

Company Visits

A major source of information on jobs is direct observation. Most professionals are invited to visit the organization itself before any job offer is extended, even if that means a long trip at the organization's expense. The four to twenty hours that are spent in the organization itself can provide an enormous amount of information beyond that obtained in interviews. All you have to do is keep your eyes and ears open.

Visual Clues

Job hunters tend to underuse direct observation for a number of reasons (chief among them is that most well-educated people do not seem to be very visually oriented). Yet this information source is very attractive in two ways. First, it doesn't require the use of the job hunter's most precious resource—time. If you visit a company for a day, you get eight hours of visual data at no extra cost. Second, it can be an incredibly rich source of impressionistic data, which you can use in checking out your conclusions about the company and its people derived primarily from what people were saying.

Ignoring visual data, or not being alert to cues provided by direct observation, can get a job hunter into trouble. The following story, related by a very bright and capable young man, illustrates the point rather clearly:

While job hunting, I found this small firm that built the most beautiful modern lighting that money can buy.

I spent a full day there and yet I just didn't pay attention to all the visual clues that suggested I might not get along with the boss. I was so enchanted by the job, and by what he said, that I didn't see the obvious signs.

You see, I recognize that I have a fairly large need for autonomy, and a fairly large need for an aesthetic environment. The job opening was for a director of marketing (reporting to the president), which was exactly what I wanted. When I talked to the company president, he assured me that I would be able to run my own show without interference. Since he did not have a background in marketing, nor any great interest in it, I believed him.

Most of the time I spent visiting the company was with him at his home and at a restaurant, but we did meet for about two hours in his office. His office is quite large—about forty by forty feet. It has very functional furniture in it, and it's usually a mess. Outside his office is a smaller office area, twenty by twenty feet, that has five desks in it (yes, five people share that office!). It has the same functional furniture and it's slightly less messy. Off of that area are three other small offices nine by nine feet, each with a functional desk, chair, and grey filing cabinet.

So here we have a setup where his space is clearly dominant, and where his tastes (he has an engineering/manufacturing background) dominate also. I sat in the middle of that for two hours and yet didn't really see it.

When I came on board, I was given one of the nine by nine offices, and for the first month everything was OK. Then the dreary office area began to bug me and when I asked my boss about getting some nice office furniture, he just effectively ignored the request. Each month thereafter, especially as I started to initiate some new marketing programs, we began to clash. After five months it became clear he was not about to give me the autonomy he promised. I quit after six months.

So we encourage you to be alert when you make company visits and to pick out signals that tell you something about the firm.

Goldman, Sachs & Co.

The following pictures simulate a recruiting visit to the New York City headquarters of Goldman, Sachs & Co., a premier investment banking company. Although call-back visits vary, candidates visiting Goldman Sachs for the first time might expect a rigorous interview schedule that includes meeting people from several departments of the company, usually in two-on-one interviews. Often, when the candidate arrives, he or she is hosted by a first year associate whose responsibility it is to arrange the

schedule and distribute the candidate's resume and evaluation sheets. Lunch is usually out of the building in the company of two recent associates of the firm, who talk about what the first year at the firm is like. The host associate collects the evaluations from the interviewers at the end of the day. If this first visit is successful, the candidate will return to meet with additional vice presidents and partners in the firm, usually those more closely associated with the probable work place of the candidate.

As you move sequentially through these snapshots of such a visit, be alert for patterns. Then, summarize your observations into tentative inferences as we did in the self-assessment portion of the book. Given these photos, complete the sentence, "Goldman Sachs is a firm that. . ."



LaGuardia Airport, New York.



Central Manhattan from the Triborough Bridge across Queens.



