Sneak Peak 2006

Saj-nicole Joni On Business

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The Big Trend
Growth and innovation will occupy center stage in the executive suite for 2006. With the markets moving forward, top leadership now must be about growth and innovation. Profit delivered solely by improving margins and focusing on operational excellence just isn't going to cut it.

The Unconventional Wisdom
More chief executives will invest in developing breadth of perspective and judgment in the rising stars. The trend is turning away from fears that developing a robust inner circle and kitchen cabinet is a sign of weakness. Quite the opposite: Boards and chief executives are looking carefully at whom a leader can attract to think with them. They are committing resources to support this kind of turbo-charger of executive performance and including "the network factor" in their succession planning.

The Misplaced Assumption
That expertise is more important than judgment. Wrong! Expertise has been and will always be important--but discernment of nuance, understanding interdependencies and framing a vision that matters, combined with the ability to marshal relevant expertise from diverse quarters--this is what will distinguish those who deliver exceptional performance.

The Watch List
-- Companies to watch for smart moves: **Google** (nasdaq: GOOG - news - people), **Microsoft** (nasdaq: MSFT - news - people), **Wachovia** (nyse: WB - news - people), **Morgan Stanley** (nyse: MWD - news - people), **Lehman Brothers** (nyse: LEH - news - people), **Whole Foods** (nasdaq: WFMI - news - people).

-- Companies in tight places: **Wal-Mart Stores** (nyse: WMT - news - people), **American International Group** (nyse: AIG - news - people), **AT&T** (nyse: T - news - people), **Research in Motion** (nasdaq: RIMM - news - people).

The Bold Prediction
Big companies will succeed when they free themselves to act like smaller, more nimble companies, including learning to think illicit thoughts.

Saj-nicole Joni writes The Third Opinion column..