

When the Perfect Job . . . Isn't

(By Melinda Pittman)

So you thought you landed the job of your dreams, one that had it all—the type of work you've always loved, a flexible schedule, even the money you were looking for. There's just one problem. Now that you've started the job, it's not anything like you thought it was going to be. What do you do?

First, let's talk about what can be done to avoid such a situation. It all starts with effective communication during the interview process. There are a lot of things that happen when you're conducting a job search: updating the resume, coordinating interview times, gathering information about the job, effectively selling yourself, etc. In addition, you're probably experiencing a tinge of excitement, which is perfectly understandable.

However, excitement or anticipation doesn't need to cloud your judgment or more importantly, prevent you from doing everything necessary in order to make sure that accepting the position is ultimately in your best interests. While it's important to show enthusiasm during the interview process, it's equally imperative to remain objective when assessing whether or not the job is as good a fit as it appears to be.

The second step is asking the right questions of the person or people interviewing you. Not everyone is comfortable asking questions, but it's a must. Open and honest discourse at this early stage will not only help you to gather more information, but will also set the tone for future interaction.

Below are some of the issues you should definitely address during the interview process:

- **The job description**, including the scope of your responsibilities. Find out what the full performance objectives are, and then equate your expertise and past experiences. In other words, find out what you must do to be successful, and then communicate your expertise in those areas.
- **Who you'll be reporting to**. Is that likely to change in the immediate future? If so, does that change the scope of the department objectives, as well as the objectives you must meet?
- **Who you might be working with** on a collaborative project (you don't need specific names, just a general sense of titles). What business units within the company will you be interfacing?
- **Notice the working environment**—does it consist of offices or cubicles? Then observe the people—do they seem friendly or do they appear hurried and overworked?

Take some time to write out your career objectives prior to the interview, as well as questions you'd like to ask during the interview. The more specific you can be at the beginning, the easier it will be for you to determine the correct course of action and the less likely you'll find yourself in a difficult situation.

Open and honest communication . . . again

That doesn't help me, though, you say. I'm already in this situation. What do I do now?

Once again, open and honest communication, tinged with the right amount of diplomacy, will go a long way toward aiding your cause. Ask to speak with your immediate supervisor behind closed doors. Express your concerns in a non-confrontational way. Certainly don't accuse the company of misleading you, even if you feel that has been the case.

Present your concerns as though you believe a misunderstanding has taken place. Stress your desire for clarification, citing what you were told before taking the position against what your job currently entails. If you present yourself in a professional and courteous manner and address the issue with the proper

demeanor, you may find that your supervisor is more than willing to accommodate your needs. But you'll never know unless you ask.

And if the meeting yields no results and it looks as though your "dream job" will continue its devolution, you must continue to remain calm and composed. You now have a decision to make. Assess the situation as objectively as possible. Even though the position is not what you thought it would be, are there opportunities to learn new skills and technologies that will assist you in your career goals? Will your role expand into other areas that will give you "career stretch"? Does this or will this job offer new opportunities that will shape your career and help you to achieve your overall career goals?

If the answer to any of these questions is "yes," work with your new boss to show your value to the organization, and ask for his or her assistance in moving forward. However, if the answer is "no," it would now be in your best interests to continue your job search, starting with those companies with which you interviewed along with your current employer. If your supervisor is made aware of your concerns, but has no solutions to offer, chances are good they won't be surprised if you move on.

Above all things, you should remain professional and be willing to communicate with those who are most able to help you remedy the situation. Although this may be difficult in the short run, it can provide you with long-term benefits and a new direction.

If you have any questions about this topic, please contact me at melinda@thepittmangroup.com.