

CareerDiva.net

You've got the job!

By Eve Tahmincioglu

Welcome to CareerDiva. The thinking man's and woman's career and workplace blog. I'm Eve Tahmincioglu, journalist. Author of *From the Sandbox to the Corner Office: Lessons Learned on the Journey to the Top*. And Your Career columnist for MSNBC.com.

There is nothing like that feeling when you land a job at the company you wanted to work for. But lately many of you have been getting this disconcerting follow-up call.

Hello, this is the hiring manager from Company X. I hate to do this but we're going to have to push back your start date a couple of months.

It's like a needle skidding across an album (remember those) for many job seekers. Alas, many more of you have been hearing this from HR folks lately.

I got this email yesterday from a reader:

I am a recent college graduate and had a job to start on June 1st. Two weeks ago, though, I was informed that my new hiring date has been pushed back to Sept 1st. The offer is still good and I can wait. What should I do in the meantime? Look for another job? Work somewhere part time? Should I try to keep in touch with the company or find out what's behind the new start date?

Economic pressure is creating a sea of uncertainty for many companies and often times they have buyer's remorse and want to put off bringing you into the corporate family. Some of these decisions are based in reality, but some can be bogus.

"It's an integrity issue," says Chuck Pappalardo, managing director of Trilogy Search, a recruitment firm in the San Francisco Bay area, about businesses that operate this way.

He believes the onus is on the job seeker to figure out if there's really logic behind such a decision, or whether they just have little regard for how they treat their employees. If it's the latter, he stresses, you don't want to work for such an employer.

Here are Pappalardo's tips and things to look out for when the push-back happens:

- You should ask specific questions of the hiring manager and find out exactly why they put off the hire.
- Answers should be honest and traceable, meaning you should be able to read for yourself that sales were off in the quarter, or they recently lost a big account, for example.
- Don't feel strong armed. That's a bad sign.
- It's also a bad sign if the HR person calls you to push back the date, when you've been dealing with a different contact prior to that.
- Get answers from the person or people you've interviewed with directly.
- Ask them to put the new date in writing. An employer, if they really want you, should be open to that.

Also, you need to keep the job-seeking juices flowing.

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“The job seeker should continue looking for other opportunities especially if there isn’t a signed contract involved,” says Gina Ng, a career counselor. “But at the same time, don’t burn the bridge with the employer. It’s always good to have options. The job seeker may find something better along the way. In the interviews, the job seeker can even use it as a leveraging point, in terms of salary, to show a certain degree of value and desire. “Well I have another job offer from XYZ, but I am much more interested in ABC’s mission and its goals.”

It’s all about keeping your options open. There still may be a great job waiting for you in two months, but in this economy you just can’t leave your fate in the hands of others.

Take charge!



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