

BUSINESS

Job seekers make their own luck

Research survey reveals strange interview incidents

BY JEFF MITCHELL
Staff Writer

T rue story: A job seeker shows up for a morning interview, carrying a box of doughnuts. To the astonishment of the interviewer, the man begins to eat each and every one of the pastries, explaining it is the only chance he'll have to catch breakfast.

True story: When asked why he wants to work for the company, a job applicant responds, "I'll have to think about it and get back to you." He then gets up, walks out of the office and never returns.

Believe it or not, this kind of behaviour is displayed every day by people attempting to find employment, according to OfficeTeam, a worldwide administrative staffing service with offices in York Region.

The company conducted research in which executives were asked to describe the strangest occurrences they've witnessed during job interviews. While some behaviour reported was outrageous, it is within the realm of plausibility, according to Lara Dodo, branch manager with OfficeTeam's Richmond Hill office.

"Some of them I said, 'Yeah, it happens,'" Ms Dodo said with a laugh. "You shake your head because you think to yourself, 'What were people thinking?' The honest truth is, I don't know."

Many of the transgressions outlined in the OfficeTeam research run contrary to the essential rules of job hunting, Ms

Dodo said. There are a few simple rules for job seekers, including:

- Be prepared. Know the job for which you're applying and the company with which you are seeking employment. Don't be like the man who, when asked what he could contribute to a company, replied, "That's a good question. I haven't given it much thought".

'At the end of the day, a job seeker is supplying something. They're supplying their skills and knowledge. As a supplier, we have to be aware of what the industry is buying.'

- Be professional. Dress appropriately. Be punctual. Present your resume and portfolio material properly. Conduct yourself with the appropriate air of confidence and ability. Don't be like the candidate who, a few minutes into an interview, picked up his cellphone to call his parents and let them know the meeting was going well.

- Be positive. Act as if you want to be there and will be a productive, enthusiastic member of the team, because that's what human resources executives and managers look for: the right fit. You'd be advised not to react like the woman who was asked during an interview why she was leaving her current job. "My manager is a jerk," she replied. "All managers are jerks."

Ms Dodo said it's often lack of preparation that causes candidates trouble. If

you're uninformed going into an interview, you'll be ill-prepared to answer questions and make pertinent inquiries.

"Treat your job search as you would a full-time job," Ms Dodo said. "Because it is a full-time job. It's a mindset."

It starts with the way you introduce yourself to a company, in the form of your resume and cover letter. These documents should attract human resources people by explaining the experience and talents you have relevant to the job.

It continues with personal contact, which typically begins with a phone call, leading to an interview or series of interviews.

Throughout, the job seeker must be professional, presentable and marketable, Ms Dodo said.

"Ultimately, you want to present yourself in the best light that's going to illuminate or highlight your talents," she said.

A word of warning, though: don't overdo it. Ms Dodo said it's best to be conservative in dress and demeanour.

"Everyone has the impression you have to sell yourself," she said, "and you do. But I think there's a line between being confident and being assumptive."

"There's a fine line between overselling and underselling."

That approach of marketing one's abilities and talents as commodities is a wise one in today's hectic job market, said Julie Bulmash, director of human resources with Synthesis, a Richmond Hill technology company.

"At the end of the day, a job seeker is supplying something," she said.

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Job seekers need to follow the three Ps of behaviour: be prepared, be professional and be positive. Eating snacks during the interview has been tried, but is not recommended.



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