

## Yes, These Letters Are Real!



You can send your workplace questions to Stephen at: [StephenSays@bellow.press](mailto: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 @WorkplaceGuru, Like Stephen on Facebook; and follow him on LinkedIn.

**Dear Stephen:**

*Before I ask my question, I really want to give you and BoF your due. I read the “Ask Stephen” column and the whole magazine every week, and it’s always excellent. Though this question may come off as a bit accusatory, I really do enjoy reading your column each week. I have come to value your point of view and to think of you as a sort of Tony Robbins for the furniture industry.*

*With all that said, I just want to know whether all the letters you print are real and why everyone is so eager to come to you for advice. Don’t get me wrong, some of these stories you share are great lessons in the workplace and life, but I often read these questions agast. I can’t help but wonder who has these problems,*

*who writes these letters, and whose first impulse is to think about going to Stephen Viscusi. I guess I am a cynic. I don’t mind admitting I’d never heard of you before I started reading these columns, but it seems like there were a whole lot of people who knew who you were right from the beginning. I enjoy reading the stories; I just want to know who’s behind them, how you choose them, and, frankly, what credentials you to answer them all?*

**Cynical Susie**

Dear Cynical Susie,

You ask a fair question, though surely you see the irony in asking it this way. You are the person writing these letters!

I get hundreds of workplace letters and questions from readers of *BoF* each month, and I choose the cream of the crop for this sanctified space. I will admit I occasionally use letters I receive from readers of my two bestselling books: *On the Job* (Random House) and *Bulletproof Your Job* (HarperCollins). (If you’re at all interested, the HarperCollins book is published globally in seven languages and any of you can read the online version

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for free.) Sometimes, if I see a particularly good question from one of my 125k twitter followers (you can find me @stephenviscusi), I’ll reach out to get them to write a bit more. I find that my platform at BoF is great because it allows me to answer readers’ questions in nitty-gritty detail, rather than in a quick email or in 280 Twitter characters. I will say, and only because I value my readers so highly and would hate to give a false impression, that I will — from time to time — combine similar questions I may get over the course of a week or so into one longer question. I simply pick out the portions of each question I believe would most interest my readers.

Often, I find people who are having issues at work simply don’t know where else to turn. Therapists, friends and family are great, but without real perspective on your workplace environment or job, how valuable can their advice really be?

As the CEO of the largest recruiting firm in the interiors industry, my job has allowed me to interview literally thousands of clients and candidates over the years. In these interviews, I have built a tremendous working knowledge of the interiors industry. I can explain things as minute as company culture at specific small firms or as macro as large scale mergers and acquisitions. I have seen thousands of people be promoted, fired and everything in between for thousands of different reasons. I have met with hundreds of HR professionals, CEOs and corporate boards to understand how they respond to ever-evolving employee problems and solutions. The bottom line is I know the business. And knowing the business as well as I do makes it simple to answer these questions. I know the answers already; I just have to write them down.

I understand I can come across as brash or overly confident in my opinions. But I am featured on

“Steve Harvey” and asked to do other TV appearances precisely because I am not afraid give the honest and hard-hitting advice people don’t always want to hear.

The real key to these columns is I try to answer your questions from my heart, but without getting mushy or losing my sense of perspective. I am a self-made entrepreneur, a blue-collar kid from a white-collar town called Armonk, N.Y. I solve workplace and career problems every day and have found my advice works time and time again. I just get it, plain and simple. I have a ton of knowledge and an ego big enough to let everyone know how much I know.

I hope this helps answer your question and give you a little bit more perspective on who I am and why I do what I do. Now, do you have any workplace issues that I can help you with? If so, just “Ask Stephen!”

**Stephen**