

Interviews That Were Not Stellar

There are several things that can aggravate an executive recruiter that originate from both the candidate and the client company. Things that come to mind of late are candidates that, although thoroughly questioned about the topic, decide to spring the prospect of relocation to another city to their spouse only after two interviews and a house-hunting trip. (Didn't the spouse wonder why he/she kept heading to the airport?) Or when a candidate, when explaining the reason for his decline of the position, relates that "the job was everything he was looking for, the money was more than he asked for, the position was just what he 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 US in education and he currently lived in the 78th rated, and thus 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 smoke screen. Just have the guts to say "for various reasons, this isn't going to fly" A big gripe of mine is when Candidates spend companies hard earned monies on flights when they have absolutely zero intention of taking the position. I often ask, "Would you relocate?" They would respond, "I'd consider it." I'd ask, "Would you DO it though?" "Well, no actually, but I would like to see what's out there though." Right... or the young folks who finally confess, well, really, I'm kind of content but I wanted to see what's out there, and I am not in a position to change jobs. Get a life....ok. Our clients and ourselves are here to update you on what's available even though you're not a viable candidate.? ... It is always protocol for the company to pay the interviews 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 that the prospective employee pre-pay the flight on his or her credit card just to show a little commitment on their part. No matter what ensues the interviewee would be reimbursed immediately but there is just too much abuse of free two-day trysts going on nowadays. Candidates that send out resume to feed their ego when they have no intention of moving are the most egregious and unprofessional.

Candidates that pad their salary so the offer will be incrementally higher, then when upon learning they are at the top of the salary range, backpedal and state that they were including benefits etc. in that figure. Or when asked what their current salary is they respond that they don't know and will have to consult with their spouse.

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

On the other side of the fence, a company that interviews a candidate and then waits more than two weeks to decide is essentially telling the candidate he is not the guy. Whether this is intentional or not

May or not be the case, but companies must act quickly and assertively, like within 48 hours of the interview. If they wait a couple weeks the candidate will no doubt have already been exposed to new and potentially exciting opportunities. But more so the candidates' original excitement after the interview will have faded to some extent.

Conversely though, it is often difficult for a company to bring in all the candidates of choice in a brief compact window of time. Another thing I have seen client companies do, which is generally the kiss of death, is when justifying why they can't come close to meeting the salary demands of a candidate's asking price, they give the candidate a laundry list of his shortcomings justifying the lower salary. Bad idea.... Or, to attempt to justify the lower salary because of the costs of acquiring him (i.e. training costs, training curve, relocation costs, headhunter fees, etc.), although, again, often valid.

Another bad idea is intentionally lowballing on the first offer knowing darn well it will not be acceptable. The only thing this accomplishes is creating a confrontational negotiation from the get-go.

In 27 years of owning my own agency, I've realized most candidates I have dealt with, mostly Mechanical engineers, have the basic common sense to know the dos and don'ts of interviewing. Be yourself (or be someone else for that matter if you're an undesirable person), be humble, be honest about what you do and don't know, don't belch, ask questions about school systems and local athletic associations (indicating you would want to set down roots), and of course, maintain good eye contact. Don't look at your shoes during the interview. Of course, if maintaining good eye contact is a really arduous task, at least stare at the interviewer's shoes!

Then again, in 27 years I have experienced firsthand or heard of other headhunters or human resource directors who have experienced some more interesting approaches by candidates.

"She wore a Walkman and said she could listen to me and the music at the same time."

"Stretched out on the floor to fill out the job application."

"A balding candidate abruptly excused himself. Returned to the office a few minutes later, wearing a hairpiece."

"Asked to see the interviewer's resume to see if the engineering executive was qualified to judge the candidate."

"Told the interviewing executive he was out of his league."

"Announced she hadn't had lunch and proceeded to eat a hamburger and French fries and wiping the ketchup on her sleeve."

"Stated that, if he were hired, he would demonstrate his loyalty by having the corporate logo tattooed on his forearm."

"Interrupted to phone his wife for advice on answering specific interview questions."

"When asked about his hobbies, he stood up and started tap dancing."

"Pulled out a Polaroid and snapped a picture of me. Said he collected photos of everybody that interviewed him."

"Demanded more money and that if he got the increase it was a done deal and then after getting the bump, 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 and he shut it off, apologized, and said he had to leave for another interview."

"A telephone call came in from his wife on his cell phone. His side of the conversation went like this: "Which company? When do I start? What's the salary?" I said, "I assume you're not interested in conducting this interview any further." He promptly responded, "I am as long as you'll pay me more."

"His attaché case opened when he picked it up and the contents spilled, revealing ladies' undergarments and assorted makeup and perfume."

"Candidate said he really didn't want to get a job, but the unemployment office needed proof that he was looking for one."

"...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."

“Candidate dropped his coffee cup under table and was under table for at least 15 seconds looking for it.”

“Candidate cleaned his ears with his car keys during interview.”

“When asked what he aspired to do X 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 kept making eye contact with another person to our right that wasn’t there.”

“A candidate who inferred he wanted to work there, but needed a certain week off in the following August to go to a Star Trek convention, because he had a “killer Borg outfit.”

“A fellow responded to a question by putting on a Boston accent and replied loudly “Ask not what your company can do for you but what you can do for your company.” About ten seconds of silence ensued.

“A candidate that flossed in the parking lot in the presence of the hiring managers after a lunch meeting.”

“A District sales manager that showed up for an interview with a sports jacket over a “Weezer World Tour” T-shirt.”

“A candidate showed up at 11 am on interview with alcohol on his breath.”

“A Director level QA manager shows up on interview with seriously wrinkled Non-Pleated khakis and seriously wrinkled golf shirt”

(“casual” ..is suit pants, newly starched shirt, and newly polished shoes, no tie)

“A designer that literally had such bad body odor the first three interviewers abbreviated their interview and canceled the rest of the day’s schedule. One of the interviewers had to open the door to the office to create a cross breeze.”

“During the course of an interview, I asked a candidate to explain an unaccounted for gap in the dates on his resume and he replied, “Yea, I was kind of bumming around at that point, but I’ve done a 360 degree turn since then.”

“candidate flown into Fla. says “hello everyone!” in Barneys The dinosaurs voice”

It takes all types, but as stated earlier, just be yourself. God knows the stories candidates could tell about the interviews they’ve been through. I’m sure that could make for some interesting reading.

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