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Obtain feedback before leaving interview

To get feedback from employers about how you did in interviews and what your chances are, job seekers need to address these issues before walking out the door. The best advice is to engage employers directly rather than relying exclusively on body language or intermediaries.

Nancy Eberhardt, having hired hundreds of people, coached CEOs in hiring and voluntarily mentored young people, advises job seekers to “ask if there’s anything we said that would get in the way of being hired. This gives you a chance to help clarify and remove barriers.”

Eberhardt, a business coach at Pathwise Partners LLC in Richmond, Va., recommends being authentic. Explain that you want to learn from the interview and, should the offer go to someone else, what one thing you could do better, she says.

“This takes the interviewer off the hot seat,” she says, when he might not have made a decision. Also, it garners points in organizations that value learning. Still, Eberhardt mentions that



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most employers fear legal action or that the applicant, embarking on a long conversation, will debate his candidacy with the interviewer.

“The costs are greater than the benefits to the hiring manager,” she says.

An interviewer who does provide feedback created his own method. Greg Burcham, a Midwest regional field service manager, screens and hires field service engineers. Job seekers are extremely receptive to his method for giving feedback.

“I paint a worst-case scenario,” he indicates, “by (outlining) the expectations. If a person is gung-ho, motivated and (ready) to prove himself, I dig further ... while asking myself if I can teach this person what he knows to do the job.”

Burcham wants to be certain that the applicant will transfer his passion to his job. Some

people make the decision for him, remarking that the job he’s discussing isn’t a good fit.

Eberhardt says that curious people and those who like to learn are receptive to feedback, unlike others playing a numbers’ game.

Burcham doesn’t mind direct questions from job seekers, such as “What are my chances?” and “Where do I stand?” When appropriate, he voluntarily tells an applicant who doesn’t ask if he’s a second choice. He also volunteers when he’ll contact the person. Finally, he doesn’t indicate whether the applicant will or won’t get the job but encourages the person who receives an intervening offer to consider taking it.

Software development manufacturer Nearsoft Inc., headquartered in San Jose, Calif., explains its hiring process in a friendly, lively tone on the Web, where it states that funneling questions through headhunters will generate a response in less than 24 hours to 48 hours at most. “If the process seems to be stuck somewhere,” the website says, “please, send us an email and

somebody will be in contact with you within 24 hours (hopefully, much sooner).”

Vicente Plata, whose Nearsoft roles include functions of a senior software engineer and software architect, explains how it works: “When we, as techies, interview someone, we have to give detailed feedback, including the candidate’s pros and cons, a general overview and tips for improving (in case he/she is not hired). Headhunters have the responsibility of formatting this and sending it to the candidate.”

The method and schedule seem very efficient and legally sensitive. Also, Plata says, it enables Nearsoft to “keep in touch with potential future co-workers (and) help them improve their careers. ... At least, if they don’t get the job, they’ll receive valuable feedback.”

Don’t let systems, however well-intentioned, make you passive. If you don’t find an employer as forthcoming as Burcham, get feedback you need through direct questions.

Dr. Mildred L. Culp welcomes your questions at culp@workwise.net. © 2012 Passage Media.