

# ASK DAVID



**David E. Fitzgibbons** is a Certified Personnel Consultant and expert in jobs and the hiring process. David has been an Executive Recruiter since 1991 and is the owner of [ToyRecruiter.com](http://ToyRecruiter.com). No other recruiter in the industry will answer your questions with as much candor and insight as does David. David is here for you so if you have a question, please feel free to contact David via [email](mailto:).

ASK DAVID VOLUME 2 answers the following questions:

- **I fell in love with a coworker...any advice?**
- **How quickly can I follow up after an amazing interview?**
- **Is there racial discrimination in the hiring process?**
- **I lost my motivation...any advice?**
- **Are internet job boards like monster.com and Careerbuilder for real?**
- **Any advice for what college degree my daughter should get?**
- **I'm an out of work Baby Boomer...am I too old to get hired?**
- **What is the best way to present my resume?**
- **Should I risk working for a company with a suspect reputation?**
- **Are industry salaries up or down?**
- **Did an inventor just get offered \$500,000 by Hasbro for a doh concept?**
- **Should you publicize your successes?**

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**Dear David:** You are an expert and know absolutely everything there is to know about hiring and employment; what about love? A co-worker and I find ourselves falling in love and I want to know if we should proceed with our office romance and at what peril?

**David Says:** Yes you should proceed and yes you face some peril. Office romances have been in vogue since the invention of the office. Even the oval office has seen its share of romances including one of the more infamous which included President Lincoln and Captain Derickson; but I digress. Theories on office romances differ greatly among the generations. Ask the Greatest Generation and they will say "*absolutely not*". The Baby Boomers will demure and say it is "*unwise*". Gen X says "*proceed with caution*". The Millennial's say "*do it and be proud doing it!*" I personally know many people who have met and married their current spouse at work and I feel that work is an acceptable place to meet and date people. Most of us are working 8-10 hours days and that doesn't leave much room for meeting people outside of the office. A recent survey found that 1/3 of all office romances lead to marriage so clearly meeting someone at work can be fruitful.

Here are some ground rules. Check your corporate policy as there may be regulations regarding employee dating and in particular subordinate dating. Establish rules about how

you will conduct yourself at work (no public displays of affection) and stick to them. Do NOT use work email to communicate - this is an absolute MANDATE! Don't hide the relationship longer than necessary. Just like a defense attorney likes to break difficult news to the jury first – you need to be preemptive as well. Let your story get out, don't let stories about you get out. Also, discuss the ramifications both personally and professionally should a breakup occur. How will this affect your company, your career and your ability to work together? Know the culture of your company and how/if they would be accepting of an office romance. In short, be smart and be prepared. Most relationships in life do not work out so prepare for that inevitability. I have been yearning for an office romance for years but since I work alone I just don't feel it is in the cards for me.

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**Dear David:** I just finished the best interview of my life and I am dying to get this job. As you know I have been out of work for almost a year. What should I do now and how fast should I call the company back to find out if I am their man?

**David Says:** At the close of your interview you should have addressed a few issues with them. First, you needed to determine what the next stage of the process will be and their time frame. Then you needed to ask them when **you** can call. Don't leave it up to them to call you; rather you should initiate the call. Timing is essential as this may have been their first interview and the process may be many more months. You have to know when the appropriate time to follow up is or you'll hurt yourself and seem feckless by calling too early or too much.

You should have also asked for and received the names and contact info for all the people you spoke/interviewed with. This is important both for your thank you email/letter and eventually your follow up call. Your thank you note should follow within 24 hours and be brief, upbeat and offer a (very) few words on how you can help the client increase their business (or other appropriate verbiage). If references were asked for and provided make sure you reach out to each reference to prepare them for the call. Be brief with them as well and let them know the name of the person and company who will be calling them so they can take the call and "get it over" thereby speeding up the process for you. Additionally, send a thank you note to each of your references thanking them for their time and effort on your behalf; that note could go a long way to improving their recollection of your abilities and that could be a big help.

Lastly, relax, don't wait by the phone and continue looking for other opportunities. The hiring process moves at a glacial rate and there is little in life more emotionally debilitating than waiting for important news. Move forward with your job search and seize the day.

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**Dear David:** You see everything in the hiring process, much more than anyone else and I want your honest answer to this question. As you know I am well-qualified but have been out of work for a while now. My question to you is, is it because I am an African American female? Be honest, is there discrimination at play in the hiring process?

