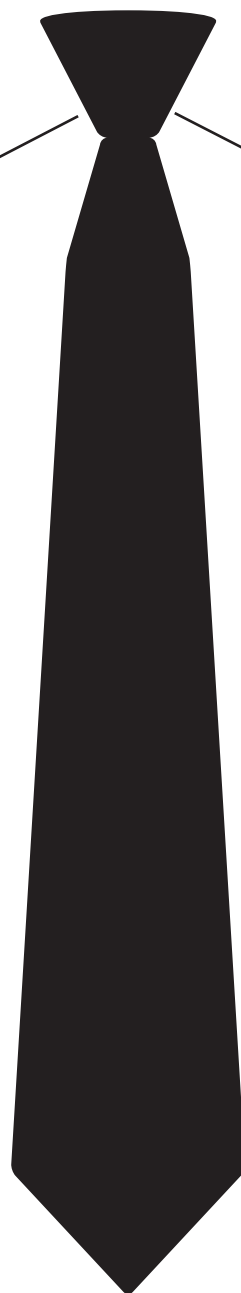




Executive Class

By Ted Alan Stedman

In today's hyper-competitive world, adult education could mean the difference between moving up the ladder in your career or losing the job you have. Fortunately, it's never been easier to upgrade your skills, learn new planning and management practices and attach another degree (or your first degree) to your resumé. Online coursework in conjunction with classroom discussion conducted at school or in chat rooms allow even the busiest professional and parent to earn a certificate and advance their life.





M eet Rich Yeager, an engineer at Honeywell in Kansas City. More than 30 years after graduating from the University of Kansas (KU) with a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering, the 58-year-old will soon graduate with a master's in engineering management from his alma mater's Edwards Campus near Kansas City. "I've raised a family, worked in many places for Honeywell and now divide my time between the East Coast and Kansas City area," says Yeager, who realized he was out of step with the fast-paced technology of his field.

those who want to keep their job on an upward trajectory need to catch up and keep their skills current *and* expand them.

"'Life-long learning' is the catchphrase now," say Professor Jim Campbell, interim vice provost/dean of continuing studies at University of Wisconsin, Madison. And acquiring new skills relevant to a current or anticipated career is what drives many to adult higher education. Campbell cites degree programs in health care administration, health services fields like counselors or psychiatry, health advocacy and laboratory management as the hot fields

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"To use my expertise to help along newer engineers, I really needed a current understanding of the newer technology and business aspects of electrical engineering," he explains. Knowing how to manage projects and people to get optimum results are skills that transcended his original career objectives, and Yeager says his second stint as student has greatly buoyed his capabilities. "I was a technical person who did the math. Now I have the people and business skills to present and sell projects, and that solidifies my importance to my employer."

Yeager's realization follows the same pattern that many professionals face today. In short,

among the adult ed population. "Our aging population is making these career fields very much in demand," says Campbell. Languages are also popular, since the world is becoming smaller and businesses increasingly operate on a global level.

The upside for these students' second acts, beyond keeping their current job, can be substantial. According to WorldWideLearn, an online directory charting executive education, employees taking executive, or EMBA, programs in the U.S., Europe and Asia pocket average salaries of approximately \$130,000 to \$200,000. While about half the students are in their 30s, the remainder are well into their careers,

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enrolling in programs to enhance their problem-solving abilities as well as increase their value to employers.

KU's Edwards Campus is considered at the forefront of continuing and executive education programs in the country, offering its 2,100 students 25 degree programs built for its adult student body profile: 50 percent married; 26 percent with children under age 18; 58 percent working full-time; and 64 percent attending for career advancement.

Vice chancellor Bob Clark, who teaches MBA, leadership and strategy courses, says his working students—about 80 percent in graduate degree programs—go directly back to their employers, applying their lessons to real-world issues immediately. “We’re essentially KU’s executive campus,” says Clark, “developing graduates who can add value to the community and economy.” To Clark, a better educated workforce is a win-win for everyone:

the employee, the employer and the city, since a better credentialed work force lures more business to Kansas City—and the higher paying jobs that go with it.

Prime time For Online

Like KU, Colorado State University (CSU) has invested deeply in adult and executive education, offering 24 master’s degree programs in its Division of Continuing Education. Significant portions of CSU’s students are in the military, many in non-combat situations with regular intervals available for study time. “They’re anticipating leaving the military,” says Associate Provost Hunt Lambert, “and they want to have a career in place upon discharge.”

Yet many other CSU students are from the early- to mid-career private sector who realize their promotion depends on a MBA or other advanced degree. “Agricultural business degrees are huge with us because of the

Does Your Career Need a Lift?

