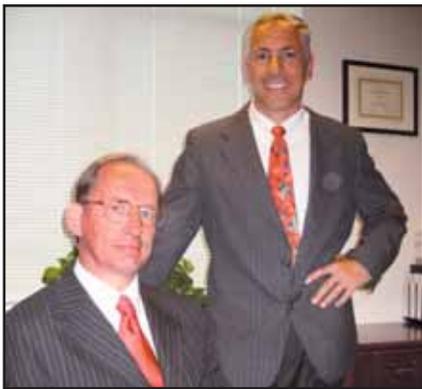


Employment trends: companies are hiring...but carefully

At Greenwich, Connecticut-based Wire Resources Inc., co-owner Jack Cutler and Peter Carino have seen employment cycles come and go since 1970. He and his partner specialize in the industry, with insulated wire and cable a main focus. Some 75 percent of its recruiting is for middle management (plant, sales and engineering managers), 15% executive level and remainder key individual contributors, i.e. process, product and applications engineering. They discussed employment trends with *WJI*.



Wire Resources Inc. co-owners Jack Cutler (sitting) and Peter Carino.

WJI: How do you compare the 2001 recession to prior down cycles?

Cutler/Carino: The recession started in the cable industry several months prior to 9/11. Sales and marketing professionals took the first and subsequently biggest blow and other management was later scaled back. Prior recessions (1972, '87 and '91) were mild by comparison, although some industry segments (military, medical or housing industry) fared better this time. This slow recovery differs from past ones largely because of the impact of globalization. Manufacturing continues to move offshore in response to competitive pressures and outsourcing is a greater component than ever before.

WJI: Are employers looking for a different type of employee?

Cutler/Carino: From 2001 into 2004, companies wanted people who could squeeze cost from the plant or the supply chain. The vast majority of our time was spent recruiting plant managers and pro-

urement professionals. Prior to 2001, the laws of supply and demand were more heavily skewed to the job seeker, especially in the telecom business. Sales and engineering expertise were in high demand and equipment suppliers were enjoying record sales and profitability. The hiring process is taken much more seriously today. Clients want employees who can work in a flatter organization. They want candidates who are more versatile, with well-rounded experience. "What else does he/she bring to the table?" has become much more important. While there are fewer cable companies today there are also fewer cable professionals. Many industry veterans were laid off, some left the industry and others took early retirement. Also, the cable industry does not have a great appeal to the young college grad, so the employment pool is very dry as it is losing people and can't attract them as well.

WJI: What is the hardest job to fill?

Cutler/Carino: The engineer, be it is an executive, manager or key individual contributor. Cablers must be able to offer unique products or be a low-cost producer and either calls for superior engineering talent. That talent pool is small and companies want candidates with competitive expertise.

WJI: What do companies look for in a position such as a CEO?

Cutler/Carino: Clients want a CEO to have international experience and financial background versus a sales and marketing upbringing. They want someone who can deliver in an industry with shrinking profit margins in many product segments. They want a person who is willing and able to be visible within the organization as well as to customers. Not an ivory tower type, but someone genuinely interested in listening to and learning the concerns of the shop operators. And, to make it work, an education in SWOT analysis, the ability to read tea leaves and a judicious mix of aggressiveness and caution.

WJI: How do you assess the current state of the industry?

Cutler/Carino: We have had steady work this year with sales and marketing assignments and that tells us the industry is improving. When times are very, very tough, many companies will reduce fixed costs by eliminating direct sales professionals and hire manufacturer's reps. When companies are hiring marketing directors and managers you know they are thinking further out than next week.

Veteran Southwire employee has his day

In an era where few employees remain with a company for life, Georgia-based Southwire Company's Benny Byrd stands out: 40 years on the job without ever taking a sick day. The Georgia legislature honored the warehouse specialist earlier this year by declaring July 21 to be Benny Byrd Day.

But truth be known, Byrd's greatest commitment to his employer, an act of bravery few would have dared, took place just one month into his career. "I got married on a Sunday and I was scheduled to be at work at 10 o'clock because I was on the night shift," Byrd said. "I asked for the

night off, but they said I was too valuable to the production team." The then 20-year-old

spent his honeymoon tending a baling machine in Southwire's copper reclamation area. "I'm married to a very understanding woman," he said in what should rank as one of the greatest understatement ever made.

"I just enjoy what I do," Byrd said of his streak. "That and I've always had good health. I've felt bad, but I've never been down to where I couldn't go."

"Benny Byrd is an iron man," said Southwire CEO Stuart Thorn. "He is a tremendous asset to our company and an example of commitment for all of us."



Southwire Company's Benny Byrd at (where else?) work.