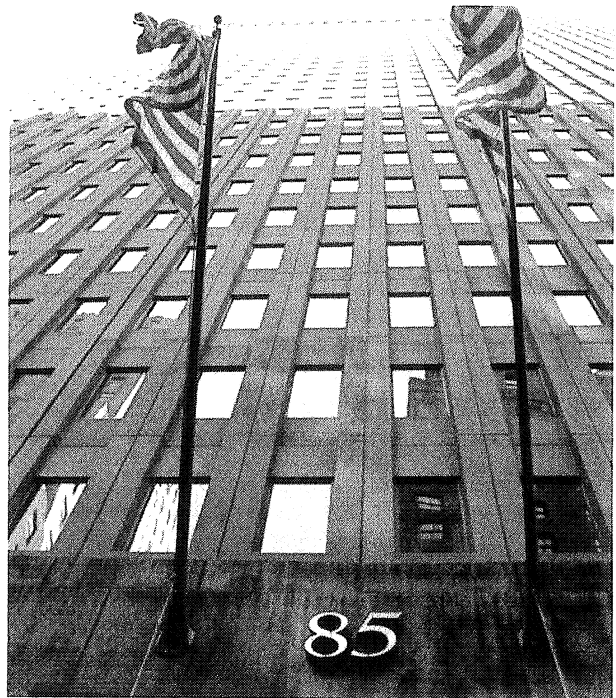
**Southern Manhattan near Wall Street from
The Statue of Liberty.**



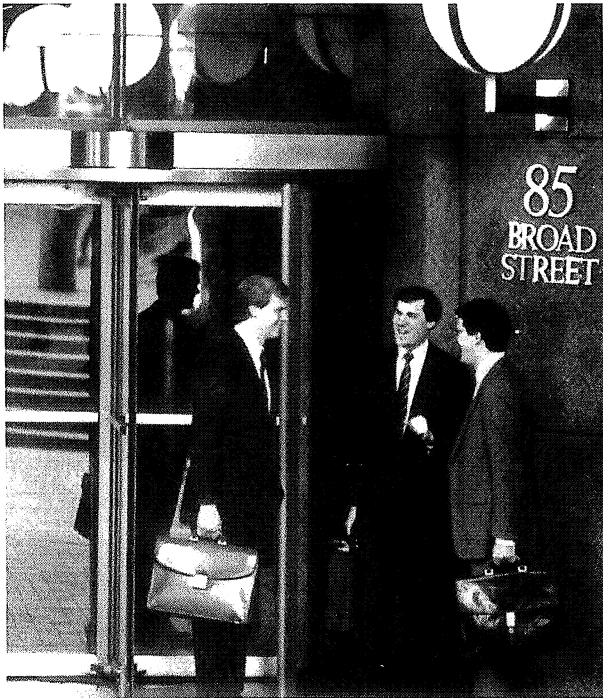
**The trading floor of the New York Stock
Exchange.**



Broad Street, Manhattan.



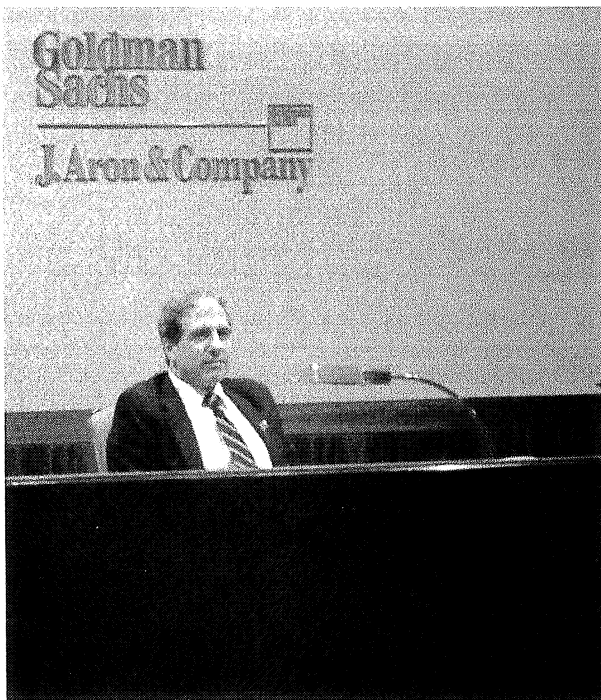
**85 Broad Street, headquarters of Goldman,
Sachs and Co.**



The front door of Goldman Sachs, and some employees.



