

# Don't Just Be Like Everyone Else

by John West Hadley

**W**hen I started out in my first actuarial role, my father said to me, “*An actuary with a personality can go anywhere.*”

What he meant by this was that the actuary who broke out of the stereotype could really stand out among others and have a great career.

There's a lot of truth in that. So many in technical professions like ours fall back on their technical skills and don't pay enough attention to their “soft skills.” I believe one of the things that made me a successful actuary (and now, career coach), relates back to a common refrain I heard from non-actuarial colleagues, “*You don't seem like an actuary.*”

This didn't mean I wasn't proud to be an FSA—after all, I worked hard to earn it! It just meant that I worked equally hard at dealing with people on their level, taking seriously whatever challenges they faced.

With *The Stepping Stone*, you have a great opportunity to work on improving your own “soft skills.” A great case in point is this issue's “Dear Stepping Stone” column, which will give you insight into how to be more effective at coaching your staff (and others who don't even report to you). Write to me at [SteppingStone@JHACareers.com](mailto:SteppingStone@JHACareers.com), and we'll directly address your own questions and challenges in an upcoming issue. And of course, we will be sure to omit or revise identifying details to preserve your anonymity, unless you want to have your name associated with the column.

Also, think about writing your own articles. There's no better way to make sure you deeply understand an issue than by teaching it to others! ●



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