



By Allen Anderson

We Generate Employer Resistance Not the Employer

We generate much of the resistance employers have to hiring people with employment barriers, especially the candidates with more significant employment barriers. That is, resistance is not solely a product of the employer's innate reluctance to hire. We create conditions, which pull out employer resistance rather than opening up their interest or cooperation.

Most employers have a neutral position on employing someone with an employment barrier. They have not decided whether it is a good idea or not. A few are strongly supportive, a few are strongly opposed but the vast majority is neutral.

Situations that create robust resistance in employers include: confusing selling strategies leading to relevance issues and unfulfilled expectations, overselling techniques promising more than can be delivered leading to failed expectations and poor follow-up services leaving employers in the lurch and leading to resisting to future efforts.

In smaller communities, us generating employer resistance will haunt us for a long time. Employers will not forget their disappointments and a negative mythology will be reinforced. In all communities, it will burn out staff and produce an internal belief system that the clients are unemployable.

We generate our own resistance but we are not aware we are doing it. We subscribe the resistance to the employer rather than examining our methods. An employer resists hiring not because they had it in their mind to resist, but because this resistance was pulled out of them instead of interest.

Let me give you some examples of generating our own resistance:

1. Selling too soon is the classic example. On first meeting the employer your question is "Can I tell you about my program?" No matter how configured, this is a cold sales pitch based on your needs to find a job.

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The employer, when polite, agrees to hear you out and when busy or not polite, says “no”. Why would the employer want to hear about your program? What makes your program so interesting that an employer would like to listen to you and then feel compelled to hire?

You must be a compelling speaker for this to work at all. The assumption is you have something, which every employer should want. When they resist, as they inevitably will, we pin that resistance on the employer. Describing your program in a general way does not make it compelling or in many cases even interesting. This strategy lacks relevance to the employer. It is about what is relevant to you not what is relevant to the employer.

Lack of relevance generates resistance. We should be saying something like “Could we talk about your business and see how what we have to offer might be of benefit to you?” We have reversed the equation from talking about us and our needs to talking about the employer and his/her needs. Talking about employer needs does not generate employer resistance, because you focus your programming on what’s relevant to the employer.

2. Talking too much, too early and when it is not your turn. When you open with “Can I tell you about my program?” you must now talk to the employer. What are you going to talk about?

Generally, it is an outline of what your program does plus a description of and an apology for your client’s shortcomings. Again you are speaking about yourself, which is bad enough, but somehow you must also think of something to talk about without knowing much about the employer, which leads the employer to have a higher proclivity to say no than yes. You are creating the resistance by your behavior.

As you talk, you do not know to what the employer is comparing you to. They will be thinking, “Is this as good as what I would traditionally hire or want?” The resistance is building as you dominate the talking and you do not even know the resistance is there. As the employer does not see or understand the match, they will figure out a way to say “no thanks”. You will not even know you created the resistance and it was not because the employer wanted to resist, it is because you set him/her up to resist.

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What should you have done to minimize resistance? You should have concentrated on getting the employer to talk in the early stages with you asking insightful questions. This strategy minimizes resistance by knowing and demonstrating you know what the employer really wants.

These are just two areas where we, by our own design, generate our own employer resistance. In my next articles, I will explain other areas where we continue to generate resistance and its impact on our success. I will also outline the alternative solutions.

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