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Interview with J.T. Kirk, author of *Confessions of a Hiring Manager*, for FascinatingAuthors.com.

FASCINATING AUTHORS: What excites you most about your book's topic? Why did you choose it?

J.T. Kirk: First of all, it's in the news nearly every day! The prospects for hiring in 2010, the climbing unemployment rate, how people are coping with being out of work for extended periods. The topic played into my background, skills, knowledge, and expertise, and after reviewing competitive books in the marketplace, I saw a unique opportunity to write a book from a hiring manager's perspective.

As I write in *Confessions of a Hiring Manager*, résumé writers and career coaches may be able to give you a fish and feed you for a day. But it's the hiring manager who can teach you how to fish so you can feed yourself for a lifetime. After all, it's the hiring manager who does something the others cannot: hire people!

FASCINATING AUTHORS: How long did the book take you from start to finish?

J.T. Kirk: From compiling notes into chapters to submitting to a printer for advance review copies—probably 10 months. I also had other projects and consulting work going on at the same time, so I probably could have finished the project in less time otherwise. My "notes" consisted of a few of my previously published articles on the subject as well as my foils from past workshops. I also conducted several interviews with former clients and workshop attendees.

FASCINATING AUTHORS: What aspect of writing the book did you find particularly challenging?

J.T. Kirk: A couple of things. I had to balance the amount of focused, hard-hitting, immediately usable information with keeping the price of the book as low as possible. There's no sense in writing THE book about getting a job or changing careers if it's too expensive for people who have been out of work for many months and need to use nearly every available dollar to pay the mortgage, put food on the table, and clothe the kids. I realize the book could say so much more than what it does, but maybe there's a *MORE Confessions of a Hiring Manager* project that needs to be written.

Second, I wish I had had the foresight to start the project earlier, like the fall of 2008. If I had, the book would already have been available to people who could benefit from the information in

it and perhaps be in a job already. Hindsight is 20/20, but that aspect of this project has always bothered me to a degree.

FASCINATING AUTHORS: What surprised you the most about the book writing process?

J.T. Kirk: I'm not sure I had any surprises about the book writing process itself. As a hiring manager in technical, marketing, and communications positions, I have written many thousands of pages for my employers. What I was reminded of, however, during the process was that the key to producing a high-quality book that provides solid information for the reader is not so much in the writing, but in the rewriting. "Revise ruthlessly" is an axiom heard often in the writing world, and it hits you square in the face when you decide to tackle a book project.

FASCINATING AUTHORS: Did you have any favorite experiences when writing your book?

J.T. Kirk: I sent early draft chapters to an HR acquaintance, and her enthusiastic feedback and comments fed my enthusiasm for completing the project.

My sister-in-law worked with her husband in a franchise business. The economy hit the business hard, so while he worked the business himself, she started looking for a job. After having no luck in her job search for several months, I coached her through a rewrite of her résumé and cover letter. A little over a month later, she got an invitation for an interview. A few days before her interview, I sent her a draft on the chapter that details how to control a job interview, and two days after her interview, she was hired for the position. She said that positioning herself as their problem solver made the difference.

FASCINATING AUTHORS: What do you hope your readers will gain from reading your book?

J.T. Kirk: Job seekers and career changers must learn how to position themselves as the hiring manager's problem solver, and they must know how to do that by positioning their professional skills, knowledge, and experience to address those hiring manager concerns. *Confessions of a Hiring Manager* shows them how to do that.

FASCINATING AUTHORS: What projects are you currently working on?

J.T. Kirk: I am working on a follow-up project for release later in 2010 entitled, *50 Things You Can Do NOW to Help Keep Your Job*. I'm also working on the companion workbook to *Confessions of a Hiring Manager*, which will be available when the book comes out April 30, 2010.

FASCINATING AUTHORS: Is writing your sole career? If not, what else do you do?

J.T. Kirk: I provide one-on-one assistance to individuals who need help creating and assembling their Professional Skills, Knowledge, and Experience Portfolio (PSKE Portfolio™), and I will soon return to conducting workshops based on the content in *Confessions of a Hiring Manager* to professional associations and organizations. I occasionally perform some contracting work as well.

FASCINATING AUTHORS: Did you do any research for your books, or did you write from experience?

J.T. Kirk: For *Confessions of a Hiring Manager*, mostly from my 20-plus years experience in hiring manager positions in technology, science, marketing, and communications functions for Fortune 500 companies.

FASCINATING AUTHORS: How did you come up with your title?

J.T. Kirk: Because *Confessions of a Hiring Manager* is the first book written by a hiring manager that reveals the view from the other side of the interview desk, I felt that using the word “Confessions” aptly described some of what goes on in the hiring manager’s world that candidates may not be aware of.

