

Beware of Ghosting When Hiring

By Scott Cullen

Why Disappearing Acts Are Scaring Away Great Candidates—and Great Employers

Halloween is full of ghosts. Recruiting shouldn't be.

Unfortunately, disappearing acts have become one of the most frustrating parts of the hiring process. Candidates complain that employers stop communicating after interviews. Employers tell stories about applicants who vanish after scheduling an interview, or even after accepting an offer.

Ghosting isn't unique to the office technology industry, but it has become common enough across recruiting that it now affects hiring timelines, candidate experience, and even an employer's reputation. According to the Society of Human Resource Management's (SHRM's) 2025 Talent Trends research, 41% of organizations experiencing recruiting challenges report increased candidate ghosting during the hiring process, making it one of employers' most persistent hiring frustrations.

The good news? Most ghosting isn't inevitable. Often, it's the result of communication breakdowns, unrealistic expectations, or a hiring process that unintentionally encourages people to disappear.

Ghosting Goes Both Ways

When employers talk about ghosting, they're usually referring to candidates who suddenly stop returning phone calls or emails. Perhaps the applicant misses an interview. Maybe they accept another offer without telling anyone. Sometimes they even fail to show up for their first day of work.

Candidates, however, often tell a different story. Many have experienced multiple interviews followed by complete silence. Others receive enthusiastic messages from recruiters or hiring managers, only to never hear from them again. Even a simple "We've decided to move in another direction" would provide closure, but that message too often never comes. The result is frustration on both sides.

Recruiting is a two-way relationship. When either party disappears without explanation, trust quickly erodes.

Why Candidates Ghost Employers

It's easy to assume ghosting is simply unprofessional behavior, but the reasons are often more complicated. Sometimes candidates receive another offer that moves faster. Sometimes a counteroffer convinces them to stay. Sometimes they decide the position isn't the right fit but feel uncomfortable having that conversation. And occasionally, they simply lose confidence that the opportunity is moving forward after days or weeks go by without hearing anything.

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That last reason deserves particular attention.

Although no employer can control every candidate's decision, organizations often have far more influence over the hiring experience than they realize. Research and recruiting professionals alike increasingly point to slow communication, confusing interview processes, and poor candidate experiences as major contributors to disengagement.

Five Ways to Keep Candidates Engaged Between Interview and Offer

- 1. Set Expectations Early** - Before the interview ends, explain what happens next. Let candidates know how many interviews remain, who will be involved, and when they can realistically expect to hear from you.
- 2. Don't Go Silent** - Even if your hiring decision has been delayed, send a quick update. A brief email saying, "We're still interviewing and expect to have an update next week," reassures candidates that they haven't been forgotten.
- 3. Keep the Process Moving** - The best candidates are often interviewing with multiple employers. Long delays increase the chances that someone else will make an offer first.
- 4. Stay Personal** - Whenever possible, communicate directly rather than relying solely on automated emails. A short phone call or personalized message demonstrates genuine interest and helps strengthen the relationship.
- 5. Close the Loop** - Whether the candidate is hired or not, let them know the outcome. Professional courtesy leaves a positive impression and may encourage an excellent candidate to consider your dealership again in the future.

Why Employers Ghost Candidates

Employers don't usually set out to ignore applicants. Hiring managers become busy. Priorities change. Internal approvals take longer than expected. Another candidate accepts the offer. The position is placed on hold. None of those situations is unusual. The problem arises when nobody tells the candidate what's happening.

Many employers also hesitate to deliver bad news because they dislike difficult conversations or worry about saying the wrong thing. SHRM reports that some organizations have even cited concerns about legal liability as a reason for limiting communication with unsuccessful candidates, even though a professional, neutral rejection message is generally both appropriate and appreciated.

Silence, however, rarely protects an employer's reputation. Candidates remember how they were treated. Today's rejected applicant could become tomorrow's customer, referral source, or ideal candidate for another position.

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Hit the Gas

Copier Careers recruiters frequently remind clients that top candidates rarely stay available for long. That's especially true for experienced sales professionals, service technicians, solutions specialists, and managers within the office technology industry.

A dealership that takes three weeks to schedule interviews may discover that its preferred candidate accepted another offer after only a few days.

From the employer's perspective, it may look like the candidate disappeared. From the candidate's perspective, they simply accepted the opportunity that showed the greatest interest first.

SHRM's latest research reinforces this reality. Competition for qualified talent remains intense, and organizations continue to cite both employer competition and candidate ghosting among their biggest recruiting challenges.

Communication Prevents Most Ghost Stories

One of the simplest ways to reduce ghosting is also one of the least expensive: communicate consistently.

For employers, that means:

- Acknowledge applications when appropriate.
- Explain the hiring timeline.
- Follow up when delays occur.
- Notify candidates when the position has been filled.
- Close the loop, even if the answer is no.

Candidates appreciate honesty. A brief email saying, "Our decision has been delayed another week," is far better than two weeks of silence.

Candidates also have responsibilities. If another offer has been accepted, say so. If personal circumstances change, let the employer know. If the position no longer feels like the right fit, a courteous email takes only a few minutes to write.

Professional courtesy never goes out of style.

How to Withdraw from a Hiring Process without Burning Bridges

Sometimes the right decision is to step away from a hiring process. Maybe you've accepted another offer. Maybe you've decided to stay with your current employer. Or perhaps you've concluded the opportunity simply isn't the right fit. That's perfectly acceptable. What's not acceptable is disappearing without explanation.

A brief phone call or email is all that's required. Thank the interviewer for their time, let them know you've decided to pursue another opportunity, and wish them success in filling the position. You don't have to provide a lengthy explanation or apologize for making the decision that's best for your career.

Why does this matter? The office technology industry is smaller than many people realize. Hiring managers move to different dealerships. Recruiters maintain relationships for years. The dealership you decline today may have the perfect opportunity for you two or three years from now.

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Reputation Travels Faster Than Ever

Years ago, a poor hiring experience might have remained a private frustration. Now, candidates share experiences on LinkedIn, Glassdoor, Indeed, and industry forums. Recruiters also remember organizations that communicate well, and those that don't.

Likewise, employers remember candidates who cancel professionally, arrive prepared, and communicate honestly throughout the process.

The office technology industry is surprisingly interconnected. Dealership executives change companies. Sales representatives move between competitors. Service technicians build reputations over decades.

Recruiters maintain relationships with both employers and candidates for years. Every interaction contributes to your professional reputation.

Nobody Wins When Communication Stops

Ghosting wastes time. Employers continue interviewing candidates who have already accepted another position. Candidates spend days wondering whether they're still being considered. Recruiters find themselves trying to reconnect parties who have simply stopped talking to one another. Almost all of this uncertainty could be reduced with straightforward communication.

No one expects every interview to result in an offer. No one expects every candidate to accept. People do expect to be treated professionally.

Don't Let Your Hiring Process Become a Haunted House

Ghosts belong in haunted houses, not in recruiting. Whether you're hiring your next service technician, searching for an experienced sales representative, or considering your own next career move, remember that communication is one of the few parts of the hiring process that every participant controls.

Candidates should never leave employers wondering what happened. Employers should never leave candidates wondering whether anyone is still listening.

The strongest hiring relationships aren't built on perfect interviews or flawless resumes. They're built on professionalism, honesty, and mutual respect. Those qualities may not eliminate every ghost story, but they'll certainly keep far fewer people disappearing into thin air.