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### ***Keep an eye open during interviews (part 3)***

By Paperitalo Staff

We'll wrap up this theme this week--I promise.

Most are fearful of the interviewing process because it is a sales function. Many look with disdain and fear on the sales function (I did when I was a bright young engineer) and want nothing to do with it. In reality, without sales we cannot spin the invoice printer and no one has a job. Sales is very important--especially selling yourself.

Two weeks ago we looked for visual clues that you might be interviewing at the wrong business. Last week we looked for human clues. This week we will talk about selling yourself.

A few years ago, I put together a presentation about this subject for a meeting of young professionals. However, I would like to go a bit beyond that with some explanation here.

First, one has to understand that when one is looking for a job, it is not about you, it is about the business of the employer. You need to be aware of this from the beginning--when you are setting up an interview (if you are lucky enough to get to this point). There is nothing on your calendar that is more important than the interview date, at least nothing normal (an exception might be the funeral of a close relative or being at the deathbed of a parent, spouse or child, but I can't honestly think of anything else). If you have a conflict with the proposed interview time and place you have just sent a message that something else is more important to you than this prospective position--a very bad message to send.

Secondly, be prepared. Study the company as diligently as possible. If you are interviewing with a public company, tons of information is readily available. Read it and know it.

Thirdly, be sensitive to the interviewer(s). You may have more education than they have. They may hate your alma mater, especially if you live in the US South and your football team just beat theirs in a lopsided match up last week, last year, last decade or last century. Emotions run high on funny things.

Do what I tell sales people to do. I suggest they adopt an attitude of being "quietly confident." No one likes a braggart or show-off, but everyone is afraid of the meek and lowly, too (in a business setting). Don't interrupt, but if you get a quiet chance to insert a bit of knowledge you

have learned, structured in the form of a question, do it. For instance, if your interviewer discusses a facility their company has recently (shutdown) (opened) say something like, "Yes, I read a little bit about that and found it interesting. Perhaps you can explain the overall picture behind that action." Don't ever say anything such as, "Yeah, I know all about that--didn't you close that facility because energy costs are through the roof and corporate wasn't on top of it?" First off, you don't know all about it, you are an outsider, and secondly, it is just possible that your interviewer is married to or the cousin of the ding dong that made the mistake.

Don't try to be funny unless your name is Jerry Seinfeld and you are interviewing for a gig at Carnegie Hall. Be pleasant, courteous, and dignified (but not stiff). Don't ask about salary, benefits, or anything like that--if they want you, they will bring that up at the appropriate time.

And finally, don't forget that the sole objective of an interview is to get an offer. You may not want to work there, but you want that to be your decision after you have carefully weighed all the options.

While interviewing, observe safety. Do people seem to be working in a safe manner? This is one clue of which we did not speak in the last two weeks. It may be the most important one as you make a decision about going to work at a new position.

Be safe and we will talk next week. ##