

Who is the most competent person in the meeting? Possibly you!

Job seekers often revert to their previous application behaviour. The longer it's been since their last application, the more this happens. However, the balance of power in the job interview and the expectations placed on them by the company may have changed considerably in the meantime without the applicants realising it.

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When young and inexperienced jobseekers apply, the balance of power in the job interview is clear: the company is in the stronger position and can often choose from many candidates. As recruiters and hiring managers are older, there is also a big difference in experience and expertise.

This relation changes as applicants gain more professional experience. However, many older job seekers still have the old image of recruitment in their heads, according to which it is exclusively the employer who makes the selection.

Recognising your own expertise

A client had been selling investment goods for many years. He had been working for a company for a few months with the aim of revitalising the neglected sales department. The market environment turned out to be more difficult than expected, the company's figures were disappointing, and the company urgently needed new business.

The CEO exerted subtle pressure on my client with chummy remarks that they would «rock» the market together over the next few months. The

discussions my client then initiated about mutual expectations prompted him to resign. What went wrong?

Dangerous suspicion of competence

There were different ideas about the short-term prospects of success. My client had assessed the situation realistically: he knew that after months of inactivity on the sales front, a new sales pipeline had to be built up first. As customers investment decisions often take several months, rapid success was not to be expected.

I asked him to what extent he had addressed this topic in the job interviews and managed expectations. Although the question was addressed, he recognised that he had not made it clear enough what he considered achievable in the short term. Due to a suspicion of competence on the part of his interview partners regarding their own customer market, he did not take enough leadership on the subject. This would have been his task, as he was the most competent person in his specialist area in all recruitment interviews.

In every job interview, think about how much your contact person knows about your area of expertise. Don't expect them to reveal their lack of knowledge; there is rarely as much bluffing as in job interviews - on both sides. If in doubt, suspect incompetence and take the lead on the topic.

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