for charitable or community projects, because "even if you're not the last one standing, you'll have better credentials for your next job search."

To reach Diane Stafford, call 816-234-4359 or send e-mail to stafford@kcstar.com. Read her recent columns and Workspace blog at www.workspacekc.typepad.com.