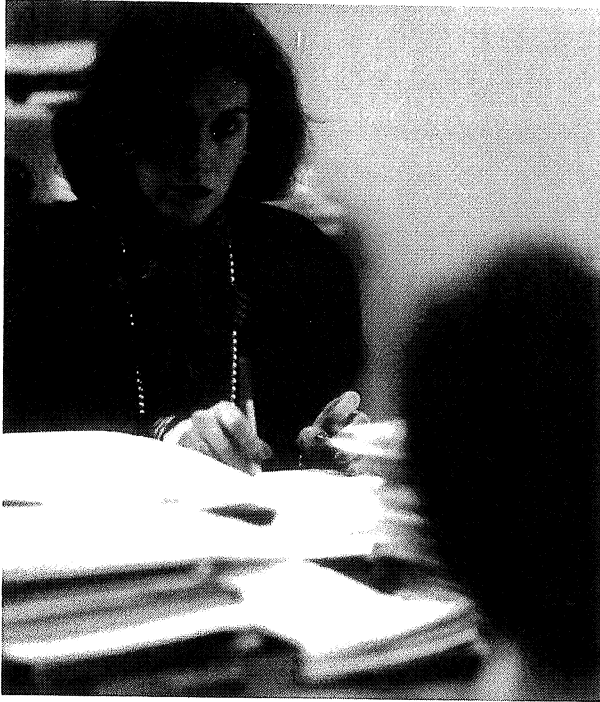
Elevators to the offices at Goldman Sachs.



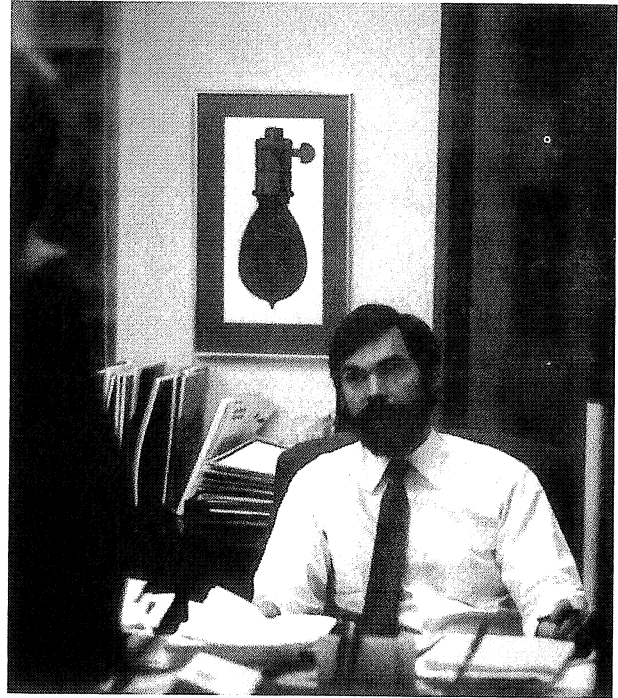
Reception and Security on the fourth floor.



Reception Area, fourth floor.



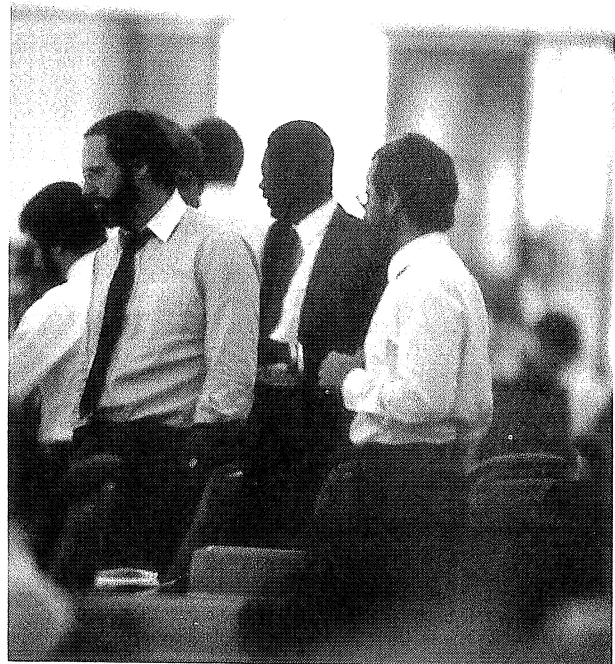
Reviewing the day's schedule with your host.



Interviewing with a vice president from Research.



Getting an explanation in Operations.



Walking by the Fixed Income floor.

