



## ASKING FOR FEEDBACK IS POINTLESS. INSTEAD ASK FOR ADVICE

By Nick Kossovan

If a candidate I did not hire wants to make me uncomfortable, they only need to ask for feedback. (I will revisit this.) Self-proclaiming job search experts and career coaches commonly advise asking for feedback when you do not get the job you have interviewed for. The thinking-as if all hiring managers assess candidates in the same way-is that you will learn "tips" on improving your interview performance.

Employers own their hiring process, to which job seekers are not entitled transparency to. Nor do employers owe candidates an explanation of how they select candidates. Consequently, job seekers have no idea whether their application or resume has been reviewed and discarded or gone into a black hole.

Even if someone looks at your resume and LinkedIn profile, you will not know why you were not selected for an interview. Likewise, if you were interviewed, you will not know why you did not get the job. There are infinite reasons why you did not get selected, the most probable:

- An internal candidate got the job.
- There was a candidate who interviewed better than you and was a better fit. (It is possible.).
- None of the candidates the employer has interviewed has met their criteria, so they are still looking.
- The employer has decided not to fill the job at this time. (This is common, given the talk of a looming recession.)
- A candidate networked themselves into being hired. (It is no secret that most highly desirable jobs are filled through referrals.)

So, besides being a regular reader of this column, how do you improve your job search skills, particularly when interviewing, if you don't ask for feedback? By asking for advice rather than feedback.

As I mentioned, being asked to give feedback makes me uncomfortable. The last thing I want to do is hurt a candidate's feelings. There is also the possibility that my feedback might be twisted to create a narrative for legal issues. This is the prevailing reason why I, and almost all hiring managers, avoid giving feedback. ("We had numerous applicants ")

However, when someone asks me for my advice, I become a chatterbox.

Asking for feedback is asking, "How did I do?"

Asking for advice is asking, "What can I do?"

Advice has a very different tone. If you have built a bond with your interviewer, which you should have to some extent, you should feel comfortable asking for advice. Think about the last time someone asked you for advice. I am sure you were flattered.

How does this feel?

"While I'm disappointed I wasn't selected, thank you for interviewing me and assessing my skills and experience. As you know, I am seeking a senior analyst position with a mid-size IT firm. Do you have any advice for someone with my background searching for such an opportunity?"

Tell me this does not feel very different from asking for feedback, which, to be honest, is essentially asking, "Why did you not hire me?"

Feedback is pointless because, as the name implies, it is backward-looking. Feedback is an "evaluation" of past performance. On the other hand, when you ask someone for advice, they are more likely to think critically and specifically about how you can improve to succeed in the future.

Here are two tips to help you get advice you can use in your job search.

- Be specific in the advice you seek.

If you need help in a specific area (e.g., your resume, cover letter, networking, interviewing, LinkedIn profile), specifying where you need help will make the advice you are given relevant. For example, do you need help crafting STAR (Situation, Task, Action, Result) stories to answer behavioural interview questions more compellingly?

"When you ask me to tell you about a time when I handled a challenging situation, I felt my response, the story I told, wasn't resonating enough. What advice can you give me on improving my response to this question which I'm sure I'll be asked in future interviews?"

You will receive more specific and actionable advice if you ask people to think about what you feel will help you in the future.

"Can you offer me any advice on improving my presentation skills so I can deliver a more powerful presentation than I did with you and Carminia?" or "What suggestions would you have for making my slides more eye-catching?"

- Give a little nudge.

Do not end the conversation if you are given a vague answer like "You did great. However, there was a candidate whose background was a better match," which is probably true. Probe further. "In what ways can I improve how I present my background, so my next interviewer will clearly see how my background meets their needs?"

Good advice can transform your job search.

Lastly, your interviewer does not owe you advice or feedback. Be respectful of their hiring decision. They know what they need in their next employee. Insisting on being given advice or feedback-aggressive behaviour-will be remembered should you and your interviewer cross paths down the road, which is more common than you think.

Nick Kossovan, a well-seasoned veteran of the corporate landscape, offers advice on searching for a job. You can send him your questions at [artoffindingwork@gmail.com](mailto:artoffindingwork@gmail.com)



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