

New Leaf Resumes' Newsletter

Food for Thought ☒ Inspiration ☒ Practical advice

Evaluating Fit

The older I get, the more synchronicity I see. (I think it has something to do with awareness that comes with wisdom! Well, there's got to be some upside to all this grey hair!) Lately, I have had clients who have landed a second interview, and contact me to ask, "How can I know for sure that the fit is good?"

First of all — congratulations! This clearly indicates that you are a strong contender for a job offer. But then I'd have to ask "What is the 'something' that is giving you reason to doubt?"

Assessing fit is a difficult topic because most of the variables are highly personal. Your assessment of the company may depend on

- your ability to tolerate either cliques (read: almost no one fits in) or exceptionally high expectations (read: lots of overtime), the fall-out after a difficult merger, or the tension from an upcoming project;
- how much you need the job — if you've been unemployed for awhile;
- how rare positions in your field are — and whether you will tolerate less-than-favourable conditions in order to get your foot in that door;
- whether you are a new grad who may have to take a less-than-ideal position to launch a career;
- whether you are currently employed and looking for either a lateral move or a step up the career ladder — in which case you may not feel the pressure to jump out of a frying pan into a fire!

There are always a few questions that you can ask yourself, and ask your interview panel, in order to come to a reasoned, if not perfect, decision.

1. Quite often, the second interview will include members of the team on which you will be working. Ask the team "How do you like working here?" or "What is it about ABC Corp that keeps you working here?" Recently I had a client who asked just that question. He shared with me that all of a sudden the room went dead-quiet...finally the HR Manager volunteered to leave so that people could speak freely. Wow, what a red flag. Although he accepted the job offer, he did so with reservations, and he quit on day one, after witnessing a serious altercation between staff and management — which he described with the following "Before you knew it the plant manager was swarmed by 5 or 6 people yelling over one another about the situation not being fair and seniority rules, really it wasn't a very pleasant place to be." And that happened during orientation.
2. Which brings me to the second suggestion: listen to your gut. My client had that gut reaction during the second interview. I, too, had such a feeling during a second interview. The plant president, to whom I would be reporting directly, mentioned something about "not liking telling people something a second time." Given that I hadn't started working there, and had certainly not given him any reason to worry about my work ethic, that remark really seemed out of place. I lasted a few days longer than my client above; I quit at the end of day four. My perception of the boss turned out to be oh-so-true.

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3. This next suggestion is imperfect, as you won't always find out the truth, but do investigate the company, office or position. I recall applying for a position and landing an interview. Something in that interview got my "danger" signal on high alert, so I called the incumbent to ask about the position. She very candidly told me "don't apply." Seems it was a position that truly needed to be split into two, but there was no corporate will to do so. She put in a lot of overtime, with little thanks, and I steered clear. In today's LinkedIn and Facebook connections, you might just be able to find someone who works there. Or you could hang around the company at quitting time to query a current employee — find someone who makes eye contact and looks friendly.
4. During the interview, ask about performance appraisals - how often, what aspects of your work will be evaluated, how will your accomplishments be acknowledged or rewarded? Ask about the corporate culture — do they celebrate successes and how; is there succession planning; what are the corporate goals; do they support employee development? Ask also, what are the upcoming challenges? How high is the turnover in the company, and in this position in particular?

Then there are always good reasons NOT to take the job, and these include:

1. You're not given a written offer. It should include start date, title, starting salary, when benefits begin, when your first review will be and what you can expect at that time. Executive's offers should go beyond the above with some detail of the scope of the position's accountabilities, reporting structure, and reference to future promises, if any were made in the offer (I have also had several executives who were promised considerably more than the company delivered on).
2. You don't agree with the company's mission statement or vision, corporate culture, or ruthless methodologies.
3. Turnover is high in this position, or even in the company.
4. The salary is quite low, and you know that you'll be looking for another job even as you begin this one. That wouldn't really be fair to the employer, and won't get you a glowing recommendation either.
5. The job is way over your head, or way below your abilities. Again, you'd be looking before long.

Admittedly this topic is challenging, highly personal, and sensitive to many variables. But I hope that I've shed a bit of light on a topic that is perhaps a bit neglected.

Please feel free to share this email with friends, family, colleagues and neighbours who may be job hunting. Your continued support is very much appreciated.

If you have topics that you would like to see covered in a future issue, by all means, send me an email or pick up the phone.

In the meantime, all the best in your career, Stephanie

p.s. If you would prefer to access my newsletters on my website, please let me know and I will remove your name from the email list.

p.p.s. Did you know that New Leaf Resumes has acquired the www.newleafresumes.com address as well?