

## Spurned Job Candidate Asks: Should I Expect a Look from Company I Previously Interviewed With?

Dear Stephen,

I am out of a job and looking for work but feeling optimistic about finding a new position fast. I was a sales rep for the same manufacturer for the last 10 years, right out of college. So experience wise would you call me a veteran? Not an old timer or a retread (ugh - some of those derogatory terms I have heard to describe the people in our industry) but I have know-how and a successful track record. I am seeing that many companies have sales openings which is surprising since just a few months ago people were being let go. Another odd aspect of this dreadful pandemic.

I see on LinkedIn and by networking with friends that there are specific sales jobs companies are recruiting for, then I go to the manufacturer's or dealer's website, then to the "employment" or "career" section and I can drill down to that job and download my resume. Even if there is not a job in the geography where I live I download my resume so that if an opening happens I will be in their HR database. I think that may increase my chances of getting a call before HR starts to look outside of

their own resources. So far I have had lots of interviews.

A strange thing happened that I want to ask you about. Two weeks ago I downloaded my resume to a major manufacturer, applying online for a position that is open in the area where I live. My resume matched the job description almost perfectly and I got a call from HR to schedule a Zoom interview. I studied the company's website, and looked up the person I would be talking to on LinkedIn and did all my homework. The interview hardly got underway when the HR person thanked me for applying and explained she had discovered I was already in their applicant database and I had already applied and been interviewed at this company four years ago. Without more of a detailed explanation to me the HR person told me the interview would not be happening and thanked me for my time and interest but ended the call. I was floored. Then it occurred to me that I had in fact applied to the company 4 years ago and forgot. I don't remember the details of that interview but regardless, my work experience is certainly different



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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 (@stephendiscusi), like Stephen on Facebook, and follow him on LinkedIn.

now, 4 years later. I never thought that that interviewing in the past, that long ago, was relevant to the job I was applying for today (and they were both sales jobs). I was so disappointed and, well, really mad. Is this even legal? I mean they had actually scheduled the interview; why would they not have just passed in advance? Why not re-interview me again today and see if the experience I have gained may make me a better candidate for the job they have today. This really left me with a bad taste in my mouth about this company and I will move on but I was wondering if companies are allowed to do this? Does it happen often?

Signed,

The Interview Door was Slammed in My Face

Dear Slammed,

Ouch! I know you must feel bad and I do not blame you. From the details you provided it sounds to me like an honest but unfortunate mistake on the part of the HR department. What you described really can happen. Let me explain how and why. HR departments are overwhelmed with the amount of resumes they are receiving today. Every company tries to keep a very thorough database of everyone that has ever applied to them, for any position, and the information is kept in perpetuity (forever!). And if an interview took place, that record is attached to the resume and available to management in the future.

Companies do this because they never know when they will have an opening. Remember people are always quitting or getting fired, and hiring companies want to go to their own candidate resources first. It is faster and cheaper for a company to keep an active pool of candidates on hand than going to a recruiter, or even run an ad. Yeah, they also look on LinkedIn, but someone who has already sent in a resume shows they have a genuine interest in that company, and that is a plus too. So they reach there first. Common sense.

I am not a lawyer so I have no idea about the legality of what happened to you but I'd like to take your thoughts in a different direction. It must have been a bit embarrassing for the hiring company to schedule a Zoom interview only to explain on the call that it was being cancelled, but my experience tells me there was no ulterior motive. They did not set out to make you feel bad. Here is my highly technical HR term of what happened: a goof up!

My guess is the when you downloaded your resume to the HR department it was read by Artificial Intelligence and usually AI catches resumes that were sent in already, no matter how far back. The AI also goes beyond that and reads if you are a match for a current open position, using the company's own set of proprietary key words or phrases. In your situation, AI could have missed that they interviewed you already through something as

simple as a name change, or you added a middle initial, or shortened your name to Steve from Stephen, for example. The AI system is not perfect. Or maybe a human being at HR actually read your resume, thought you were perfect for the job, set up the Zoom interview right away and then only later checked the database to discover that you had previously interviewed and thought it was nicer to reject you over the Zoom. Hey it happens. They simply put the cart before the horse, went ahead and scheduled your interview then found out they were not interested in you and decided to explain this on the phone.

I appreciate you believe you are a more experienced candidate than four years ago when you interviewed last, and maybe you do deserve another chance at an interview but it is always the hiring company's call. Besides we really never know why an interviewer is "passing" on a candidate. It could just be as simple as they have better candidates then you, but our egos never allow us to believe that. Or it could be that the interview last time was not as great as you thought it was, and the company didn't see a fit. Maybe you even tested with them, and the test result algorithm concluded you were not a good match. Bottom line is this. Why pursue a company that is not interested in you? Their loss - don't waste anymore time and energy on it. With so many other sales openings in our industry right now, and more coming up in January 2021, concentrate on the positive and the companies that want you. BTW, it also occurs to me that you may have remembered you interviewed there and didn't do well, and thought you could trick the system - this happens a lot too. It's like when a recruiter asks you to interview for a job and you not telling the recruiter you already did an interview at that company. Hoping for a second chance, but that strategy rarely works and often backfires! Either way do not focus on this set back and move forward - I have no doubt you'll have a job soon.

Best,

Stephen