

MANAGEMENT & CAREERS

How to Deal With a Long Hiring Process

Getting a job takes longer than ever, as employers ask more of candidates



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By Sue Shellenbarger

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It has never been easy to land a job, but a rise in hiring has added a new twist: Employers are taking nearly twice as long to hire people as they did several years ago.

Companies need an average of 23 days to screen and hire new employees, up from 13 days in 2010, says Andrew Chamberlain, chief economist at the jobs and recruiting site Glassdoor, based on a study of nearly 350,000 interview reviews by the site's users. Applicants run a gantlet of multiple interviews not only with bosses but with teams of prospective co-workers. Also, more people are being asked to submit business plans or face a battery of personnel tests.

Employers are trying to avoid costly mistakes. Getting a new hire up to speed can take six months to a year, and replacing one who fails can wreck a tight budget. Finding the best candidates requires assembling a large, diverse pool, says David Orr, vice president, human

Some employers demand so much that applicants lose interest. An employer's treatment of recruits is "a very, very good barometer of how they're going to behave" toward employees, says Nigel Taylor, vice president, sales, for Technology Business Research, a Hampton, N.H., market-research firm. Mr. Taylor rejected a job offer last year after the employer "went dark on me for four weeks," failing to call at all or answer his emails promptly, he says.

Many job seekers agonize over what to do when their second- or third-choice employer nears making an offer while the No. 1 choice is still making a decision. Pressing the first choice risks getting you dropped from the race, but saying nothing can cause you to lose out on the No. 1 opportunity.

One of Mr. Hellman's clients was expecting two offers within a week but still hoped for an offer from his No. 1 choice, where he was awaiting a final round of interviews. He emailed his No. 1 choice with an enthusiastic, positively worded request, Mr. Hellmann says: "I'm very excited about the opportunity and I know I'd enjoy working with you. That said, I do have other things in the works that are moving forward very rapidly. If there's anything I can do to expedite this process, please let me know." The employer quickly scheduled a final interview, and the client got the job.

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