

COMPANIES FILL TOP POSTS FROM OWN RANKS CREATING VACANCIES LOWER DOWN



It seems that top-tier executives looking to get a new C-suite job in the Washington area may not find a single place to send their applications to. Hiring specialists are saying reports vindicate findings that local companies, while filling top positions, prefer to fill them with the proven and tested employees from within their own ranks rather than cast a wider net. In April Defense giant Lockheed Martin declared that its chief executive Robert J. Stevens was retiring and that his place would be taken by their existing, chief operating officer, Christopher E. Kubasik, evidencing that companies, are turning to known faces to take on executive roles. This was a trend that started during the recession and in the face of a listless and indecisive economy, has become a standard for companies to follow. However, hiring experts say, that when businesses promote from the inside, they create job openings on the lower rungs of the corporate ladder. This has created a cascading effect of opportunity for those seeking jobs in these regions. When it comes to executive jobs, "There are fewer of them, and [hiring] is not happening in the same way with the same frequency," said Paul Villella, chief executive of Reston-based staffing firm HireStrategy. Just as Lockheed Martin opted to fill its vacancy from within, J.W. Marriot Jr. announced that the company's old hand Arne M. Sorenson would take over as the hospital chain's new chief executive. Similarly Rosetta Stone made Stephen M. Swad, its chief financial officer, its new president and chief executive. There have even been cases of firms, when confronted with a vacancy, to distribute the retiring person's duties amongst other experienced and senior leaders, totally eradicating that position. Others adopt a chain-reaction approach. Everyone climbs up one rung on the hierarchy ladder and the lowest rung remains empty, for a new person to fill. "Everybody moves up a notch, but the new person comes in at the bottom," said Lisa Sturtevant, a researcher at George Mason University's Center for Regional Analysis. Sturtevant said that this chain-reaction system explains why there is a huge spurt in the entry level workers in the area. She analyses that, based on data from the US Census Bureau, around 32,000, or 13 percent, of the 250,000 workers who moved to the area from 2008 through 2010 were between 22 and 24 years old. According to her research 7 percent of the people who live here are between 18 and 24. She said this age group "always should be a big share of movers, but this is bigger than the past." The Washington metropolitan area was largely immune to the happenings around the country and the gloomy job market and sluggish financial markets, were not as visible here because the area's economy depends on the federal government, which is largely stable and certainly far stronger than elsewhere in the country. This scenario may be in for a change as the federal government is seeking to cut back. And other cities are also picking steam and thereby increasing their ability to compete for young workers within the Washington area. Nevertheless, young graduates continue to regard Washington as a place of opportunity, where their chances of getting employment are high. Rachael Peli, a 2012 graduate of Anderson University in Indiana, said that the chance of landing a job of her choice was what motivated her to move to the District. "It was mostly the jobs, to be honest," Peli said. She said that she had sent her resume to companies in Chicago, Indiana and on the West Coast, but eventually felt that more avenues would open up if she came to Washington DC. Her presumptions proved correct, for soon after coming here she got a position in the digital public affairs practice at Edelman. Joe DeGioia, president of executive search firm JDG Associates, says there are many challenges that confront candidates seeking executive-level jobs. These vary from sector to sector, he says. The constraints or limitations in jobs occurred in high-level hiring, amongst administrative and human resource jobs, even though marketing and sales executives are more in demand. "Everybody needs more business," DeGioia said, and these leaders would be on the front lines of generating it. Those being employed at the lower rungs, will do well to remember that the path to the top begins from the lowest rung.