ASK ELLEN – why do employers conduct “fake” interviews?

2/9/12

(today’s question was prompted by discussion on the listserv following yesterday’s posting of “10 Ways to Ruin a Job Interview” http://money.usnews.com/money/blogs/outside-voices-careers/2012/02/08/10-ways-to-ruin-a-job-interview)

Q: I have what is possibly a very naive question: why would a company even conduct “fake” or pro forma interviews? Isn’t that just a waste of everyone’s time?

Honestly just curious. Thanks!

A: At face value this is puzzling, and does seem like a waste of time (and you could argue that it *is*…) I am sure you’re not the only person wondering about this!

Some workplaces have internal or union rules/regulations which require them to post positions for a certain period of time (internally and/or externally) and interview a certain number of people, even though they may have chosen who they are going to hire before the job description is even written. OR, they may be pretty sure of who they want to hire, but want to interview some others just in case. Another scenario is that someone is being interviewed as a courtesy to someone else who has recommended that person, while the hiring decision has already been made.

So, as the applicant, you really won’t be able to tell, most of the time. Every interview is good practice for the next interview, though. You never know when you might make a good impression on an interviewer, and that might benefit you down the road, when another position opens.

And it is possible that the person they have chosen to hire might not work out for one reason or another, and if you interviewed well, you’re next on their list!

———

Just for fun: Party Girl “We’ll just put the books anywhere!”
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gzbDdgWiaS0

———

Thank you,
Ellen Mehling
Director, Westchester Program and Internships
ellen.mehling@liu.edu