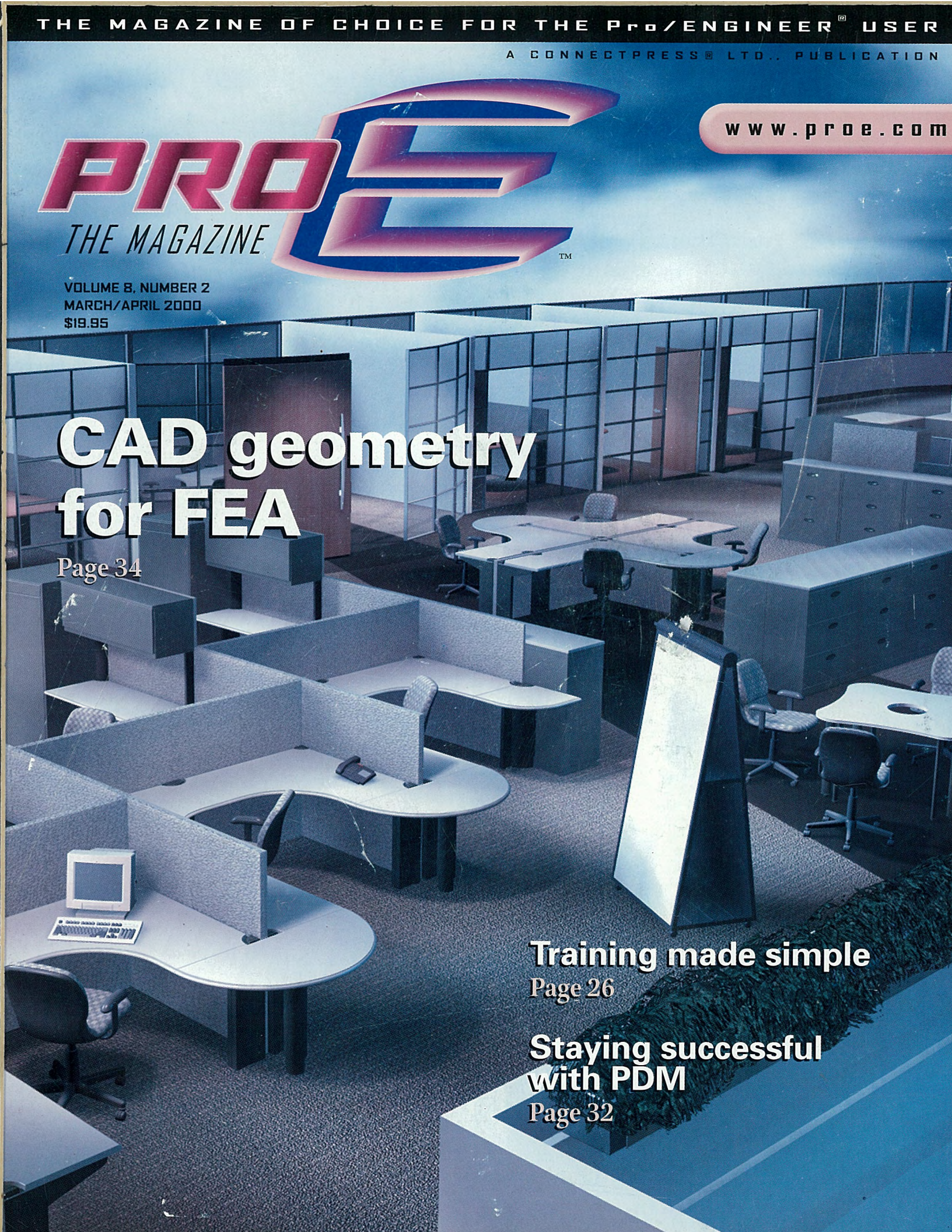
THE MAGAZINE OF CHOICE FOR THE Pro/ENGINEER® USER

A CONNECTPRESS® LTD., PUBLICATION

PROE THE MAGAZINE™

www.proe.com

VOLUME 8, NUMBER 2
MARCH/APRIL 2000
$19.95



CAD geometry for FEA

Page 34

Training made simple

Page 26

Staying successful with PDM

Page 32

The dos and don'ts of CAD/CAM job hunting

Bill Wright

I have been an executive CAD/CAM recruiter for 18 years, and I've seen it all when it comes to professional recruiting. It still amazes me that some of the basics of good interviewing seem to get lost in this important process. So whether you are job hunting or head hunting, here are some tips before you sit down for that next interview.

What are you thinking?

