OAKLAND BUSINESS & Finance

Be realistic about expectations, hiring timetable, pay

JOB SEARCH

GEORGE HAYES

Q: The job I started two weeks ago doesn't seem to be working out. Should I call it quits and start looking again?

A: It's very common for a feeling akin to "buyer's remorse" to set in during the early phases of a new job. No matter how well you've done your homework, there will be some unexpected events, personalities, responsibilities and procedures that you'll be forced to address. It's hard to determine if these are just little things that can be worked through or if they provide an accurate glimpse into the future.

People have often called me shortly after making a job change to say, "Get me outta here!" When I call back three weeks later with a good opportunity, the response is usually, "What are you talking about? This place is great!"

I've come to the conclusion that it's difficult to accurately assess a new employment relationship for at least six months. Also, make sure your expectations are realistic.

Q: I've had three interviews with the same company and they want to schedule another one. Isn't this a bit much?

A: Welcome to the 1990s. Last year, we had a candidate return to a company five times, only to be told that he wasn't a finalist. Today, you can expect multiple interviews, testing and a physical examination for jobs at almost every level.

It wouldn't be so bad if the process moved along at a brisk pace. However, long periods between the steps are common and frustrating. Throw in a holiday or scheduling difficulties due to a manager's vacation and you'll feel like you'll see retirement before you get an answer.

Over the past 15 years, the average length of time from the initial interview to the offer has lengthened dramatically. Employers are extremely cautious and go to great lengths to ensure they are selecting the right people.

If it strikes you as overkill, you're probably right. Keep expressing your enthusiasm and interest in the position, but never stop looking at other opportunities. Just because you've been invited back several times doesn't mean the offer in in the bag.

Q: What is a good way to conclude an interview? I'm uncomfortable with "I look forward to hearing from you."

A: for you! People who allow interviews to end on such a passive note end up looking forward to that telephone call for a long, long time. Interviewing is selling, and effective salespeople know how to close.

We recommend a two-step approach. First, express an interest in the position with "Gee, I'm interested," or "I'd really like to pursue this." Many employers haven't a clue about how the candidate is viewing them. Let the hiring manager know that you want the job.

Then, get a clear picture of the next step — who's supposed to do what and when? Don't be satisfied with, "We have a few more people to talk with and we'll call you in a few days." Are you just going to go home and wait for the phone to ring? No way. Come back with "Great, but if I don't hear from you by Tuesday, can I give you a call? I'd like to stay on top of this." When you take responsibility for the next move, you know it's going to happen. A proactive attitude speaks volumes to employers.

Q: A friend suggested that I avoid giving a specific dollar figure when potential employers ask about money. Why not cut to the chase so we don't waste each other's time?

A: There are real risks associated with revealing your dollar target too soon. You could blow the deal completely or end up with a lower offer than you could have had.

Let's say you tell an employer that you need $25,000 to start. Now, let's go inside the employer's head to hear her thoughts . . . The midpoint on this job only goes to $24,000. What bad luck — this candidate is perfect! Oh, well, better send him on his way."

So, you just lost a great job with excellent long-term potential for $1,000 per year (i.e., 48 cents/hour gross). You didn't even get the grand tour. You never even determined if you would have enjoyed the work or the people.

Another scenario . . . "Outstanding! I was going to offer him $27,000. Now I can buy a new copier!" You just lost $3,000 because you showed your cards too soon.

Always try to get an employer to talk about salary first. When addressing the money question, try something like: "Gee, it depends upon the total package. Did you have something in mind?" He who speaks first loses.

Send questions to George Hayes, Job Search, P.O. Box 2497, Southfield, MI 48037. He is president of Emplex Corp., a Southfield outplacement and pre-employment testing firm.

Marketplace

from page 8C

different veneers and inlays.

Poplar was chosen because it doesn't warp, expand or contract. This enables these grand old tables to retain their value and even appreciate substantially over the years.

Handley describes the work as very tedious and detailed, as one would expect. The tables are completely disassembled and refinished, the inlays are removed and painstakingly restored.

Handley's many other duties at Saffron's prevent giving full time to the refinishing business. He currectly refinishes between two and three tables a year.

Saffron's outlets are located in Pleasant Ridge and Utica.

■ BUSINESSWOMEN MEET

Channel 4 (WDIV) newswoman Jennifer Moore will address the Financial Women International-Detroit Metro Group on Wednesday, Jan. 17, at the Clarion Hotel & Executive Suites, 31525 W. 12 Mile Road, Farmington Hills. A networking session runs 5:30-6 p.m.; dinner is at 6 p.m. The cost is $22.50.

To attend, call Barb McCoy (313) 241-3431.

—compiled by Valerie Olander and Janice Tigar-Kramer