

EVERYBODY LIES

Cindy Kraft, the CFO–Coach

I love Dr. Gregory House, the crotchety but loveable protagonist in the series House. I was reminded of his favorite expression “everybody lies” in recent conversations.

The first time was during a monthly Ask the Coach call. There was a job seeker on the call who was asking my thoughts about taking a position that would move him several steps backward in his career with a company that was about to be acquired. Among other things, I mentioned the fact that anytime there is organizational change, there is often also personnel change. He said the person who interviewed him **assured** him his position, should he choose to accept it, would be secure. Before I could seal my lips, the words “everybody lies” escaped.

Not that it would be an intentional lie, or even a conscious lie ... but who, in today’s volatile job market, can make that kind of a claim? Unless, of course, their magic ball allowed them to see into the future. The best case scenario would be that the assurance of a secure position was what all the parties wanted – not that it was something that could be signed, sealed, and permanently delivered.

I couldn’t have scripted the next caller’s question any better. He said, “I had two interviews and they told me they would be in touch within a week to 10 days, and I haven’t heard anything from either of them.” Again, I wish I wasn’t so spontaneous, but the words just rolled off my tongue. “Everybody lies.” He had very clearly made my point.

Now, I have no reason to believe that the company didn’t sincerely believe that it would be able to make a decision and be back in touch within a week to 10 days. But things happen. Especially in a job search. Have you noticed how those time frames that are offered up seem to be so nebulous and frustratingly out of reach most of the time?

A few days later I had lunch with a few recruiters from the networking gig I crashed – but this time I was invited, personally. These are internal recruiters who work for a single organization ... different than independent retained and contingency recruiters who serve many company clients.

As we discussed the whole hiring process (which I lovingly refer to as a Train Wreck), the “everybody lies” phrase began circling again as we discussed the overall breakdown in communication that accompanies the process. Hiring managers that convey incompletely or inadequately, and some times ineptly, their needs; recruiters who are then forced to be creative in filling in the blanks; candidates who fail to market themselves effectively (could this be classified as lying by omission in some cases?); candidates who embellish (no comment), or worse; and of course, the old ... “we’ll be in touch” zinger that is uttered after the interview.

You get the picture. **Most** of these situations don’t begin with the intent to lie, but some do end up as inaccuracies, misstatements, gross exaggerations, and yes, even fiction. My point is not that people **knowingly** lie. My point is really that people will say whatever they believe a person wants or needs to hear in order for the conversation or process to keep moving forward.

In other instances, we offer opinions and solutions and make statements based on our own understanding that is borne of our unique experiences. What we sometimes say is not “**the**” truth, but “**our**” truth.

Circling back to the job search process, the best way to keep those “lies” in check is by maintaining control ... to the extent possible. For example, when the “we’ll be in touch in a week” phrase is offered up following an interview, don’t just say thanks and leave. Rather, politely request permission to follow up with them if you haven’t heard back within that time frame. That way, at least in that situation, you won’t be sitting around wondering what your next step should be and when it should occur.

And that’s the truth ... at least from my perspective!

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