

Publication: Business Insider Online

Date: 26 December 2022

Headline: Asking about pay in a job interview makes you less likely to get hired

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No job candidate wants to come across as greedy, selfish, or lazy during an interview. But research suggests that that's exactly how hiring managers will perceive you if you ask about pay and perks.

Therein lies the job hunter's paradox: You need to earn a living and you want to have a life outside work, but acknowledging that out loud to a prospective employer is a professional no-no.

"It's off-putting to interviewers," Anthony Nyberg, a professor at the University of South Carolina's Darla Moore School of Business, told Insider. "It allows them to think you care more about the rewards than the actual job."

The upshot for job seekers is that patience and restraint are key. Remember: You have leverage only once the company decides it wants to hire you.

Nyberg likens it to dating: "Wait till they've fallen in love with you before you start talking about how many children you want to have."

Managers want employees who are 'intrinsically motivated'

Research by Rellie Derfler-Rozin of the University of Maryland and Marko Pitesa of Singapore Management University has found managers are less likely to hire candidates who ask about pay and perks during job interviews. Derfler-Rozin and Pitesa also found that

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managers rate candidates who ask questions related to the job higher than applicants who also ask about compensation or benefits.



Anthony Nyberg is a professor at University of South Carolina's Darla Moore School of Business. Academy of Management

The researchers chalked this up to something called "motivation purity bias" — meaning managers only want to hire people who are intrinsically motivated by the job itself. Of course, this notion is a charade, as few workers can afford not to care about the external rewards of a job like, you know, pay as well as other benefits like flexibility and time off.

Nyberg said that workers who ask about vacation policies are seen in an especially poor light. "It sounds like you're walking in the door saying, 'I don't want to work,'" he said.

There are broad implications for managers who might be missing out on talented candidates merely because they inquire about pay. In particular, managers could overlook job seekers from lower economic backgrounds, who are more likely to need money, and women, who are more likely to be concerned with flexible schedules, childcare, and family-leave policies.

Pay-transparency laws could alleviate some of this tension. Already New York, Nevada, Colorado, and Connecticut have laws that require organizations advertise a pay range up front. California has a similar law set to take effect next year.

And yet reporting by Bloomberg suggests these laws are ineffective. Some employers post artificially low pay bands both to keep wages from rising and also to keep existing employees from discovering they're underpaid, Bloomberg found.
Patience can lead to money

For job seekers, the implications are clear: You need to do as much due diligence as you can on your own about what the job and the company pay.

Erin Andersen, a career-transition coach in New York City, recommends resources like Salary.com and Payscale, which provide salary ranges for job titles and location, complete with a breakdown based on your education, years of experience, and so on. "There's a lot of information out there," she said.

It's wise to wait to ask your would-be boss about pay until you're the leading candidate. From a strategic perspective, you want the employer to be fully invested in you as a contender for the role.

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Then, you need to bide your time until you get an offer. "There's very little risk to waiting until the employer brings it up," Nyberg said. "People are afraid they're going to invest all this time in what they think is a \$90,000 job and find out it's a \$25,000 job, but that really doesn't happen."