

Are You Stalling or Just a Dunce?

Dear Stephen:

What do you think it means when somebody you are in an ongoing email dialogue with cuts off the conversation because they are suddenly “on the road traveling” for a day or even a week? It seems I have been receiving this kind of message a lot lately, and I’m starting to get worried.

I am in sales, so I hear it most often from someone whom I’m expecting to sign an order I am waiting on. But I’ve heard it from a hiring manager I am in contact with about a job I may want and even with some lead who reached out to me initially.

To be clear, this is not an auto reply from someone on vacation. I am referring to an individual traveling on ordinary business and most likely carrying a smartphone and a computer with them. I would think

this person should be able to do business from almost anywhere in the world. Is that not all we talk about? The 24/7 work cycle that we cannot escape? That is the way I thought the world worked today except it seems when I am waiting on that \$2 million order of benching systems from that bank, that promotion my boss and the HR department have been sitting on or that potential job offer I think I may be getting, there is no Wi-Fi in Cleveland or wherever. Is it me, or is just the way it is?

No matter what the reason, the job offers, the promotion or the order, I find myself constantly overthinking things and really

torturing myself. Is it a stall? A fake out to buy more time? Or just a technology stifled executive that can’t get their act together while on the road? Does someone’s world really stop because they are not in their office? Where is one’s office today, even? I thought it was supposed to be wherever the internet was available. Help me understand how to deal with this message. I am often tempted to blurt something out that will no doubt insult my client or boss. I stop myself every time, but I just want to question the reasoning I am given for a delayed answered. Like please just tell me the truth!

On the Road Again?



You can send your workplace questions to Stephen at: StephenSays@bellow.press

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 @stephenviscusi, Like Stephen on Facebook; and follow him on LinkedIn.

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Dear On the Road Again?

I wish I had better news for you, but it seems you already know the answer.

Chances are what you seem to be guessing here is true. Whoever you are dealing with — a client, a boss, a potential new employer or a potential new order — is looking to buy some time. Maybe it would help to think of it this way: No answer is better than “no.”

I can assure you I have experienced this myself many times; we all do. Someone, somewhere, along the decision-making chain simply cannot come up with an answer, and so they stall. Often, they are stalling because the decision has come down to two or three final options. Choice is hard for everyone, and when it comes to a choice that may have con-

sequences for others it is even harder. The person making the decision does not want to make you seem like you may be their second choice. It’s that simple.

I hope you can understand where these folks are coming from, as many of us are just as often the person who needs some extra time to make a big choice. Keep that in mind the next time you get frustrated.

On more than one occasion, I myself have gone out on a limb and suggested to someone who I could clearly tell was stalling, that I wonder how “traveling” could delay someone so long. I wondered aloud if they were technology handicapped or just plain old. That was a mistake. It is annoying to be stalled, but please trust me, confrontation doesn’t work well in these cases. There is just no tactful way to do it.

Technology is great. It allows us to be more connected than ever before. It also means we expect immediate answers. That’s not always a fair expectation. As hard as it is, try not to take a little radio silence personally. Twenty years ago a decision to make a purchase from you or give you a promotion would have taken just as long, if not longer. You simply would not have expected the answer to be instantaneous. The decision-making process hasn’t changed that much, only the communication process. Patience is a virtue critical to success in any field. Nurture that muscle and don’t get frustrated, that’s all the advice I can give here. Just remember: It is better to hear nothing than to hear “no.”

Stephen