



Is “Ghosting” Another Symptom of COVID? 3 Ways Your Business Can Prevent Getting Ghosted by Your Applicants

Insights

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The term “ghosting” originated in the early 2000’s, usually in reference to dating and romantic relationships. With the ever-increasing use of social media and online dating apps, ghosting – the act of having someone completely disappear from your life without warning – has become an unfortunate part of today’s dating world. However, it has now become a problem in the working world, with businesses facing an increasingly challenging environment where promising candidates vanish into thin air. While employers have traditionally been more likely to ghost than to be ghosted – ignoring jobseekers or not communicating with failed applicants to let them know they didn’t the job – the tables have certainly turned in recent years. What are the three things your business can do to reduce the risk of being ghosted by your applicants?

Why the Increase in Ghosting?

While ghosting was a growing trend among job candidates before 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic and its after-effects can shoulder much of the blame for the current environment. In 2021 alone, more than 47 million Americans quit their jobs – which is the most resignations on record according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. This unprecedented mass exodus, dubbed the Great Resignation, was precipitated by the pandemic and completely changed how people think about life, work, and balancing the two.

Millions of workers went from being in an office setting Monday through Friday to working from their kitchen tables wearing pajama pants. Video conferencing technology provided the flexibility of being able to conduct business without requiring a traditional office setting. The opportunity for remote work has changed the landscape of the workplace forever.

The Modern State of Workplace Ghosting

The job market has bounced back from the early days of the pandemic when there were mass layoffs and job loss to the point there are more job opportunities than applicants. This has led to an increase in ghosting by applicants.

There are three kinds of ghosting that we are seeing from jobseekers these days:

1. no-shows for scheduled interviews;

2. no-shows for the first day of work after accepting the job offer; and
3. quitting without giving notice.

As the job market continues to surge, applicants have the advantage with it being a candidate's job market. Applicants have more options for employment and can quickly move from one job to the next. Online job search engines allow for 'easy apply' options, where one candidate can apply for multiple jobs with just a few strokes on the keyboard. If they apply to five jobs, and decide on one, then that leaves the other four subsequently "ghosted."

It is also easier for an applicant to ghost an employer when the hiring process is virtual. In a 2021 Indeed survey, 46% of jobseekers admitted to simply not showing up for a scheduled interview. Reasons included receiving another offer, dissatisfied with the offered salary, or just deciding it would not be a good fit. The prevalence of ghosting does trend downward the further applicants are in the hiring process. According to Indeed, 48% of applicants said they just did not respond to the prospective employer while 46% did not show up for a scheduled interview. Only 7% did not show up on their first scheduled day of work.

Employers aren't blameless in this environment, by the way. In that same Indeed survey, a staggering 77% of applicants say they've been ghosted by a prospective employer since the pandemic and only 27% of employers say they have not ghosted an applicant in the past year.

How Can You Prevent Your Business from Being Ghosted?

Here are three steps you can take to minimize the chances of being ghosted when it comes to your applicant pool.

1. Communication, Communication, and More Communication

As any relationship expert will tell you, communication is key. This is also true for the employer-candidate relationship. Prioritizing clear and open communication from the start of the hiring process is a great way to start. Ensure that the applicant has all of the information they need throughout the process. Encourage them to ask questions. Being friendly and attentive goes a long way. If there is a delay in the hiring process, let the applicant know. The more communication you have with your applicants, the greater odds you will have on retaining them through the hiring process and eventually in the job position. Don't be the "don't-call-us-we'll-call-you" type of manager.

2. Transparency Builds Trust

One thing that has not changed is the stress that comes with searching for work. A lack of transparency in the hiring process contributes to ghosting, so keeping applicants in the loop as the hiring process continues can help. A common complaint for job applicants is extended timelines between the application and the hiring. Communicate timelines clearly at each stage so

applicants can have realistic expectations. Applicants that understand the process are more likely to stick with the company for the long haul. A good way to do this is have your hiring manager provide applicants with details on the timing of the hiring process and the overall steps your company takes when hiring, such as multiple interview rounds, drug screens, background checks, etc.

3. **Rejection is Better than Disappearing**

As the employer, let the applicant know they did not get the job. Pulling a disappearing act on an applicant is not professional. Simply notifying them via email or a phone call allows the applicant to close the door on that search and focus their attention to finding another job, rather than blindly waiting for the job offer that is not coming. If you ghost your applicants, you will find that this message will spread online on hiring websites and makes it more likely that future applicants will feel comfortable returning the favor.

Conclusion

It may not be Halloween yet, but there are plenty of opportunities before then to avoid ghost encounters. Following these tips should assist in preventing ghosting as an employer and to keep your applicants from ghosting as well.

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