

# Stephen Says

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*Dear Stephen,*

**Stifled in the Ivory Tower:**

*I've been at a major architectural firm for six years and work in the interiors department. We primarily work on hedge funds and law firms. It's a very prestigious firm. I'm pretty much happy with my job, however, whenever I'm assigned a project, the senior associate or partner that's working directly with our client ends up dictating the entire design, which seems to be the same thing over and over. I'm torn because I like the job but I hate the formula. It does not allow me to put any of my own design imprint on it. Yet I'm told that many of the major architectural and design firms are like this, so what can I do?*

**Stephen:**

As my mother would say, it never hurts to look around. The problem is, when you're with an elite brand in the architectural and design world, it's become an elite brand because they've been able to hone in on a particular look that represents their brand. That's what attracts both their customers and the architects and designers who want to work there. It hardly means everything looks the same, they just have certain principles by which they design. My suggestion is that if you look around to various design firms, you may find a firm that allows you a little more creative leeway, or more likely, where their creative sense matches yours. So, you'll feel more creative, even if you're just doing the same thing. However, the grass isn't always greener, and in any firm you'll have to work your way up the ranks before you get to dictate a firm's style. Whatever you decide, remember to always interview on your own time and don't keep your resume on your boss's computer.

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### **Hunting in Seattle:**

*I am the principal of a major dealer. We carry one of the major furniture lines and are located outside of Seattle. I want to grow my sales team in 2016, but I can't afford a headhunter. "Help Wanted" ads got me some results, but not enough, and we are too small for a HR Director. I have a personnel person that helps us with benefits and some hiring, however, we really need to attract more salespeople. Here is my question: how can a dealer, owner or manager be his or her own headhunter?*

### **Stephen:**

You can and should be your own headhunter. The first thing that attracts people to work for your company is its reputation. Every local sector has a business publication. In NYC and Chicago it's Crain's. They have an annual "Great Places to Work List," which is not hard to get on, if you know about. Get on that list. In Seattle, the Seattle Business Magazine has similar lists (like I said, these exist in every city). If you don't know who publishes it in your city, that's your first problem. Then add a "Join Our Team" section to your company's website; it's like making your own "Help Wanted" section, specifically for those people who are already interested in your company. This sort of thing is great for attracting sales people, sales assistants and project managers. It's easy enough, just copy that same section off the website from any major manufacturer. They all have one. And they work. Just make it your own, add something that has a flair unique to your business.

The manufacturers' sales reps that call on you are the best recruiters. Ask them who is good at other dealers. Then call those people up yourself, or send them a note through the "LinkedIn" in box e-mail. It is not brain surgery. This is often what the best headhunters do, our networks are just a bit bigger. Finally, grow your own sales force. Consider promoting project managers, account managers and the most ambitious of your sales assistants. Everyone everywhere wants to know there is career growth, and some of the best people are right under your nose. All of which is to say, you can definitely grow your sales team yourself, you just need to commit to growing your brand and network and put in the legwork.

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*You can send your workplace questions to Stephen at [stephen@Viscusigroup.com](mailto:stephen@Viscusigroup.com). Questions selected to be answered, will appear in this column. Please use the Subject: Stephen Says for all emails. Stephen Viscusi is a bestselling author, television personality, and CEO of The Viscusi Group, global executive recruiters located in New York. Follow Stephen on Twitter @WorkplaceGuru, Like Stephen on Facebook; and follow him on LinkedIn.*