

# Improving chances is up to job seeker



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**DEAR CARRIE:** I have been out of work for several months. Despite getting many interviews and being invited back for follow-ups at some companies, I am still without a job. I would like to find out what went wrong so I can use the information to improve future interviews. I have tried, but the interviewers have never responded to my follow-up emails or telephone calls. I truly do not understand why I don't get a note back, even as a simple courtesy. I would even accept, "We have decided to go with another candidate," but I receive no information at all. The interviewing process has gotten so perplexing and extremely frustrating. Help! My unemployment is about to run out.

— *Mum's the Word?*

**DEAR MUM'S:** I spoke with an executive who offered some insights from her twin perches of human resources and career counseling.

From an HR point of view, when a candidate doesn't get a job, the less said the better, said Mary Simmons, director of HR consulting at Portnoy, Messinger, Pearl & Associates Inc., a human-resource and labor-relations firm in Syosset.

"As an HR consultant I would advise clients not to give too much information for fear it may lead to a claim or litigation," Simmons said. "Quite frankly, it is not our job to tell the candidate why we didn't hire her or what she can do differently. A recruiter's job is to fill positions as quickly as possible, and taking time to instruct candidates we did not choose would take too much time and leave us liable in many cases."



Applicants may want feedback, but an HR executive advises them to focus on interview skills.

Putting on her career counselor cap, Simmons said, "I am asked this question often. My advice is to continue asking for the feedback, although it will be rare to get it. Instead, be proactive and take a class or tutorial on correct interviewing techniques, or work with a career counselor to do mock interviews."

Some of the common mistakes interviewees make are: ■ Talking over the interviewer. "Let them lead the interview," Simmons said. "But you

as the candidate should have notes on what you want to convey in the interview, which should be your skills and competencies as they relate specifically to that particular job and company."

■ Not doing any research on the company or the position.

■ Dressing inappropriately. "Even though suits are not often worn in the workplace today, professional dress is still a must for most professional positions," she said. "Even when the position would not require a

candidate to wear a suit or dress very professionally — say a computer programmer or a cashier — the candidate must be dressed in clothing that is not offensive, is clean and properly pressed, and not too revealing."

■ Not succinctly describing their accomplishments in previous jobs. "Companies do not want to hear what your responsibilities were at your last position, but what you did above and beyond" those duties, she said.

In the end, candidates must understand that when they don't get a job it might be less about their interviewing skills and more about their not being a good fit for a position, Simmons said.

"They should think back and take notes on the questions asked and recall whether or not they answered them to the best of their ability," Simmons said. "If they did, the job is simply not for them and they may need to review the positions they are applying for and make an adjustment there."

Call Carrie Mason-Draffen with workplace questions at 631-843-2791, or email her at [carrie.mason-draffen@newsday.com](mailto:carrie.mason-draffen@newsday.com). Your name and number won't be published. Not all questions can be answered; some may be edited for length and clarity.

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## Gender balance in management found to be profitable

BY DANICA KIRKA  
*The Associated Press*

LONDON — When Rohini Anand took over diversity programs at multinational catering company Sodexo in 2002, she had one goal: to prove that it pays for a company to have equal numbers of male and female managers.

Sodexo, with 419,000 employees in 80 countries, says she's done just that. A company study last year found units with equal numbers of men and women in management roles delivered more profits more consistently than those dominated by men.

"It has become embedded now. It's not just me talking about it anymore," Anand says.

Evidence is growing that gender equity is not just politically correct window-dressing, but good business. Companies are trying to increase the number of women in executive positions, yet many are struggling to do so because of a failure to adapt workplace conditions in a way that ensures qualified women do not drop off the corporate ladder, surveys show.

The case for companies to act is compelling.

In a survey last year of 366 companies, consultancy McKin-

sey & Co. found that those whose leadership roles were most balanced between men and women were more likely to report financial returns above their national industry median.

Companies with more balanced leadership do a better job recruiting and retaining talented workers, McKinsey found. They have stronger customer relations because management better reflects the diversity of society, and they tend to make better business decisions because a wider array of viewpoints is considered.

While most big companies now have programs to increase

gender diversity, McKinsey found women held less than a quarter of the top jobs in 92 percent of the companies.

Sandrine Devillard, who has studied the issue for McKinsey for about 16 years, said companies were nonchalant about retaining top female talent when she started. Now they want to know what programs work. Fast.

That's because a woman's prospects for promotion fall off at every step of the career ladder, according to a separate McKinsey survey of 130 large companies in 2012. Women made up 37 percent of the workforce but comprised 22 percent

of middle managers, 14 percent of senior managers, 9 percent of executive committee members and 2 percent of CEOs.

While governments in France, Norway, Spain and Germany have sought to impose quotas for women on boards, companies like Sodexo decided to start by building a pipeline to get them there.

Anand, the company's global chief diversity officer, said Sodexo's goal is for women to make up 25 percent of its top 300 managers this year. Women already make up 42 percent of the board of directors and 38 percent of the executive board.