



A Financial Times Service

Career Coach: Turn Rumor Mill Grist Into Career Gold

Article published on April 27, 2015
By Clare Trapasso

Career Coach: Can You Navigate the Rumor Mill Without Being Labeled a Gossip? *Responses have been edited for clarity and concision.*



Steve Fleming

Steve Fleming is the CEO of Wall Street Options, a recruiting firm specializing in asset management and other areas of financial services, based in New York.

Using rumors and half-truths to advance your career [is] done in every company around the world. People will go to extraordinary measures to advance themselves using these tactics.

Knowing inside information, which [could be] about an executive leaving, a client that's not happy ... [or] companies that are getting ready to go through major changes, these are things people leverage to their own advantage or their company's [advantage].

When companies are poaching ... talent, you might want to tell a rumor like, "I was given a call by the same recruiter for a similar position and I turned them down because I'm really happy [here.]" When the higher-ups find that poachable people are turning down recruiters, it shows loyalty. When downturns come in the market, they're less likely to be fired first.

If you read the newspaper and the financial stuff that's out there about your own company and your competitors ... that's the kind of stuff you'd want to use in the rumor mill.

If you're competing in the market and you're competing for the same clients, you could spread rumors about the unsustainability and internal issues the [competitor] may be having using simple things you find in the press. It could be people leaving the firm, their stock is down, the CEO is going through a divorce. You're mentioning something that's already out there.



Helen Dayen, a [Lehman Brothers](#) alum, is the owner of the New York–based Dayen Group, a career-coaching business focused on financial services.

Information is power.

Be the person who listens to the rumors, not tells them or shares them.

It's wrong to eavesdrop. It's wrong to sneak a look at someone's e-mails.

Focus on having open-ended questions and asking and getting the information. Use the gossip to your advantage and also for the greater good. If you [learn] that somebody's struggling on your project, and you want to have some goodwill with that individual, this is a good time to help them. That does help you get ahead.

Sometimes you get the best rumors from junior people who are better entrenched in the details.

You should be wary of rumors that aren't true and you should be wary of spreading them. [If you gossip,] people lose faith and trust in you.



Melissa Llarena owns [Career Outcomes Matter](#), in New York, and has experience working in financial services.

You need to use every weapon that you have to be successful. Observing and listening are critical. Sometimes it's helpful to have a sense of what's going on in terms of leadership shifts, business strategy changes, future open opportunities.

A rumor... might be that Harry doesn't like his job, so he might be interviewing [elsewhere]. Knowing that, it puts you in a position where you can start forming a relationship with Harry's boss that could put you at the front of the line should Harry's position open up.

Listen around you to see what people are saying — or what they're not saying.

After-work activities, like Thursday happy hours, are a place where people tend to share a little bit more openly than in the office. Business trips are other opportunities. Sharing a flight is not a bad idea because you can get some insights from that trip.

At printers, look to see if there's anything lying around.

If you know there are some people who just can't keep their mouths shut on certain topics, you should not talk to them. You have to be careful that it could bite you.

The way you can really distinguish yourself from a gossip is by sticking to the facts as they relate to you and only you. Once you start deviating from yourself and talking about anybody else, that's when you will be labeled a gossip.

Related Content

- July 18, 2014 [What Are the Worst Types of Bosses?](#)
- May 23, 2014 [Revealed: The Most Infuriating Workplace Habits](#)
- April 8, 2011 [How Should Compliance Handle Instant Messaging?](#)

For more articles like this one, go to <http://ignites.com>. Ignites is an information service of Money-Media, a Financial Times company. Please note that your email address will be stored to monitor compliance with our Terms & Conditions. In addition, if you work for a firm which has an existing license to Ignites, we may contact you with details on how to be added to the license at no additional cost. If you do not wish to be contacted for this purpose, please [click here](#) to send an email request for removal.

Please see our [Privacy Policy](#) for further details.