

Retreads: The New Normal?

Dear Stephen:

What is going on with all the job changing these days? Friends and acquaintances of mine in their 50s and 60s are landing new jobs. My kids are millennials, and I have read millennials are expected to change jobs every two years or so. I get that is normal for that generation, but is it also the new normal for everyone now? That is what it seems like to me.

I live in NYC, and I know three women (yes, three) in their early 60s who recently changed jobs. The kicker is that they were employed when they decided to change jobs and didn't even have the jobs they were in before (those jobs that they left), for very long. It's not just these women, either. At least six men changed jobs in the last 10 days in my NY market, too. One of these men, who is now the new division manager for a major manufacturer, has to be at least 60 and has had seven jobs that I know of in the past 10 years. What am I missing?

This all seems insane, but maybe it's worth looking myself. Also, whatever happened to that infamous term retread? Ten years ago, many of these people would have been scared to earn this ignominy and would have stayed put. I

feel like a gossip writing about it because many of these people are my friends, all of whom are credentialed, albeit capricious.

Like I said, most of these people were not unemployed, but rather just snatched up by competitors. Should I want to get some of this attention? If so, how do I get noticed and get that call? I am happy and not saying I want to change jobs, but I at least want to keep my options open and hear what is going on. I am younger than most of these people and never get a call to interview. What's going on?

On Line for the Job Carousel

Dear On Line:

I live in that NYC market place, and I know what you are talking about. From one gossip to another, I appreciate how carefully you've been following your friends' movements. I must admit, in the last few months it was as if AARP magazine ran an ad for furniture people who want to play musical chairs. All these moves came at once.

In fairness though, about a dozen people changed jobs in the last 30-45 days and only half of them were over 60. So even while it might seem particularly odd to you that these older employees are moving around,



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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.

they certainly aren't the only ones jumping from place to place. With that in mind, I think that it's worth celebrating these numbers, as it is proof that there is no discrimination in hiring practices in the furniture industry. While you highlight the lack of age discrimination, I know the market and the job changes in NYC, and I can tell you over half of those people who were recently hired are from the LGBTQ community, more than half of them are women, and a significant percentage of them are people of color. You should be proud you work in an industry that does not label people and prejudge them the way you did in your note!

My question is, what's your deal? Are you jealous of your friends? The interiors industry tends not to

care about sexual orientation, race, age or gender when hiring. We were way ahead of the curve and today's political correctness. We did it for the right reason: profits. What hiring managers care about is kindness, smarts and integrity — what we in NYC call Midwestern values. Most of the leading manufacturers in our industry come from this region, be it Iowa or Michigan, and even from the Northern Midwest, Canada. And everyone knows how nice the Canadians are! We East Coasters get a bad rap, but my office is diagonal to Knoll's executive offices in midtown Manhattan, and even though they are based in Pennsylvania and NYC, they are also as nice as they come.

Bottom line is, it's a nice industry to work in because we are around great design companies. They are not afraid to innovate and try many different things and interact with some of the most talented interior designers and architects on the planet who specify your products. This bold creative process translates into a global culture that is open in its hiring practices. I have seen this in residential furniture, textiles, wallcovering, architectural products and am finally seeing it floor covering, too. Remember when everyone from Steelcase looked the same, like they walked straight off the back nine into the office or right out of the pages of a Brooks Brothers' catalog? Not anymore. So embrace it.

Now back to you. You sound unhappy and jealous and a bit out of touch with the industry you work in today. Because companies are so open to hiring anyone, they often grab

up older people who have a ton of experience. The competition within the industry keeps people moving all the time. Maybe your closed-mindedness has something to do with why no one calls you. And here is the secret, most of these people who are changing jobs — both young and old — were not called out of the blue, but rather they proactively put themselves out there and made the right people understand that they were open to receiving calls.

You seem to think that you are special enough that everyone knows about you. That is rarely how it works — not never, mind you, but rarely. You need to be on the radar of these high level managers. Socialize and ask your ad clients directly if they know of any openings.

Remember how I explained in a past column about how you can buy a reference for the price of a ticket to the "Leaders" breakfast? Well, in some cases you can buy an interview for that same price. The same person who you want to write you a reference probably knows about more jobs than any headhunter. The industry needs to know you are always looking. If a manufacturer can find someone for free, why would they pay a fee? So do not be coy.

And as for you passive aggressively describing your friends as retreads, you should know that we haven't used the term like that since Herman Miller's Action Office was still being sold. Managers no longer count the number of jobs someone has had, but the number of clients they may bring with them and their sales numbers. Take it from me, if a

hiring manager worried about how many jobs someone has had, instead of their credentials, may be soon looking for a job themselves.

Stephen

PS: I did some checking on the NYC market for the month of May, and the questioner was right about their numbers (more or less). Wow, what changes. I am happy to report the following people made moves from one company to another, which means none of these people were unemployed, but rather were poached:

Wesley Vice left Allsteel and went to Herman Miller. Nick Brunetti left Unifor and went to Herman Miller. Barbara Giaquinto left Allsteel and went to Haworth. Robyn Baron left OFS and went to Global as regional manager. John DeBell left Geiger to join Inscape/West Elm. Susan Weinberg left Dauphin to join Leland. Brett Kaplan left Haworth to join Steelcase. Tracey Katchen left The Sander Partnership to join W.B. Wood. Michael Day left Wilkhahn to join Teknion NYC. James Cesario left Wilkhahn to join Knoll as division manager NYC. And Melissa Fischetti left Knoll to join Lutron.

Remember this much turnover means companies who lost employees may now be hiring their replacements. So, if you are looking to change jobs, you should go on some of these companies' websites, see if they have an opening listed online, and fill out an online application if one is available.

Congratulations to all those who have new jobs, and good luck to those of you looking to move!