

Interactions with Potential Employers

By Mary Waldron

It never ceases to amaze me how clueless some people are when it comes to leaving impressions on employers *before* they meet them. Any interaction with an employer before the interview is part of the interview. By this I mean you are being judged by every single thing you do and/or say. Duh, right? Well, this topic was inspired by an obviously out-of-touch job seeker who must be living under a rock somewhere in the Midwest. No offense to those of you in the Midwest who know what's up.

Before I begin, let me note that these job-search suicide instances usually start with recent college graduates who think they rule the world. Hey, we've all been there, but do yourself a favor and say this with me: "I really have no clue what I'm doing in the real world, and I am very new to all of this. I am entitled to nothing." Now that you have that out of your system, listen up.

This recent college graduate applied for a job and got an email response from the employer to set up a phone interview. The employer was nice enough to accommodate the job seeker, who lived in another state. This woman—let's call her Vera—replied, saying that whatever time the employer

picked she could make. So the employer chose a time.

This is where Vera made her first mistake. She replied to the time the employer gave her with "I work part-time five days a week, and I can only talk at 8:00 a.m. or 8:00 p.m. your time." Besides the fact that that made no sense considering she said she worked part-time, Vera explained that she obviously could not make any time the employer suggested for the interview. She also demonstrated that she was pretty demanding by asking for some extreme times of the day to talk. One would think that if you wanted the job, you'd try to make it as easy as possible for the employer.

Poor Vera never learned this when she was working for her college newspaper in the middle of nowhere for the past three years.

After a few emails back and forth to figure out a time and date for the two to talk, the employer chose a date and time that Vera committed to. Then the employer realized that she could not make the date and time chosen, as she had a previous engagement planned. After all, it was at 8:00 p.m. on a weeknight. The employer sent a reschedule email with almost a week's notice and got back to her busy schedule.

Apparently, Vera never got this email.

On the night for which the interview was originally scheduled, the employer received an email to this tune:

"I just wanted to say thank you for calling me on Thursday night. I waited for you to call at the number provided on my resume. I found it exceptionally rude to stand up a candidate who was interested in your company. Thank you again for your time."

What a sarcastic brat. Keep in mind that Vera was assuming the employer stood her up and that no emergency or miscommunication occurred. Never assume anything, ever—especially as swiftly as Vera did. This is how Vera should have replied, regardless of what really happened:

Hi [Employer Name],

Were we scheduled to talk on Thursday night at 8:00 p.m.? I did not hear from you, so I was not sure if anything had changed. Please let me know if we can reschedule. My phone number is below, just in case. I hope all is well. Thanks!

Best,
Vera

See? That covered all the bases. She went so far as to anticipate that she could have had the wrong date for the interview, that the employer might not have had the right number, and that an emergency could have come up—all plausible possibilities. A response like this is much more mature and professional. It's never safe to point fingers, no matter what the situation may be.

All in all, it worked out for the best. Who would want to hire someone with such a short fuse and, not to mention, such an unprofessional attitude.

In all industries, people miss calls and appointments for many reasons. Though it can be frustrating for those of us who never miss appointments, it's important to never send a nasty email like the first one above. This person who has only been out of college for about two months really had no business sending such a communication, regardless of the situation!

There's one more thing I should add: the employer actually had not flaked. She had recently moved to a new office and was having difficulty with her email. That is why Vera never got the request to reschedule. But how serendipitous that was for the employer, huh?