

# Love Me or Hate Me, You're Gonna Need Me

Dear Stephen:

*I am writing to tell you I hate headhunters or recruiters or whatever you call yourselves. I really do. I used to be a regional manager for a major manufacturer. Every recruiter from Grand Rapids, New York City, Los Angeles and even Salt Lake City was all over me for my business. Day and night, I couldn't get a moment of peace. Then, when I would eventually concede and schedule a meeting, every candidate they would send me was unemployed and subpar. Why should I pay a fee for finding someone unemployed?*

*Let me be clear, I had no prejudice against hiring folks who were unemployed. So long as the candidate was good, I couldn't care less. Still, I resented paying a fee for that person because I always thought they could find*

*me easily. All the person needed to do was apply directly through our company website or reach out to me on LinkedIn. I figured the headhunters were supposed to deal with the more complicated dynamics of poaching talent from my competitors.*

*Either way, it was all for naught because I lost my job in early June, just before NeoCon. After a short mourning period, I took my own advice and started reaching out to hiring managers at companies. In addition, I decided to call several of the very same recruiters who had haunted me for years to see if they could help place me. I sent them my resume and not only did I not get any leads from them, some of them never even responded.*

*I finally landed a job on my own as the manager of a local dealer. Of course, I hate it, but I am stuck here until something better comes along. I can't help but have a bad taste in my mouth about how everything played out. What's the deal with you guys? What happened to I scratch your back, you scratch mine? Is there any way to get someone to help me find a new job? Why can't someone represent me? If there is anything decent your kind does, maybe you can throw me a bone and dampen my cynicism a bit.*

**(Head)Hunted by Hacksr**



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 Hunted by Hacks:

I am sorry for what you are going through, though it certainly isn't my fault. And I'm sorry you hate your job, again, not much blame to be laid at my feet. As far as hating me, well, take a number and head to the back of the line. It's a long line filled with frustrated misanthropes projecting their troubles and industry executives who keep losing their best employees because of me — you should fit right in.

I do follow your logic, though, and, jokes aside, it's never easy to be laid off. I also hear your point about feeling used. It makes sense, of course, if I have a 100 phone calls a day to return, the first ones I will return are from the people I know or former clients. That is the way life works. As a headhunter myself, I will say it's somewhere between bizarre and rotten you weren't treated to this decency by some of your contacts. On the other hand, I think part of your problem might be you don't really understand what headhunters or recruiters (they are the same thing) actually do.

No headhunter ever represents an individual looking for a job or looking to change jobs. That is the common misconception. You — the candidate or applicant as we call you — are not paying our fee. Rather, it is the manufacturer or dealer doing the hiring. The company is the client, not the candidate.

Somehow, every applicant thinks the headhunter has a vested financial interest in placing them. It does not work like that. Usually, the recruiter has been paid in advance, and we have to poach an employed person to find a worthwhile candidate. This is actually the one thing you are right about, why pay a fee if the person is unemployed? Of course, unemployment does not make the candidate a bad worker, it just makes them not worth the fee that was paid. Perhaps your inability to grasp this simple concept as someone who was doing hiring might explain why you lost your job.

The bottom line is headhunters do not represent candidates looking for new employment. We are not talent agents, and you are not the talent. You are not Taylor Swift or Tony Bennett or Stephen Curry or whatever analogy makes the most sense to you. Think of it like going to buy a house. The real estate agent works for the person selling the house, yet when the broker takes you around he makes it feel like he is working for you. Who is paying his fee? The person selling the house. And anyone who has ever tried to buy a house can attest to the fact that once it is time to negotiate a price real estate brokers are rarely the smiling, helpful, bubbly personalities you think you'll be dealing with.

I know most of the headhunters who work in our industry.

We all have very different business models in terms of how we charge our fee. Some charge upfront, some only ask for payment after the placement is made. And in the case of The Viscusi Group, we guarantee each hire for two full years (a lifetime in furniture and two lifetimes at a dealer). So you can be sure we want the best candidates for our clients. Employed, unemployed, like me or hate me, it doesn't matter. I am happy to call you and tell you about an opportunity even if you hate my guts, just remember I don't work for you, I work for your future boss.

Of course, the other reason people dislike recruiters is because we poach good people from companies who are not our clients and bring them to their competitors. If you are not a client, your company is a target. You might not like it, but it's how we make a living and grease the wheels of competition. Want to get rid of the bullseye on your back? Hire us. Recruiters can have a bad reputation, we all know that when we take this job, and most of us are pretty comfortable playing the villain. I am a public figure who also works on TV, so I get double my share of that hate. No headhunter is looking to win the popularity contest, we're simply doing the best recruiting we can for our clients. That might rub some people the wrong way. C'est la vie. I sleep like a baby at night.

**Stephen**