There are several things that can aggravate an executive recruiter that originate from both the candidate and the client company. Some examples that come to mind are:

- A candidate who fails to explain to his/her spouse, even ask if it was OK, that the new job would mean relocating to another city or state. Not good for domestic bliss or the employer, who probably has to start re-interviewing now.
- When explaining the reason for declining the position, a candidate related that "the job was everything I was looking for, the money was more than I asked for, the position was just what I wanted to do and the company was ideal." But because he read in a magazine that "one should never take the first offer that comes along," he would have to politely decline. Good thing I didn't have any sharp objects nearby.
- Once a director level recruit said that, again, the job was ideal as were all the other factors, but he had read in "Places Rated Almanac" that this particular community rated 93rd in the United States in education and he currently lived in the 78th rated and, therefore, he would respectfully decline in order to avoid shortchanging his kids' future (never mind the fact that his kids were almost out of high school). Talk about a smokescreen.
- Why does a candidate spend a company's hard earned money to fly in for interviews when the candidate has absolutely zero intention of taking the position? "Would you relocate?" I always ask. "I'd consider it." "Would you *do* it, though?" I ask again. "Well, no actually, but I would like to see what's out there, though." Right. It is always protocol for the company to pay the interview's expenses upfront in order to make it simpler for the candidate they hope to entice, but of late I have recommended in certain situations that companies require the prospective employee to pre-pay the flight on his or her credit card just to show a little commitment on their part—the candidate is then quickly reimbursed by the company.
- Candidates who pad their salary so the offer will be incrementally higher, but backpedal upon learning they are at the top of the salary range and say that they were including benefits, etc.
- When asked what their current salary is they respond that they don't know and will have to consult with their spouse.
- Candidates who expect unreasonable salary increases.

- Candidates who have a new position every two years and insist they are not contractors. Asked why they left so many companies so quickly they say, "I've heard," "I saw the writing on the wall" or "It was a political thing." Yeah, but 14 times since 1986?

The company's responsibility

Irritations from the other side of the fence include a company that interviews a candidate and then waits more than two weeks to make a decision. It's essentially telling the candidate he is not the one. This might not be the case, but in this job market, companies must act quickly and assertively—within 48 hours of the interview. If they wait a couple of weeks the candidate will no doubt have already been exposed to new and potentially exciting opportunities. In addition, the candidate's original excitement after the interview will probably have somewhat faded.

I have seen companies list the candidate's shortcomings to explain why they can't come close to meeting a candidate's asking price—thus trying to justify the lower salary offer. Bad idea. Or they attempt to justify the lower salary because of the costs of acquiring the candidate, i.e., training costs, training curve, relocation costs, headhunter fees, etc. Again, not a good idea.

Another don't for companies: don't intentionally lowball on the first salary offer knowing darn well it will not be acceptable. The only thing this accomplishes is confrontational negotiations from the get-go.

Be yourself

In almost 20 years of owning my own recruiting agency, I realize that most candidates, especially mechanical engineers, have the basic common sense to know the dos of interviewing—be yourself, be humble, be honest about what you do not know. Do ask questions about school systems and local athletic associations (indicating you would want to set down roots). Maintain good eye contact, don't look at your shoes during the interview. Again, just be yourself and the success should follow.

Happy hunting!

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Did *that* really just happen?

The following is CAD/CAM Recruiters, Inc., top list of employers "I can't believe that candidate did *that* during the interview" stories (yes, these are true):

- "She wore a Walkman and said she could listen to me and the music at the same time."
- "He stretched out on the floor to fill out the job application."
- "A balding candidate abruptly excused himself. He returned to the office a few minutes later, wearing a hairpiece."
- "The candidate asked to see the interviewer's resume to see if the engineering executive was qualified to judge the candidate."
- "The candidate announced she hadn't had lunch and proceeded to eat a hamburger and French fries, wiping the ketchup on her sleeve."
- "He stated that, if he were hired, he would demonstrate his loyalty by having the corporate logo tattooed on his forearm."
- "He stopped the interview to phone his wife for advice on answering specific interview questions."
- "When asked about his hobbies, he stood up and started tap dancing."
- "He pulled out a Polaroid and snapped a picture of me. He said he collected photos of everybody who interviewed him."
- "The candidate demanded more money and that if he got the increase it was a done deal. After getting the bump, he declined because he felt as though the higher salary would create too high of expectations in his performance."
- "During an interview, his wrist watch alarm went off. He shut it off, apologized and said he had to leave for another interview."
- "The candidate said he really didn't want to get a job, but the unemployment office needed proof that he was looking for one."
- "He asked who the lovely babe was, pointing to the picture on my desk. When I said it was my wife he asked if she was home now and wanted my phone number. I called security."
- "The candidate cleaned his ears with his carkeys during the interview."
- "When asked what he aspired to do ten years down the road, he responded: 'Certainly not what you do. This seems tedious.'"
- "Two engineering managers interviewed another engineer, who made good eye contact with them, but he kept making eye contact with another person to their right who wasn't there."
- "A candidate who flossed in the parking lot in the presence of the hiring managers after a lunch meeting."
- "A district sales manager who showed up for an interview with a sports jacket over a VanHalen World Tour T-shirt."
- "During the course of an interview I asked a candidate to explain an unaccounted gap in the dates on his resume and he replied, 'Yeah, I was kind of bumming around at that point, but I've done a 360 degree turn since then.'"