**David Says:** Humans by nature are a discriminatory group. While it is generally *sub rosa*, I see undeniable discrimination in the industry. I believe ageism is the largest discriminatory factor in the hiring process. It goes without saying that young people are often discriminated against but with their general lack of experience (and the fact they are not in a protected class), a discriminatory company is on solid footing in that matter. I believe there is a new trend to discriminate against older candidates who are legally protected. Obviously I can't prove ageism, nor does a client ever admit to it, but as Supreme Court Justice **Potter Stewart** said about pornography, "*I know it when I see it*". I believe there are many excellent candidates over 60 years of age. I think it is a grave mistake for companies to reject an otherwise qualified candidate because of their age. **Ronald Reagan** made the best case for older workers when in the 1984 debate against (younger) candidate Walter Mondale he famously said, "*I am not going to exploit...my opponent's youth and inexperience.*" But knowing you are in your 40's I know this isn't an age issue.

To my knowledge, I have not experienced discrimination based on race. While I won't deny it may exist, unlike other factors (age, etc) I have not seen race be an issue in the toy industry. I recently placed an African American female (Hi Michelle!) and to my knowledge, she was the only person of color in the hiring pool. That isn't scientific proof by any means but it is compelling enough to note.

After reviewing your resume I will mention one negative factor you have going against you and the newest form of discrimination in the hiring process. You have been out of work too long. **Northwestern University** performed an experiment where it sent out 4,800 random fake resumes to 600 job openings. What they found was that employers would rather call back someone with limited experience who has been out of work for a short time, than someone with more relevant experience who has been out of work for 6 months or more. Put this way, it doesn't matter how much experience you have or how good you are, it matters more how long you have been out of work. Companies shy away from these candidates as they feel they have out-dated skills, or they figure if they were (likely) passed on by other companies, why should they take a chance on them? Obviously this is the worst Catch-22 of them all as those who are "discriminated" against don't get hired their skills erode further. Many who suffer this fate will drop out of the work force all together. At present there are 4.7 million workers who have been out of work for at least 27 weeks. The word "unemployable" is mentioned with those who have been out of work for 9 or more months. One of the clients I am working with has stated that he will not interview anyone who is out of work or who has "consulted" or "worked for themselves" during the past 2-3 years. It would appear this client is discriminating against those out of work. Again, while this in and of itself isn't proof, it is compelling to note.

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**Dear David:** I just wrote the biggest order in my company's history and have literally saved the company. However, I now feel very unmotivated to work. What can I do now that I *bagged an elephant* (made a huge sale) - how do I get my motivation back quickly? Also, we want to celebrate the news, how do you properly celebrate like a pro-athlete or famous movie star?

**David Says:** The loss of one's motivation is rarely discussed in management circles. Chances are this massive sale was an emotional event for you and the company. Clearly jobs were

riding on the sale and your success has made you "King for a Day". But the day is passed and now what? Now is the time to take some personal days, perhaps wrap a few days off around a weekend and do something that allows you NOT to think about work. When your mind is clear get back to work and make an appointment. The best way to get your juices flowing and regain your motivation is to pick up the phone and start the process over again. Don't worry about hitting another *home run*, go out and hit a solid *single* or *double* but get back in to the game.

To your second question, I hear that the athletes and movie stars like to celebrate by buying (overpriced) champagne in clubs, popping the corks and then pouring the champagne out onto the floor. No one drinks it, rather it is a statement of raw materialism that states "*I have so much money and have achieved so much I can let champagne flow like water*". My advice is to go to Office Max and buy a case of White Out. Open a few bottles and pour that correction fluid all over the floor; or at least in a waste basket. You will feel powerful and rich. Now stop asking silly questions and get back to work!

**Dear David:** I don't believe that internet job boards are for real. I mean, you know me and my resume – both of which are outstanding. I have sent my resume in for some very niche positions on monster.com, the ladders, hotjobs, etc and I have never, ever, even got so much as an email reply much less a callback or an interview. Dave, as you know I have certain niche skills that these postings are asking for. Are you telling me they get so many people with my skillset I am not even in the group that gets a callback? Are these job boards for real? All they have ever done for me is get my hopes up and waste my time. What gives?

**David Says:** Yes, your resume really is outstanding. Yes, the jobs boards are for real...sort of (more on that later). There are several reasons you aren't getting a callback. You are the *dolphin in the tuna net* – when monster posts a job for someone with toy experience, they get inundated with hundreds and thousands of resumes; most of them from people who have no toy-related experience other than having played with toys as a kid. So, when the net gets thrown out they have thousands of tunas and a few dolphins – but on this fishing boat, it becomes tedious trying to find and save the dolphins. But there is an even bigger problem. Who do you think is tasked with evaluating the resumes that come in from the job boards? The CEO? The VP of HR? The hiring authority? No way, nope, no sir! The lowest person on the totem-pole reviews the thousands of resumes that come in from the job boards. I once had a client who had the President's teenage daughter reviewing the resumes. She had a cheat sheet to help her – "...no more than 3 jobs in 15 years", "...look for key-words like "achieved", etc, etc. It is difficult to impress the resume gate-keeper with your accomplishments if the gate-keeper has yet to graduate from high-school now isn't it?