The subtitle: “Sage Advice for Daring Job Seekers and Career Changers in a Confused Economy” further reveals the contents of the book (sage advice), the audience (job seekers and career changers), and the timing for this information (in a confused economy).

FASCINATING AUTHORS: What books have influenced you the most?

J.T. Kirk: Wow...there’s so many in different areas of my life. Here are a few that have helped and continue to help my writing career:

- a. *The Well-Fed Writer* by Peter Bowerman
- b. *Back for Seconds: The Well-Fed Writer* by Peter Bowerman
- c. *Too Lazy to Work, Too Nervous to Steal* by John Clausen
- d. *Red Hot Internet Publicity* by Penny Sansevieri
- e. *Getting Known Before the Book Deal* by Christina Katz
- f. *Beyond the Bookstore* by Brian Jud
- g. Any books on writing and publishing by Dan Poynter
- h. Any books on writing and publishing by Gordon Burgett

FASCINATING AUTHORS: Who was your publisher and why did you choose them?

J.T. Kirk: Kings Crown Publishing took an immediate interest in the project. I liked that fact that Kings Crown limits its publishing efforts to just three categories, job and career strategies being one of them. Since they are a new, small publisher and this book is my first, we negotiated an arrangement that works very well for both of us.

FASCINATING AUTHORS: Tell us a little bit about your book.

J.T. Kirk: *Confessions of a Hiring Manager* is not just another book on getting a job: the market already is saturated with such books by business writers, résumé writers, and career coaches with advice on how to write an attention-grabbing cover letter and résumé, or how to “ace” the interview.

While the efforts of such professionals may provide some help and value, it is the hiring manager who ultimately determines who gets hired. The hiring manager's perspective offers valuable insight into unwritten corporate hiring practices and guidance on how to address an organization's needs. Résumé writers or career coaches offer a perspective of being on the outside looking in; the hiring manager is already on the inside and knows the subtleties that give one candidate the edge over others who may be equally qualified.

As a veteran hiring manager, I provide insight into those qualities hiring managers need and want in addition to the requisite skills, experience, and knowledge prospective candidates offer. I shows job seekers and career changers—including military veterans returning to the civilian workforce—how to package their work history into a Professional Skills, Knowledge, and Experience Portfolio (PSKE Portfolio™) that separates the value-add candidate from all other applicants. In addition, I share strategies for negotiating the best possible compensation package without leaving money on the table.

Confessions of a Hiring Manager offers a view from the other side of the desk that reveals the perspectives, presuppositions, and expectations hiring managers have of people looking for a job or a new career.

Confessions of a Hiring Manager is the only book on getting hired that offers:

- Strategies for developing cover letters and résumés that get a hiring manager's attention
- Strategies for controlling (not just "surviving") job interviews
- Strategies for negotiating the best possible salary offer
- Strategies for returning U.S. military veterans for translating military skills and experience into marketable civilian expertise

FASCINATING AUTHORS: What inspired you to create a work of nonfiction?

J.T. Kirk: After having presented workshops on getting hired from a hiring manager's perspective, I discovered there wasn't a book in the marketplace offering this perspective on how to get a job or change careers.

FASCINATING AUTHORS: What did you do to prepare for writing your book?

J.T. Kirk: Invest 20 years as a hiring manager in technical, marketing, and communications positions for several Fortune 500 companies.

FASCINATING AUTHORS: How did you develop your idea for this book?

J.T. Kirk: I wrote chapters from source material that included interviews with former workshop attendees, my previously published articles, workshop foils and handouts, and original research.

FASCINATING AUTHORS: What can we look forward to in your next book?

J.T. Kirk: The title of my next book is *50 Things You Can Do NOW to Keep Your Job*. In one of the worst economies since the Great Depression, people are more worried than ever about keeping their jobs. I reveal in some detail 50 things you can do now to help keep your job today.

I give job seekers and career changers my insight on what skills, knowledge, and personality characteristics managers value when they have to choose between “keepers” and those destined for workforce reduction. It’s not always the smartest person who makes the cut, and I tell readers why in this no-holds-barred book.

FASCINATING AUTHORS: Is there anything we haven’t covered that you would like to include?

J.T. Kirk: The companion workbook to *Confessions of a Hiring Manager*, entitled *Confessions of a Hiring Manager: The Workbook*, will be available April 30, 2010.

FASCINATING AUTHORS: Thank you for taking the time to be part of this interview!

To learn more about the book and Author, please visit –

<http://jtkirk-author.com/>

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