Roy Cohen, career coach and author of *The Wall Street Professional's Survival Guide*, points out these key indicators of a career in need of help:

- You're overlooked for key assignments or promotions that go to peers.
- You don't get calls from recruiters and your LinkedIn profile generates virtually no buzz.
- You're feeling stale, bored or ready for a change.
- You wonder about the next stage in your career and what training will get you there.
- You recognize that to move forward professionally—or even maintain your current position—you need upgraded skill sets.

EXOTIC STUDIES

Contemplating a wholesale change in your career? Try these unique programs where higher education comes with lifestyle rewards.



Degree in Global Environmental Science

WHERE: University of Hawaii at Manoa

THE PROGRAM: Students investigate natural systems as well as economics, policy, social systems and their interaction with the earth.

BONUS: Study at a renowned earth science institute, one within walking distance to the ocean. soest.hawaii.edu



Master of Science in Global Supply Chain Management

WHERE: University of Alaska, Anchorage

THE PROGRAM: Focus on corporate strategy within a globally competitive environment and information technology relevant to petroleum, fishing and mining industries.

BONUS: Adventurous recreation opportunities nearby: hiking in the mountains, fishing, skiing, biking and boating. cbpp.uaa.alaska.edu



Geology degree emphasizing Paleontology

WHERE: Montana State University, Bozeman

THE PROGRAM: Courses examine biological and geological processes influencing the diversity and extinction of animals.

BONUS: Earn credits working in the field throughout the northern Rocky Mountains. montana.edu



Master of Science in Hospitality Management

WHERE: Florida International University at Biscayne Bay

THE PROGRAM: Prepares hospitality veterans for senior management positions in international food production management, marketing, finance, accounting, operations analysis and law.

BONUS: The campus in North Miami encompasses 200 tropical acres in a resort-like setting with direct access to the bay. bbc.fiu.edu



The University of Colorado Boulder Leeds School of Business

The Business Management Institute (BMI) is designed for directors and managers, often with a technical undergraduate degree, who now have the need for a deeper understanding of business knowledge to help them excel in their recently acquired or expanded management responsibilities. This is an intensive business certificate program that can be completed in 7 months, one 3-day weekend per month, beginning in September 2011 and finishing in March 2012. Topics include economics, business law, accounting, finance, marketing, leadership/management, operations and business strategy.

For more information visit <http://leeds.colorado.edu/ExecEd> or call (303) 735-0541.





economics of natural resources. And we have a ton of technical people who've reached the top of their career potential and want to go into management. Two to four years of study enable them to do that," says Lambert, emphasizing that "It's not so much the Harvard or Stanford MBA that's important to students, it's just knowing how business works."

Of the division's 6,600 students, its Distance MBA program, costing about \$26,000, has become its most popular curriculum with roughly 1,000 students currently enrolled. "It's entirely tuned to the traveling business professional," explains Lambert. The program features online support, and the extended classroom uses DVDs and streaming Internet content. "We've found that combining online tools with watching the class (online) has a much better outcome than working solely online."

Soon-to-be CSU adult grad Carolyn H. Hedrick is emblematic of Lambert's belief that

the coursework matters more than a school's wow factor. "I was a 52-year-old woman with decades of working experience in a company going through staff reductions," explains Hedrick of Walnut Cove, North Carolina. "Short of a miracle, my chances for advancement within the company were slim to none."

Employed in finance, IT and marketing positions by the food conglomerate Sarah Lee Corporation for 32 years, Hedrick, now 55, changed roles when a 2006 spin-off landed her with global apparel company Hanesbrand, Inc. The move prompted her to update her skills through a distance executive MBA program paid for by her employer and offered by Colorado State University, from which she'll graduate in May.

"Without the master's program, you don't know what you're missing until you start studying," she feels. "My conversations are more intelligent. I have a better grasp. I'm

The Real Deal: Online Education

Whether you attend class or learn online, the results of a 2010 study published by the Distance Education and Training Council show that employers value employees who work to improve their skills.

73% said an online degree is just as valuable as a campus-based degree.

85% of employers who had employees complete online degrees said these employees performed better on the job as a direct result from their online degree.

92% of employers would hire other graduates of online education programs.

94% of employers would also encourage other employees in the organization to enroll in distance learning programs.



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now working with our Shanghai counterparts, having weekly meetings on IT. I'm immediately using what I learn in my coursework," says Hedrick, who was recently promoted to senior manager of financial business support.

Filling In The Gaps

At the University of Denver (DU), its University College for Continuing and Adult Education is geared to returning students with and without prior degrees who are trying to advance their careers. "Executive MBAs for mid-career adults are certainly viable," says Dr. Jim Davis, dean of the adult college. "But we're often serving students in a competitive scramble: bachelor's completion programs; master's level courses; and certificates."

"Students want to learn something tonight and use it tomorrow at work."

