

Bulletin Board: Thank you may come in handy

by Amy_Winter

A simple thank-you card shows good manners, but it could also help job candidates gain an edge in the interview process. Eighty-eight percent of respondents said a post-interview thank-you note could improve a candidate's chances, according to a survey by Accountemps, a staffing service, which polled 150 senior executives. But less than half of all job-seekers take the time to send a card.

Although many candidates choose not to send thank-you notes, this recent survey illustrates that more applicants are checking in after interviews compared to five years ago. Executives said 51 percent of job-seekers recently sent thank-you notes, while only 39 percent bothered to deliver notes five years ago. And recently more executives (88 percent) seem to be swayed by these notes; only 86 percent answered the same in the past survey.

"Regardless of how someone believes he or she performed during the interview, sending a short thank-you note afterward demonstrates initiative and courtesy," said Max Messmer, chairman of Accountemps and author of "Managing Your Career for Dummies." "Conveying appreciation in a well-written message is not only polite, it also can distinguish a job applicant from others vying for the same position."

More than half (52 percent) of executives tend to favor handwritten notes versus e-mails. Forty-four percent prefer e-mail messages, 3 percent like to receive both types of thank-you notes and 1 percent aren't sure.

Messmer thinks the best method is to send an e-mail soon after the interview and then follow up with more formal communication.

"E-mail ensures immediacy, but hiring managers still favor the personal touch of a handwritten note," said Messmer.

Accountemps offers these suggestions when writing a post-interview thank-you note:

- Limit the length to a few paragraphs.

- Express your appreciation.

- Re-emphasize your interest in the job.

- Reinforce the positive elements you could bring to the company.

For more information, visit www.accountemps.com.

FOLLOW THE FEMALE LEADER?

Gender stereotyping can have consequences for women trying to climb the ladder in the working world. Men are still seen as "typical leaders," leaving women with a hard road to the leadership positions.

Dr. Laura Sabattini, who authored the double-bind study and serves as director in research at Catalyst, the nonprofit organization working to advance opportunities for women and business, says women have to prove themselves to be qualified more frequently than men. Women face higher standards.

Although women make up more than 50 percent of the management and professional positions, only 15.6 percent of Fortune 500 corporate officers and 14.6 percent of board directors are women, according to "The Double-Bind Dilemma for Women in the Leadership: Damned if You Do, Doomed if You Don't" study.

Sabattini describes the three dilemmas facing women leaders:

- Extreme perceptions: If women leaders go against gender stereotypes, they are seen as too tough; however, if they go along with the stereotypes, they are depicted as too soft.

- High competence/lower rewards: Women usually have to work harder than men for the same position in order to prove their abilities. And women tend to receive fewer rewards.

- Competent but disliked: Women who act with assertiveness are seen as not personable. But those who are likable are depicted as lacking leadership skills.

"No matter what women choose, they lose," says Sabattini, referring to the double-bind issues. "No matter

how women, behave they are perceived in a certain way."

Catalyst attempts to illustrate this stereotyping issue as an organizational problem, not just an individual-woman problem. Many working environments are based on an old working model with men as the default leaders; therefore, they are seen as the best leaders. Organizations are missing out on a great source of talent: women leaders.

Sabattini thinks that companies need to be more attentive to gender stereotyping.

"It is a win-win for companies," says Sabattini. "Both women and men can improve the working environment.

The study offers a few suggestions for organizations to bring awareness:

- Give women leaders and other co-workers resources to spread the word about women leadership skills as well as the effects of gender stereotyping.
- Create and practice techniques that address gender bias.

Sabattini feels stereotyping will change if more women are put in higher leadership positions.

"Stereotyping is a vicious cycle; the perception remains with only a few women at the top."

For more information visit www.catalystwomen.org.

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