

Find out where you stand right after the job interview

By Carol Kleiman
Chicago Tribune

It's tough to be looking for a job in this difficult employment market. And it's challenging to create such an excellent resume that you're called in for an interview.

But even after you've done that hard work, there's another frustration: getting through to hiring officers to find out if you got the job. And then pursuing them without being considered a pest.

Your chances of success begin in the job interview. And here are the questions to ask at the last session you have with hiring officers - the one, hopefully, before the job offer is made: Ask how you did during the interview. This is a perfectly legitimate question, so don't be shy about posing it.

If you're told you've done fine, which most likely is the answer you'll get, then step up to the plate with your next question: Ask directly if you are being considered for the job.

Before you leave the interview, there are a few more important questions to ask and things to do. Ask the hiring officer for a business card, if you don't already have it. Ask when you will learn whether you got the job. And don't forget to say that you will follow up with a phone call, if that's OK. Usually, it is. If it's not, they'll tell you not to call them, they'll call you -- but you don't have to abide by that commandment.

Another essential, though not a question but a statement, is to say, without any embarrassment at all, that you really want the job, that you're a perfect fit for the company and that you hope to hear very soon about your prospects. These questions are your "on-site" strategies for finding out what's going on, and they lay the necessary groundwork for following up when you no longer are on the premises and don't have such direct access to the powers that be. Here are some "off-site" strategies to follow:

The very same day as your last interview, write a thank-you note to the hiring officer and everyone else who interviewed you. After thanking them, again assert how much you are looking forward to working there and hearing from them. Include your home address, phone number and personal e-mail, address.

If you don't hear from the hiring officer in the promised time frame, start calling immediately after the period ends. If there was no time frame, start calling once a week. Continue calling once a week for three weeks.

At the same time, if you still haven't heard one way or the other, call any contact you may have in the company, whether it is the receptionist, friends or other managers who seemed friendly. Ask what's happening. You may find out that way that the job already has been filled or they've decided not to hire. If one month has passed with no response from the hiring officer, send an e-mail asking for information. That's a last resort, however.

While the preceding professional career advice usually works, sometimes it doesn't. And that's why I've also come up with a list of things to do when all you get is absolute silence from the potential employer. This advice isn't the most practical, but it might make you feel better:

- Camp out in the company's reception area until you get an answer.
- Send a photo to the hiring officer of you and your starving children.
- Tell them if you don't hear from them soon, you never again will buy their product.
- **And now for the most serious advice of all: Forget them and continue your job search.**

*Carol Kleiman is the author of *Winning the Job Game: The New Rules for Finding and Keeping the Job You Want* (Wiley, \$16.95). Send a-mail to ckleimantribune.com*