

## HOW THREATENING IS YOUR JOB SEARCH?

CCI Newsletter: April 2005

**In a search for a job a majority of people will want to be helpful. Yet, most individuals will also be turned off by your request because they feel like they are 'threatened'. Thus, as you search for a job from people, they will ultimately find them turning their backs on you. Why? Because most people do not have jobs sitting in their hip pockets to hand out. Your search for a position assumes that they do have some direct awareness of jobs available. This lack of knowledge, as a consequence, makes them feel quite impotent to help and hence threatened. What is at the base of this situation, and what should you do about it? Read on for the answers.**

### Two Threatening Stories

#### a. Shopping Story

A person, such as yourself, enters a large clothing shop and before you get very far into the store you find a salesclerk, with a smile, trying to establish eye contact with you. As much as you may try to avoid the clerk, within seconds she is beside you offering the popular refrain "May I help you?" You reply with an equally familiar refrain "No thanks, I'm just looking."

The question is: why do you reject that perfectly innocent offer? The answer is that you reject the clerk because you think that she may have different interests than you. You want to look; you think she wants you to buy. You have a \$50 budget; you think she will try to coax you to spend more than that. You have a certain set of tastes; you think she will try to force some of her tastes on you. You want to check out all the merchandise; you suspect she will attempt to flog store-promoted merchandise. You want to be able to walk out of the store without buying anything; you think it will be embarrassing to say you like none of the things you have seen.

In a few words, you assume that the salesclerk represents a threat to your shopping plans. Observe that this is a very mild threat. The clerk will not raise her voice; the clerk is not belligerent; the clerk has no weapon; the clerk has no power to stop you from doing what you want. Yet, the clerk still poses enough of a threat to you that you will utter: "No thanks, just looking."

The point is that, in a (mildly) threatening store environment your attitude is defensive. Without the clerk's help you may not discover all the new style opportunities available. However, in a non-threatening store environment you might open up your inquisitiveness and your wallet more willingly. ***The non-threatening environment is more conducive to a person opening up.***

#### b. Waiter Story

You enter a restaurant and select a table with the goal of enjoying a \$20 lunch and its glass of wine. As the meal ends, you think about giving the waiter a tip. The waiter was so efficient and pleasant, you are contemplating a \$4 tip. Soon he is before you, presenting you with the bill for \$20. Then the server states: "For a meal of this size, we usually expect a \$3 tip."

What would be your response? For most people, there would be a defensive reaction, perhaps the thought "You'll be lucky to get any tip from me!" Not being conflictive you leave some tip, perhaps \$2 – not the \$3 he suggested and certainly not the \$4 you contemplated earlier.

Think of the situation: same meal, same restaurant, same server but the tip amount in your mind has shifted. Why would you pay less for exactly the same situation? Because you are not driving the situation – you are responding to the situation. The situation shifted from non-threatening to a threatening one – even though it was a mild threat, one in which you were under no obligation to follow the suggestion.

## Career Coaching International

---

### c. Are you doing it getting done to you?

In the shopping story above, the threat ceases when you are doing the shopping rather than the clerk attempting to help you in your shopping. In the waiter story the threat ceases when you decide how much to tip rather than the waiter helping you decide how much to tip. In a few words, *if you are doing it, there is no threat*. However, if the other party is doing it to you or for you or even suggesting it for you, you sense a threat.

Two more every-day examples are:

- Everyone likes to buy; nobody like to be sold to.
- If you quit a job its no big deal. If you get fired from exactly the same job, for essentially the same reason, it's a human tragedy.

So, if your acquaintance happens to offer you a job, it is cool. If you shop for a job from acquaintances, it's not so cool – it's a threat.

### The Lesson

It does not take much of threat to reverse a person's attitude even in the simplest transactions. We're not talking about violence, a robbery or a war here but simple every-day situations.

We must take this lesson with us when we go job hunting. We must not carry even a mild threat with us when we meet people who are giving us free time and advice. We want these people to remain conducive to opening up their minds to create job ideas and opportunities for us which they will do – but only in a non-threatening environment.

While you never want to hide the fact that you are looking for the 'right job' , it is imperative that you set others at ease by ensuring them that you do not expect them to have a job and that you are gathering information. Make it clear that you do not even expect them to know of a job.

The mild threat is our asking for a job from other people. Why? Because most people DO NOT HAVE JOBS AVAILABLE; in fact most people do not even know where a job is available.

Therefore, you stand to offend MOST people if you ask for a job.

Yet, left alone in a non-threatening environment, anyone with job connections will quickly share them with you if they come to mind. And that is all you really want.

### What you must do

You, therefore, must conduct the meeting so that the person being met sees it as a clear means for you to obtain information – not as a means for you to find a job. The job tip will willingly come forward without prompting and it will likely be a more generous tip if the meeting goes well.

### Summary

Conduct your job search meetings in a non-threatening way. To do that, do not ask for a job; and you must articulate that intent. Then, surprisingly, with enough connects, the job will suddenly appear. CCI's confidence comes from our success at seeing and conducting thousands of job searches this way.

Good luck to you in your job pursuit.

Bill Caswell  
Career Coaching International (CCI)  
[www.ccinternational.ca](http://www.ccinternational.ca)

© W. E. Caswell, 2005

### Now is the time to order your copy of:

***"The Best Dam Business Book in the World"***  
**by Bill Caswell**

Connect online with Indigo-Chapters at [www.pleaseremainseated/chapters.ca](http://www.pleaseremainseated/chapters.ca) or through General Store Publishing House at [www.gsph.com](http://www.gsph.com) or at 1-800-465-6072.

Price: 20 bucks.