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Job News & Views

When Following Up, Persistence Pays

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Would you call a prospective employer 63 times if your calls weren't picked up or returned? How about 24 times over a two-year period?

If you fear being *that* persistent will cost you an opportunity, you're in for a shock. In at least two instances cited by career experts recently, candidates who did *not* persist to that degree would have lost opportunities.

"I have a client who called an employer contact 63 times. And they were eventually hired," recounts Tara Padua, a certified professional coach who has worked with large employers including JPMorgan Chase, Deutsche Bank, AllianceBernstein and the Federal Reserve.

In another story related by a hiring manager who asked not to be named, a candidate seeking work at a hedge fund telephoned the fund manager every month for two years. Finally, the candidate was offered a job. "That's just what a hedge fund wants," the source observes. Most fund companies are small, close-knit operations whose managers want to hire people they know. The two-year series of phone conversations gave the fund manager a sense of comfort because he had come to know the candidate well enough to work with him.

Don't Interpret Silence as Rejection

The value of persistence in candidates' post-interview follow-ups came up repeatedly during at a recent "Career Chat" evening organized by the New York Society of Security Analysts.

"I actually think it's a good thing if one or two people complain that you're too tenacious, because it actually shows you're doing a good job of searching for a job," Vicky Oliver, author of books on career management such as *301 Smart Answers To Tough Interview Questions*, told the group. Use the telephone, not just e-mail, she advised.

As these experts see it the old chestnut, "Don't call us, we'll call you," is little more than a fairy tale. So if your first follow-up e-mail or voicemail wasn't returned, whatever you do, don't give up.

"Job search now is all about rejection," observed New York career coach Roy Cohen, who served 10 years as Goldman Sachs' sole in-house career and outplacement counselor. "In this job market, we may need to be a little bit more aggressive."

Obscuring Your Number Lets You Repeat the Attempt

The speakers at NYSSA's April career chat offered these further tips:

- When trying to reach a target on the phone, you may need to restrict your phone number, Padua says. That way, your number won't show up repeatedly on the recipient's phone system, which could make you look like a stalker. To prevent your own number from displaying on the other end for a one-time call, key in *67 right before entering the other party's phone number. (Alternatively, you can set your phone to obscure your number on all outgoing calls.)

- Oliver suggests recording the time of day you make each phone attempt. If you have trouble reaching a particular person, experiment by calling at different times each day. One person might be easier to reach early in the morning, while another is reachable just after lunchtime and a third takes phone calls late in the day, after U.S. exchanges close.

- After an interview, send follow up e-mails to each individual you met with. Padua advises doing that even if you're no longer interested in working for the company. Leaving a favorable impression with people who could refer you for opportunities elsewhere makes good business sense.

- When keeping in touch with managers who met but didn't hire you, or with new contacts you've added to your network, try to give them "news" - some new accomplishment or a project you've worked on lately. By providing fresh information, you'll come off as helpful instead of needy.



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