



“Worklife” by Carol Kleiman

## Interviewees often left wondering

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One of the most frustrating--even humiliating--things that can happen to job seekers is not to hear one word back from the potential employer after an in-person job interview.

And it seems to be happening a lot these days.

When I ask employers how they can be so heartless as to leave applicants hanging week after week, to be so merciless as not to tell them that, in fact, someone else has been hired--most swear they'd never do that.

Yet I get complaints from ever-increasing numbers of job seekers that they cannot get an answer about whether or not they got the job.

And they're angry: They feel they deserve an answer, yes or no, after coming in to be interviewed.

Since human resource people don't want to comment on this unpleasant situation, I asked two outside observers about the indifference shown by some corporate human resource departments.

Buzz Patterson, partner at Donahue/Patterson Associates Inc., an executive-search firm based in Chicago, has been in human resources since 1980--and part of that time he worked for large corporations. ("But I didn't behave that way. Our recruiting process included getting back in touch with the applicant after a job interview.")

Patterson is former co-president of the Chicago chapter of the International Association of Corporate and Professional Recruitment, holds an MBA and is a certified public accountant. He has this to say about not responding to job applicants, "It's awful. Unsolicited resumes are one thing, but not to get back to someone you've interviewed is just plain discourteous."

But Patterson, who became a partner at his firm in 2000, says there may be some reasons for not hearing back. "Human resource people are under so much pressure because of understaffing in their own departments that they may have no time to respond," he said. "Maybe their companies don't require them to get back in touch because of the imbalance between resources to respond and the number of applicants coming in."

Still, it doesn't take a lot of time to relieve job applicants' stress. Personnel executives, he says, "could explain that they're not interested in hiring that person, that they're continuing to look at others or aren't going to hire at all. It's not smart to cut the applicant out completely--there's a possibility the person might be re-considered for another position that might open up."

Yet Patterson acknowledges that the situation is worse today because there are fewer job openings. "Everything [about the hiring process] that's not good is amplified in a slow job market."

So what's a job seeker to do?

"The very first thing to do is at the end of the interview ask specifically how to follow up--and listen to the answer," said Jeffrey M. Posselt, partner in Waveland International in Chicago, an executive-search firm.

Posselt, who has a bachelor's degree in marketing and has been in recruitment since 1977, observes that "candidates don't always listen well, so they may expect a call back even though they were told they would only get one if the company was interested in hiring them."

The recruiter says it's OK to call within a week or two but if you get no response to "recognize there's no interest level there. That's the time to move on. Don't eat yourself up over someone else's discourtesy."

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