

So You Haven't Heard Back After a Job Interview...

by Marlo Lyons

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Summary. You applied for a job and actually heard back from the recruiter. Not only that, you've made it to the first step of the interview process: the recruiter screen. What should you do if you're met with silence after that interview, or even later in the process? The good... [more](#)

When looking for jobs, it's not uncommon to not hear back after applying — for weeks or at all — even if you have the desired skills and capabilities. At that stage in the process, it's possible your resume won't even be looked at. But what if you do get that call

back, then experience silence during the interview process? It's nerve-wracking, but the good news is that silence doesn't always mean rejection. Here are the common reasons for silence after interviews and what to do if it happens.

After a Recruiter Screen

Even if you talked to a recruiter, that doesn't mean you're actually a candidate yet. Recruiters are usually juggling more than 10 job openings at any time, which requires screening dozens of applicants to find enough viable candidates to present to a hiring manager. Typically, the hiring manager will determine who will move forward into the hiring process based on the information the recruiter gathers. It can take time for recruiters to get time on hiring managers' calendars, and then for managers to make those decisions. Further, if they're not satisfied with the candidates initially presented by the recruiter, the manager may want to see more, which could delay decision-making and the next round of interviews.

To avoid silence early in the process, during the recruiter screen, ask, "Based on the candidates you've screened so far, what else do you need to know from me to make me a top candidate for this position?" Or, "Based on the candidates you've met with, do you see me moving forward in the hiring process?" It's better to receive an honest answer than wait through silence, even if that answer could change with more candidate screens. You could be a top candidate today but later get knocked down the list by more experienced candidates who come along.

After a Hiring Manager or Panel Interview

If you make it past the recruiter screen, the hiring manager and additional stakeholders may interview you. Here are five main reasons you could receive the silent treatment after one of these interviews:

Debrief delays.

Interviewers will debrief either separately or together with the recruiter and the hiring manager. Candidates aren't all interviewing on the same days, which means interviewers don't share their feedback with each other on the same days either. Unfortunately, not every interviewer is timely about providing feedback, and it could take time to align all interviewers' calendars for a debrief meeting.

Offer formation.

The hiring manager and the recruiter could be discussing how to make a competitive offer to someone — it just may not be you. And if you're not the number one choice, you may be number two and will need to wait, potentially in silence, for the top candidate to reject the offer. The backup does often get the job!

Hiring manager/recruiter unavailability.

In the middle of the hiring process, a hiring manager or recruiter may take a vacation, depart on business travel, become ill, or be at a conference. Those are short-term delays. Other delays may come from a hiring manager taking a leave of absence or departing the company. Yes, this happens! In these situations, the hiring process is usually put on hold as the company tries to figure out if it will move forward with hiring and who will lead the process, all while also backfilling the manager.

Job change.

Once a job has been posted, the job description and criteria may change, or the job may be put on hold or canceled due to the changing economy or business needs. This happens often, as there are fluctuations and uncertainty in the economy that could impact revenue. Companies may change their hiring strategies, and hiring managers are required to reevaluate what they need while cutting budgets.

Ghosting.

If you're met with silence from the recruiter no matter how many times you reach out, you have been ghosted. This is horrible and stings and should never happen, but it does, and it could be for any of the reasons above.

How can you know which of these situations you're in, and how should you deal with it?

Listen Carefully

After finishing each round of interviews, set up time with the recruiter, let them know how you felt the interviews went, and ask, "When will you be reviewing all the candidates with the hiring manager?" That debrief date or time frame is pivotal. If the recruiter isn't communicating with you after that date, you're most likely not a top candidate. If they are communicating with you, you're likely in the top two or three candidates. If they say, "We'll have some decisions made next week" and the debrief timeframe has passed, either the hiring manager hasn't made a decision or, more likely, the recruiter offered another candidate the job and they're waiting for a response before rejecting you, since you may be the backup.

Don't Take Silence Personally

If you made it past the recruiter screen, hiring manager interview, and another round of interviews, but ultimately didn't get the job, that means your resume demonstrates your experience and your interview skills are solid, but you weren't the top candidate. The rejection may have nothing to do with you — it may be more about competing candidates' capabilities. While it's always great to check in with the recruiter, they may not always respond if you're not a top candidate, or if the job has changed or been cancelled. Some recruiters build relationships; some don't and will simply focus on the next job to fill. The best thing to do is to move on and recognize it wasn't as perfect of a job for you as you thought.

Silence sometimes speaks more than verbal communication. Be bold enough to ask powerful questions to understand where you are in the hiring process. And, most importantly, even when you think you nailed an interview, never stop applying for jobs until you've received and accepted an offer.

Marlo Lyons is a certified career coach and strategist, HR executive, and the author of *Wanted – A New Career: The Definitive Playbook for Transitioning to a New Career or Finding Your Dream Job*.

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