

LESSONS LEARNED | BY GERSON ROSENBLUM

Interview Impressions

If your store is anything more than a one-man shop, prospective employee interviews are a necessary part of what you do. You are likely come face-to-face with a lot of people applying to your company over the course of years.

In many cases, the people you interview are either current or potential customers. This means that when you interview them, you have two goals. Obviously, your primary objective is to get to know this person so that you can make an informed hiring decision. But,

how you treat them through the interview process will affect their feelings towards you and your company.

So, while you're learning about this person, what are you doing to market your company to them? After all, people tend to choose where they'll do business not just based on the inventories and the prices, but mostly on the people. Would this person choose to deal with you if not trying to get a job with you?

My interviews with prospective employees always included a tour around the facility, meeting some of the staff when possible and something of a look "behind the curtain" of what makes the business tick. I discussed the company philosophy and, most significantly, the high standards we hold our staff to with regard to our level of customer service. Just think of the subliminal value of this message.

Perhaps the single most important thing you can do to create a positive impression is how you handle the rejection process of an applicant. No one wants to call someone with bad news. This is a lesson that took me far too long to learn. I honestly have no idea how many customers I lost because I didn't handle them properly during the post-interview follow up. When I finally figured it out, I only wished that I had every last one of those applicants back so that I had a chance to do better.

view. Don't leave those applicants wondering what happened to their application. It's simply a matter of emailing them a short note to tell them that you received their application, and then an explanation that there are more qualified candidates that you will be interviewing. Thank them and tell them how much you appreciate their interest. If this person seems like they might be a good fit for some other position, you can even invite them to reapply in the future.

When you have interviewed someone, but decided they're not right for the job, the response needs to be more personal. I suggest giving this person a phone call. Your goal, besides delivering the bad news, is to make this person feel as good about your company and the process they've just gone through as possible. You want to find everything that was good about the candidate and focus on that. Tell them what you especially liked, and then simply explain that you found someone a little more better suited. At the end of the call, even if they're disappointed, they should feel validated and appreciative of your time. With that call made, add this person to your mailing list and to feel proud of the new relationship you've forged. **MI**

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MAINTAINING THE RELATIONSHIP

So, what's the right way to treat an applicant? For starters, you're going to take a lot of applications where you won't do an inter-