

What To Do When You Don't Hear Back After A Job Interview

You finally landed that coveted job interview. Maybe you aced it; perhaps you flopped. Either way, you send a thank you note and check your inbox compulsively for a week, waiting not-so-patiently for some sort of response. But you hear nothing.

This happens far too often.

According to a new [CareerBuilder](#) study among 3,991 employees, 60% said they've experienced this as a job candidate.

Why is this so common?

"Sadly, many times it is simple rudeness that is present when a candidate never gets a response after a job interview," says HR expert [Steve Kane](#). "This should never happen at a sophisticated, progressive employer. Obviously, if someone is going through the effort of preparing for an interview, they deserve some idea of their likelihood of receiving an offer."

Sometimes employers get overwhelmed with the communication process, says Amy Hoover, president of [Talent Zoo](#), a site for marketing, advertising, and digital professionals. "It's not fair and it's not professional, but it's reality."

[David Parnell](#), a legal consultant, communication coach and author, says there are generally three primary ingredients to the radio silence an interviewee experiences after their meeting, assuming we are talking about a savvy employer. "One, 'he's just not that into you,'" he says. "Two, bandwidth is precious and needs to be spent on more pressing issues, like more competitive candidates. And three, the potential risk for providing specific, negative feedback is much higher than the potential reward."

Employers, like most other humans, "are self-interested and rational," he adds. If they desire a candidate, they will pursue them with fervor; if they do not, they won't. "And while they are otherwise occupied with the candidates they covet, telling others that they won't be pursuing them and why is not only uncomfortable (for all parties), it potentially exposes them to legal action," he says. "As a result, often times mum's the word."

Lynn Taylor, a national workplace expert and author of [Tame Your Terrible Office Tyrant](#), offers another explanation. "Unemployment is still relatively high, and many companies are deluged with candidates," she says. "The short-term-oriented thinking is that candidates are in abundance, so we can save on labor costs by only responding to A-list candidates. The scales are still tipped in favor of the employer, and unfortunately as a result, many do not allocate the resources necessary to respond to each job candidate."

Given the breakneck pace of a thin staff today, it's not uncommon to hear back a few weeks later from a prospective employer, after you've given up the fight, she says. "Vacations, hiring freezes, restructurings, resignations, and project status changes can all affect if and when you hear back from an employer."

In Pictures: 10 Things to Do When You Don't Hear Back After a Job Interview

But candidates deserve to hear back—even if the news is negative. As it turns out, following up is beneficial to both parties in the long run (even if it's awkward and uncomfortable at the time).

The CareerBuilder survey found that the effects of a candidate's negative experience can lead to a broader impact on the employer's business or its ability to recruit top talent.

Forty-two percent of workers said they would never seek employment with the company again if they were displeased with the way their application was handled. Another 22% said they would tell others not to work there; and 9% would tell others not to purchase products or services from the company.

"When the labor market tightens once again, and employers are avidly searching to fill critical spots, they may look back at such practices and wish they had been more responsive," Taylor says. "Even a template letter of acknowledgment is better than no response. Job applicants have long memories, and it may be difficult to acquire that same quality talent later if candidates are not treated well now."

Kane agrees. He says employers will always be looking for new talent, and if a job seeker has the choice to work for an employer who is known for showing respect for job candidates versus one that does not, candidates will likely choose the employer that operates respectfully.

"Most employers are very concerned with their reputations," he adds. "Not providing feedback to job candidates is a reflection on their entire management process. Especially in these days when social media can play such an important role, being discourteous to job applicants makes virtually no sense."

Why do candidates want feedback, even if it's negative?

Dr. Sanja Licina, PhD and Senior Director of Talent Intelligence at CareerBuilder, says candidates don't want to remain in a state of anticipation, wondering if they're still in the running. "Not only do they want to close the loop, but they often would like to hear feedback from the employer and see if they could be considered for opportunities down the line."

Parnell agrees. “In my experience, a candidate’s drive to gain definitive feedback is usually rooted in a psychological need for closure.”

Plus—any feedback after an interview can help the candidate better prepare for the next interview, Hoover says. “It can even allow the candidate to learn more about himself and his strengths.”

How long do you wait before you do something?

Determining the appropriate wait time before soliciting feedback begins with the interview itself, Parnell says. “Be sure to determine, specifically, the next steps in the process prior to closing the meeting. This way, you have an idea as to when the employer should respond, and if they don’t, when you should mobilize a more proactive approach.”

Kane concurs. “At the end of an interview cycle, it is perfectly reasonable for a candidate to ask when they might expect a response from the employer. That sets up a perfect opportunity to follow up with the employer if feedback is delayed much beyond the date given.” Understand that hiring managers are doing many more things than simply interviewing, and often times estimates of response time tend to be very optimistic, he adds.

Take the initiative. Don’t just twiddle your thumbs and wait. Do something.

“In today’s market, it behooves job candidates to take the bull by the horns and follow-up,” Taylor says. “The squeaky (not screechy) wheel gets the grease. Nudge, don’t pester.”

She says when the timeline expires, wait a few days then write a “check-in” e-mail to your primary contact showing your continued interest. “Just make sure to offer something of value to the hiring manager in the e-mail, such as a link to an industry or competitive firm-related article, interesting blog, LinkedIn discussion or upcoming industry event.”

