

## The Do's and Don'ts of Interviewing at NeoCon

Dear Stephen:

*It's trade show season. I just got back from the Vegas hospitality show and ICFE, and now NeoCon is right around the corner in June. What are your thoughts on going on job interviews during a trade show? I am employed as an outside sales rep for a manufacturer and have been approached by competitors to interview for similar positions. Sometimes I get connected through a recruiter, but just as often I get calls directly from other companies.*

*I am basically happy in my current job but feel I should explore all my options. Based on advice I have read from you in the past, all these other potential jobs seem worth considering because they offer a significantly higher base salary. I'm unsure what to do though. Most of these manu-*

*facturers are suggesting I "stop by" an outside location like a hotel during NeoCon in Chicago to have a chat, an interview really.*

*I live in Atlanta and will be at NeoCon on my company's dime, so the whole situation gives me pause. I also have customers to meet during the trade show, and I have to work our showroom, to say nothing of my concerns about confidentiality or someone seeing me interviewing. My boss and customers will be floating around the city. I do not want to seem disinterested in these positions or miss my chance, but my boss is paying for me to be there, and I am nervous I'll get caught. How do I handle this?*

**Not Looking, Except at NeoCon**



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 Not Looking:

It sounds like you are looking, and it sounds like some people are looking at you, too. Know you aren't the only one. I have received dozens of e-mails with this same question recently. I'm sure there were tons of these sorts of "stop by" meetings at ICFE last weekend. They are a hallmark of all the big trade shows. The reality is these shows bring together the best talent from all over the country, so it seems like a prime opportunity for companies looking to snag some good talent — at least one might think. Ultimately, there is no right or wrong answer to your question.

There is something to be said for striking while the iron is hot

# The hard fact I tell both my clients and candidates is a good candidate will not be that available to interview during NeoCon or any of the other trade shows, so it's best to set up an interview after the show where the candidate flies to the company's headquarters.

and taking the risk. It is true you are flying to the trade show at your boss's expense, but I am sure you are not being paid for 24 hours a day of work while you are there. So long as it doesn't affect the way you do your job or your entertaining clients at the show, what you do when you're off the clock is none of your boss's concern. Yet an equally valid case can be made for avoiding this whole situation, and I have mixed feelings about the way it's all done. So, if you turn down the interview at NeoCon while making clear you are interested but don't feel comfortable interviewing during the show, a smart, prospective employer will respect your integrity and likely be impressed you are too busy to meet during the show.

On the employer's side, I always think when hiring employers try to interview during NeoCon it makes them look like a cheap-skate. Sorry, it's true. Common sense should tell you any good salesperson or executive worth hiring should be too busy during a trade show to interview. A first class company you would want to work for should always offer to fly you in for an interview at their own cost. If I was offered an interview during NeoCon, I wouldn't be insulted, but I would be wary.

The hard fact I tell both my clients and candidates is a good candidate will not be that available to interview during NeoCon or any of the other trade shows, so it's best to set up an interview after the show where the

candidate flies to the company's headquarters. However, that does not mean a candidate may not have time to stop by a booth or showroom, say a quick "hello" and size one another up. Let's face it, you can look on LinkedIn and see what someone wants you to think they look like (which they rarely look like in person anymore, it's getting worse than Tinder), but you still want to see them in person. Any trade show is a great chance for prospective employers and employees to get good intel, maybe kindle a bit of chemistry. However, in my opinion, legitimate manufacturers or dealers should not try and do it on the cheap because you happen to be in the same city. It is as simple as that.

**Stephen**