But there is more. I said the job boards are "sort of" real. Many companies use them strictly for evaluation resumes. Meaning they list a job they already have filled, get some resumes in, review them and then evaluate them against someone they already have on staff. It makes HR really feel like it is an asset to the company. Think about it. You and hundreds like you respond to these listings and never even get an email back. That is because they never intended to really fill the position. Some companies just want candidate flow (resumes) in the unlikely event a person leaves their company. Then HR can run to the President and say, "Don't worry, we anticipate this sort of thing and have numerous candidates (resumes) we can call on to fill John Smith's position". Again, the intent of the posting is not to fill a currently (or perhaps ever) open position. Lastly, job boards sell

companies a "listing package", usually unlimited postings for 12 months for a discounted fee. The job boards WANT job listings – it helps generate traffic. So, if the company with the free listings doesn't list one month they get a friendly reminder email that reads, "...don't forget, there is no cost to you to post a job but a great cost/loss if you don't!". So, the companies with the listing packages post jobs...sometimes, many times, for jobs they have no intention, need or desire to fill. And that is why you never get a call back.

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**DEAR DAVID:** My daughter is a freshman at a small private college and isn't sure what degree she wants to pursue. I talked her out of photography as a major but now she is thinking sociology and I wanted your opinion as a recruiter if that is a good degree to get or not?

**DAVID SAYS:** Allow me to answer in two ways. First is that within reason you should allow your daughter to pursue whatever career path and degree that she is most passionate about with the caveat that I feel a degree in photography could be complete waste of her time and your money. With that said I will share that a sociology degree offers one of the lowest lifetime earnings (approximate \$2.5 million dollars over 30 years) as well as one of the lower ROI's (19%) for your college investment. The three most commonly held jobs for those with a degree in sociology is social worker, chemical dependency counselor and corrections officer. Before jumping into careers as depressing as those I would recommend your daughter intern or volunteer at homeless shelters or with her local children's services. The world needs social workers that is a certainty, the question that begs to be answered is should you spend over \$100,000 after-tax dollars for your daughter to acquire a degree that will pay her \$30,000 her first year out of college? This is a decision for all stake holders to consider wisely.

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**Dear David:** I am an out-of-work Baby Boomer with 35 years in the industry. It is obvious by my resume how old I am and I fear I won't ever get hired again due to my age. Is there any hope for me?

**David Says:** Hope is on the way. Consider this; a baby boomer turns 50 every 7 seconds. While Boomers as a class will grow by 25% in the next decade – other age classes will remain flat. So, where will all the employees (critically necessary for a company's success) come from in the next 10+ years? Boomers! I believe there will be a shift towards, and an extreme need, for seasoned, experienced employees who don't need a lot of time off and don't need to break the bank on salary. A company can have their cake and eat it to...power employees who are reliable and affordable.

With regards to your resume; remove your year(s) of graduation and eliminate any job that is 20+ years old. Start there and then send it my way, I'll look at it for you.

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**Dear David:** I sent you two different resumes, one showing off my Marketing side and the other my Product Development side. The major change was the Objective statement. Do you have any advice for how best to present myself via the Objective statement at the top of the resume?

**David Says:** Skip the Objective statement. It is a waste of time and effort and worse yet, a waste of tremendously valuable beach front real estate. Most Hiring Managers and HR skip over the Objective for the pabulum it is. For those who don't, your resume may be rejected precisely because of your Objective statement. I know professional resume writers prefer the use of Objective Statements but I prefer to let your experience and the verifiable accomplishments of your career do the selling – not some trumped up Objective statement. You will free up space not having it and thereby afford yourself more room to detail the business accomplishments that really matter.

**Dear David:** I have a predicament here. I have been out of work for over 6 months now and while I have had several interviews I am usually "their second choice" and I don't get the job. I did have an interview with a company in ██████████, NJ that makes collectible ██████████. I know you are aware of their reputation. I was recently offered the position of ██████████ but I am not sure I should take the offer but if you are out of work, shouldn't you take ANY offer - any advice?

**David Says:** While I won't comment on the company you mentioned I will state that there are excellent reasons not to take an offer. A bad reputation is certainly a strong reason not to work for a company. Working for them, while knowing of their suspect reputation, taints your resume. In addition, if this company is a turnover mill, you won't be working for them long and how will that look on your resume? Frankly, I think you would do yourself a disservice to accept the job with a company that has a poor reputation and high turnover.

Another reason not to work for a company is work/life balance. I represented a company that required a half-day on Saturdays. They made it known going in and they paid you separately for the work. The problem was it was already a 50-hour work week BEFORE the Saturday hours. Of course they paid well, which is why people worked there, but you have to ask yourself if the extra money is worth the time away from family/friends, etc. Most people burned out within a few years and while nobody had a bad word to say about the company (yes, they have a good reputation) the hours were just too long. A long commute (in excess of 90 minutes each way) is another reason you might wish to reject the offer. Every individual I have ever spoken to who did a 3-hour commute regretted it; especially, if they were laid off or fired; sour grapes over having invested 3+ hours after working 8-10 hours. It's just too much time devoted to work.

