**How to Deal with Getting Ghosted by an Applicant**

If you have ever been a candidate for a job, you’ve likely experienced the frustration of being “ghosted” by a recruiter or hiring manager. Your interviews were great, the hiring manager was talking to you about next steps, and suddenly everything goes silent. But in a strange twist of fate, things have changed. Now qualified candidates are in the driver’s seat - a tightening job market and a sustained labor shortage have contributed to a surge in professionals abruptly cutting off contact and turning silent. Many HR staff and Hiring Managers are now appalled at the same behavior they felt was excusable when it was done by the company.

Being ghosted can happen for a multitude of reasons. Often people simply forget... they are too busy... they selected another job or did not like the one offered and don’t want to say so... they have another opportunity or counteroffer “in waiting’ and don’t want to respond until they know more... However, if you are getting ghosted repeatedly, it is time to investigate the reasons further.

**Investigating and correcting a pattern of ghosting:**

If you get ghosted more than occasionally, consider the following questions:

1. **Is this a pattern in the working world as a whole and if so, can I do anything to correct it?** For example, during COVID, candidates may job search, but fade at the prospects of an offer – hesitating at taking the job due to ample unemployment benefits and concerns about COVID.
   * Are you demonstrating a concern for safety or is your hiring manager interviewing in person with their mask half covering their nose and with unmasked personnel walking by constantly? If so, you just lost half your candidate pool. Remember that if you fake a safety-focus during the interview, it doesn’t help to retain someone once hired.
   * If your pay is below the level of unemployment, what are you doing to sweeten the opportunity? People want to work if they are working in a great atmosphere that is not only safe but fun and engaging. Money is just one piece of the puzzle, but if you feel it is a big piece, you might consider retention bonuses to sweeten the deal for some period of time.
2. **Are your hiring managers forgetting that selection is only one part of recruiting? Selling the candidate on the job and company is key too.** Hiring managers and recruiters are a true reflection of your company. If they treat candidates poorly or rush them through the process without asking about their needs, the candidate believes (with reason) that they will have an unpleasant experience as an employee of the company.
3. **Are you recruiting the right people?** Staffing firms will tell you that advertising for an A player when you are a C company is a sure recipe for ghosting. The same goes for wanting to hire “professional” looking staff to do warehouse work. Hire for the position – don’t concentrate on “must haves” that really just narrow your pool, especially when you may find yourself with candidates who are less interested in the job and therefore more likely to ghost you.
4. **Is there something in your pay, benefits or time off plan that just turns people off?** Consider reviewing Catapult’s policy and benefits survey to see if your policies are in line with those of other companies in your industry?
5. **Are you an adamant “work from office” employer?** You will lose candidates in this market.

**Retool/evaluate your hiring system by:**

1. Revisiting your hiring processes to ensure that your employees are treating applicants and candidates with respect and transparency. Each step should be quick; candidates will get other offers the longer they look.
2. Double-check to ensure that automated e-mail responses are not being misused. For example, if someone came in for an interview, they deserve a phone call to let them know the status of the position if the hiring process is slow for some reason.
3. Periodically follow-up with a small sampling of non-selected candidates (via a brief phone call) to assess if they were treated appropriately. It doesn’t have to be an awkward discussion about why they weren’t selected. Instead, simply mention that you have randomly selected candidates to ensure that your recruiting processes are appropriately respectful and professional.
4. Challenge your hiring managers and recruiters to envision themselves on the other side of the equation. If they were the candidate, how would they want to be treated?
5. Find out why candidates are rejecting offers – is there something you could have done differently? You can do the same with “ghosts” but they are less likely to reply.
6. Finally, ask your new hires for their suggestions to improve the hiring and onboarding processes and survey your staff in general to find out what keeps them at the company and what changes in policies and benefits would make a difference in their life.

Written by a Catapult Advisor.