

OPINIONS

Want that job? You should at least stare at his shoes

There are several actions that can aggravate an executive recruiter, and they originate from both the candidate and the client company. Things that come to mind are candidates who, although thoroughly questioned about the topic, decide to spring the prospect of relocation to another city on 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 declining 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

MY TURN

BILL WRIGHT

nearby. Once a director level recruit said that, again, the job was ideal as were the other factors, but he had read in *Places Rated Almanac* that this particular community rated 93rd in the U.S. in education and he currently lived in the 78th-rated community 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 smokescreen. 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.

Free trysts

It is always protocol for the company to pay the prospective employee's expenses up front 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 job candidate 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 now-days.

Candidates 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.

There are candidates who expect unreasonable salary increases ... those who have a new position every two years and insist they are not contractors. Asked why they left so many companies so quickly, they respond, "I've heard ..." "I saw the writing on the wall ..." or "It was a political thing." Perhaps, but 14 job changes since 1986?

Interviews from ... well, you decide

- "She wore a walkman and said she could listen to me and the music at the same time."
- "(A candidate) stretched out on the floor to fill out the job application."
- "A balding candidate abruptly excused himself and 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."
- "(Interviewee) 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 who interviewed him."
- "Demanded more money and that if he got the increase it was a done deal. And then after getting the bump (in salary) declined because he felt as though the higher salary would create too high of expectations in his performance."
- "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 who wasn't there."
- "A candidate who inferred he wanted to work there, but needed a certain week off the following August to go to a Star Trek convention because he had a 'killer Borg outfit.'"
- "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.'"

On the other side of the fence, a company that interviews a candidate and then waits more than two weeks to make a decision is essentially telling the candidate he is not the guy, whether this is what it intends or not.

In today's job market 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 more exciting opportunities. In addition, the candidate's original excitement after the interview will



have faded to some extent.

Conversely, 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, they give the him a laundry list of his shortcomings justifying the lower salary. Bad idea. Equally futile is an attempt to justify the lower salary because of the costs of acquiring him (i.e. training costs, training curve, relocation costs, headhunter fees, etc.).

No belching!

Another bad idea is intentionally lowballing on the first offer, knowing darn well it will not be acceptable. All this accomplishes is creating a confrontational negotiation from the outset.

In 19 years of owning my own agency, I've come to realize that most candidates I have dealt with (mostly mechanical engineers) have

the basic common sense to know the "do's and don'ts" of interviewing. Be yourself (or someone else 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 19 years I have experienced first-hand or heard of other headhunters or human resource directors who have experienced some more interesting approaches by candidates. The list is included on this page. Note: it's for information and amusement purposes only. Don't try any of these techniques in an actual interview.

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