Hoover agrees. “If your initial follow-up message is tailored to the timeline you were given in an interview, you will come across as professional, prompt, and courteous. If you wait too long it could show a perceived lack of interest.”

Make a plan. Parnell says if you call and e-mail too much, you become both annoying and desperate; if you don’t follow up enough, you communicate disrespect and a lack of interest. “It is important to be formulaic with your attempts by setting a schedule and sticking to it. Only allow yourself a particular number of attempts over the course of a limited time. If you get your feedback, great; if you don’t, move on—period.”

Be gracious. Always be pleasant in your e-mail or phone correspondence, even if you’re annoyed with the employer, Taylor says. Maybe they’re still in the process of interviewing candidates and haven’t yet made a decision. Or perhaps they think you’d be a better fit for

a different position within the organization, and plan to contact you when it becomes available. “Your level of professionalism will be remembered,” Taylor says. “It’s often how you handle setbacks that set you apart from the rest.”

Check your social network for connections. Check [Facebook](#), LinkedIn, and Twitter for former colleagues or friends who currently work at the company, Hoover says. “If you discover a connection, try to solicit an endorsement from the person or at a minimum, try to find out the status of the hire and where they are in the process.”

Always gauge the responses to your outreach efforts before your next move. This begins with your real-time interview feedback, Taylor says. “If it’s a warm reception, then the door’s open for you to further engage. If it’s chilly at best, don’t waste a lot of time with serial badgering. Oftentimes no answer *is* an answer.”

Move up the chain. “While I have a healthy respect for HR and internal recruiters, when it comes to business acumen, sometimes they are a mixed bag,” Parnell says. “If you find that you’re unable to get a response from them after a material number of attempts, move up the food chain. In my endeavors, I’ve found that the higher up you go, the more respect you’ll find for the interviewee.” Reaching out (directly) to the person you’d actually be working for can often reinvigorate the process, or at least bring it to a close.

Follow your gut and be realistic. “Rejection is psychologically traumatizing; in fact, it has been proven to cause physical pain,” Parnell says. “It shouldn’t be a surprise that our minds are equipped with powerful mechanisms such as rationalizations to nullify its affects: ‘Maybe they didn’t get my last 37 emails.’ ‘I’ll bet they left the country this month and don’t have phone service.’ Rationalizations like these can serve to keep us pushing forward when we should be searching elsewhere. Follow your gut – it usually knows the answer.”

Taylor agrees. She says when an employer hasn’t responded to a couple of your follow-ups, or won’t take your call, don’t become a pest. “Read between the lines of a ‘no.’ Industry circles are small and you have better things to do than get a reputation of desperation. Do yourself a favor and move on with your work life putting all that energy into a positive, worthy pursuit.”

Keep the employer up to date. As other activity manifests throughout the process, be sure to inform the employer of your progress in your follow-up correspondence, Parnell says. “Rather than calling them with ‘gimme, gimme, gimme,’ by offering them tangential, employer-related information that might facilitate their process, you will remind them that you are still in the hunt without sounding self-serving.”

Don’t take it personally. “For all you know, the job may have been reduced in responsibility, salary, timeframe, or even eliminated,” Taylor says. “Most companies do

not want to broadcast that kind of news to the public and opt for the safer route, which is to say nothing. You have marketable skills, and one job (the right one) is all you need.”

Let this experience tell you about the company. The post-interview process doesn't always directly reflect the corporate culture—but it can, Hoover says. You'll want to remember this if they ever reach out in the future, or if you decide to apply for another position down the road.

“Keep in mind that getting no response from an employer after you have followed up can be one more data point as to whether you really want to work for the company,” Taylor says. “How you're treated after the interview could be indicative of how you'd be managed once on the job.” If you've put all the pieces together and just don't get a good feeling about working for them, go with your gut. “You might consider their lack of action a gift or preview—and a sign to move quickly to greener pastures.”

Here are 10 things you should never do:

Never offer a self-imposed deadline without due cause. If you have some legitimate reason—moving to the area by a certain date, receiving a promotion (at your current job) that may be accepted in lieu of an offer, an impending placement on an assignment, etc.—this flies in the world of interviewing. However, demanding an answer by the end of the week or else, does not, Parnell says.

Never lie. Any outright lie, especially one that seems implausible, will crush your chances with this employer, Kane says.

Never attempt to communicate with a hiring manager through their personal e-mail, home address, cell phone or telephone.

Never criticize the company on social media. “Unlike using your social network for good, do not give into the temptation of calling a company out on their lack of response to you,” Hoover says.

Never complain to the employer about your frustration with them.

Never call or e-mail relentlessly. Leaving three un-returned messages is a social and professional faux pas, Parnell says. “While it is reasonable for an employer to miss or forget about a single phone message, missing or forgetting a second is terribly unlikely.”

Never call on back-to-back days. Hoover says this will become a hassle for the interviewer and rather than showing your continued interest, it might tell them that you're not aware of boundaries.

Never try gimmicks, like dropping off a shoe at the reception desk because you're trying to "get your foot in the door."

Never stop by with more information in the hopes that you'll gain points for enthusiasm.

Never bribe or kiss up. You want to win the job out of merit and self-confidence, not out of ill-attempted forms of