Davis points out that graduate degrees require a serious commitment. They often demand twice as many hours as certificate programs, and a substantial financial investment of roughly \$23,000. By contrast, DU's certificate programs are areas of concentrated study in a particular area of skill. "That tends to have an immediate, tangible benefit to the student in his or her job situation," says Davis. "Often, that's what preserves their job or leads to advancement opportunities."

Whether a student wants an MBA or a certificate, many find going back to school a much more enriching experience than their undergrad days. Part of that is because students usually know exactly what they want. "The key thing for universities providing adult and executive education is to keep the coursework convenient and relevant to the job," says Davis. "Students want to learn something tonight and use it tomorrow at work." 📱

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Ted Alan Stedman is a Denver-based freelance journalist and photographer who constantly needs to reeducate himself on the new tools and techniques of his trade.

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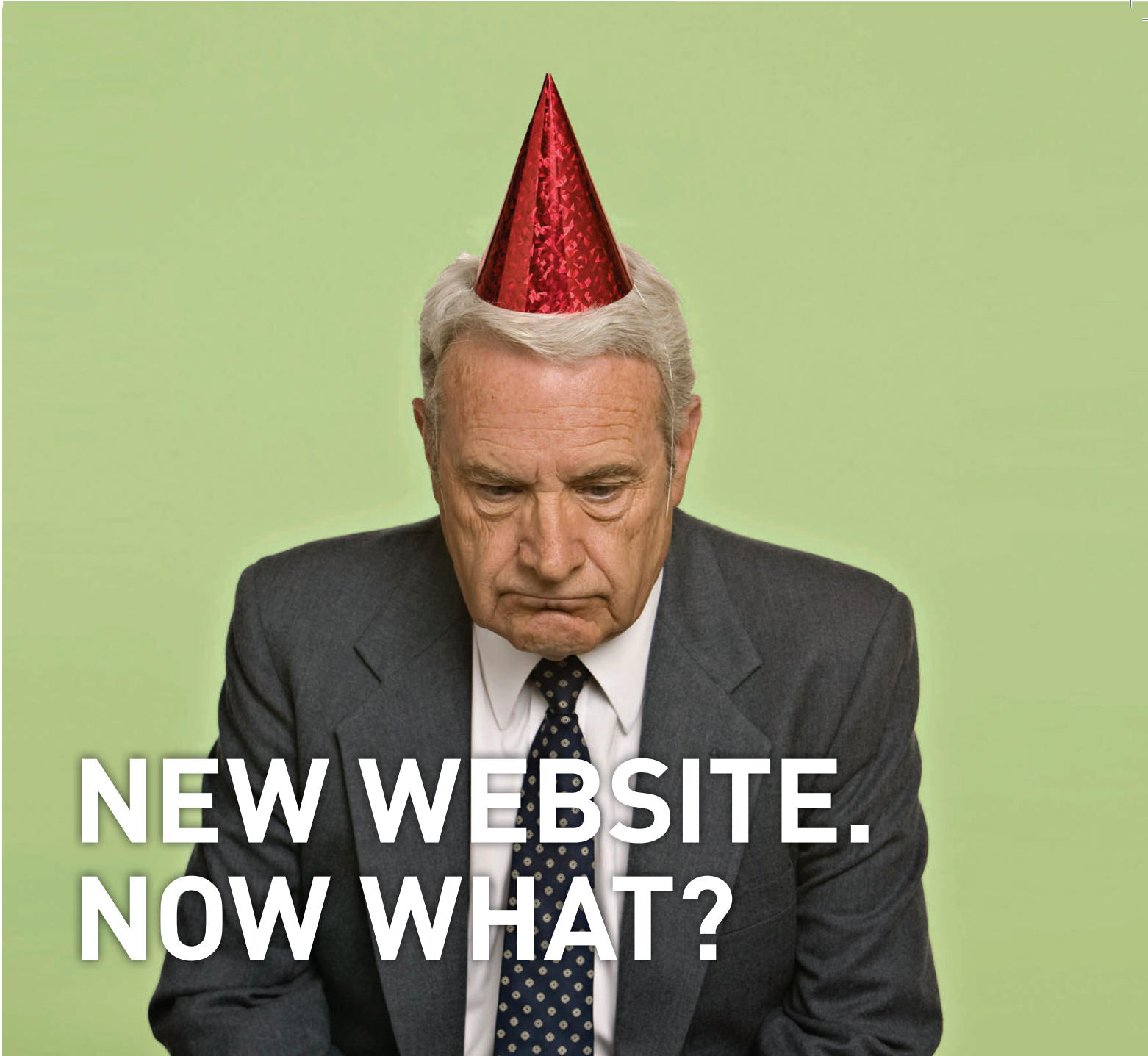
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