The fact that you are asking my advice about whether you should accept this position is reason enough to know it isn't the right position for you. I do, however, wish you luck no matter what decision you make.

**Dear David:** You told me on the phone the other day that salaries were down significantly in the toy industry but a recent article in the **Wall Street Journal** said wages in the US were only down a few percent. Who is right, you or the esteemed Wall Street Journal?

**David Says:** We're both right. Nationally wages are down only a few percentage points although the **WSJ** is **not adding in bonus compensation** when they reference "wages" (i.e. "salaries"). Do you think the CEO's and brokers on Wall Street are making a few percentage points less in "total compensation" this year than last? Not a chance. C-level compensation is approaching its highest levels ever and Wall Street is so steeped in cash I heard brokers are consumed with buying large quantities of physical gold, as they themselves have little faith in the stock exchange they plunder. But I digress.

What about the toy industry? Wages are down and in some companies **wages are down significantly**. I know firsthand of incoming salaries that have been cut 50% or more and I personally know of numerous people who have accepted pay reductions as forced on them by their employer.

There are three factors that apply to the reduction in wages we are seeing. First is the market. It is clearly a "buyers market" with more available people than jobs. The second factor is the perceived importance of talent within a given industry. Most toy companies don't place a high worth on talent and feel that talent is easily replaced. That is counter to the extreme importance placed on talent at companies like **Google, Microsoft, Facebook**, etc. where they feel the employee brings a skillset so unique and powerful that s/he has intrinsic value. Last are the "values" of the company where "values" are defined as "principles". There are far too many companies that will take advantage of employees today and gladly accept the high turnover and acrimony associated with such tactics only to happily replace the lost employees on a regular basis. These companies are at the vanguard of predatory salary negotiations. Salaries are down in our industry and there are hundreds, if not thousands, of people in our industry who can verify that – ask around.

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**Dear David:** - I read in a recent issue of **Inc.** magazine that a 23-year-old college student invented "gluten free" modeling clay called "**Soy-Yer Dough**". In the article it mentioned that **Hasbro** offered the student \$500,000 plus royalties for the innovative dough. My questions are why in the world does Hasbro even want the product? How big is the market for gluten free dough? Why such a big advance (\$500,000) against royalties? If there is a market out there why doesn't Hasbro just make "soy-doh" themselves? What am I missing in this story?

**David Says:** I read the story and was surprised myself. I spoke to unnamed sources from within Hasbro who tell me "*...this story is a myth*". There are numerous children who are sensitive to gluten and who may be negatively affected by Play-Doh as gluten is a component in wheat. [Play-Doh is primarily made up of water, salt and wheat flour]. However, the general consensus among those I spoke to was that soy too "*has similar issues with regards to allergies*". Personally I don't think Hasbro is interested in chasing this niche market and I really doubt they offered half a million dollars to the inventor.

The inventor of Soy-Yer Dough, **Sawyer Sparks**, appeared on **ABC's Shark Tank** in 2009 where he appeared to ink a deal for \$300,000 in exchange for 51% of his company. Both the Shark Tank deal and the "*reported*" Hasbro deal were killed because both parties wanted to manufacture Soy-Yer Dough overseas – a *no no* for the young inventor. At present it

appears Sawyer is making up large batches of the dough and selling it on his website. A 6 ounce container costs \$1.99 plus shipping and any applicable taxes.

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**Dear David:** I read other recruiting newsletters and I notice yours never makes mention of success stories or all the amazing placements you make. Shall we assume from that conspicuous omission that you really don't make any placements or you are soon to be out of business?

**David Says:** Thank you for your (feigned) concern about my professional well-being, I appreciate that. Allow me to answer your last question first. I have owned my own recruiting firm since 1991 and have garnered the respect and admiration of those I have worked with and they in turn have treated me very well and made my business a success. So, much to your chagrin, I expect that I will be around for a long time to come.

As to including "success stories" in this (or any) Newsletter; frankly I find it silly to waste YOUR precious time reading marketing pabulum. To be candid, I find it makes the writer/recruiter look feckless as they try any method at all to prop up their profile and trump up their abilities with their readers. I do my best to impart knowledge and insight to my readers, not ramble on in some personal diatribe and then tell you about a placement I made to fatten my wallet. This Newsletter is for you, not me, and those who read it with an unbiased view see it clearly for the purpose it is intended.

I do sincerely ask you to reach out to me with your resume; it would be my pleasure to show you the content of my character as I try to help you help yourself in this job market. Call me.

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