

How to make a headhunter hate you



Let's count down the **Top 5 faux pas**, or to put it more bluntly, horrific violations of etiquette and social norms in the world of recruitment that I have personally experienced in Thailand over these many years.

5. "Dear Bob" - When my name is Tom

Wrong: Do you get upset when people call you Frank and your name is John? Or similarly, when you get an email that opens with "Dear Bob" and your name is Tom? Does this not signal a lack of attention to detail? If someone can't be bothered to double-check that the recipient is addressed correctly, what else does this person get wrong? Probably a lot.

It's extra annoying to receive an email and resume that has clearly been sent to a large group of recruitment companies and executive search firms.

Correct: Make sure you always read your email one more time before hitting Enter. Double-check that the name after "Dear" is actually the name of the person you intend to contact.

If you want to forward your personal resume to more than one recruiter, do yourself a favour and send one email at a time. To show a level of integrity and professionalism, personalise the message and use the recipient's (actual) name. These little things matter.

4. Going to an interview dressed for Saturday night

Wrong: There is a big difference between hitting the clubs and attending a job interview. The miniskirt, high heels and red lipstick are fine for a night out. But that's where it ends.

Correct: Dress up, please. To the women: no short skirts, no big earrings, and no rainbow-coloured nails. Also go easy on the perfume. To the men: wear a tie and even a jacket if the company is in a business where such a dress code is the norm. Invest in a classy pair of black shoes to show that you are a businessman.

If you must greet the interviewer with a handshake, deliver a proper, firm hand. A limp or weak handshake can taint your first impression. You could lose the interview before it even begins.

3. That \$25,000 you forgot to mention

Wrong: This is one of the worst. At the end of any recruitment process, we start negotiating compensation and benefits. The head-hunter will usually liaise with both parties as a buffer, to prevent the risk of hard feelings brought into the employment because of tough negotiations.

Once you've shared all the details of your current package and the employer has tabled you an offer, you will bring the discussion to an abrupt halt if suddenly, late in the process, you claim that you forgot to mention the \$25,000 monthly cash allowance you also receive.

If you pull this trick out of your hat, make no mistake: The employer will recognise it as a ploy to deceive or outwit them. You will look extremely greedy, completely lacking in common sense, plain old stupid, or some combination of the three. Either way, you're in trouble.

Correct: When the recruiter or employer asks you to provide the details of your current package, make sure you put absolutely every cash amount and benefit, great or small, on the table. Ask the recruiter if they have a list of typical bonus types, allowances and benefits. Then use that as a checklist when you prepare your total compensation.

2. Say one thing to me, and something else to my client

Wrong: It's clearly wrong to provide a resume that lists a current job and talking to the recruiter as though you're still in that job – when you're really not. What's even more wrong is telling the recruiter you're working at Company X, but then in an interview with the potential future employer, revealing that you have in fact left that "current" job and are now unemployed.

I still cannot get my head around the idea that anyone would think this strategy is going to work to their advantage: Hiding facts from the head-hunter, whose help you want, then showing the client interviewer that you cannot be trusted.

Correct: Isn't it obvious? Put all your cards on the table, please. If you have left the last company shown on your resume, tell the recruiter. Even you are still officially on the company's payroll, if you've already given that employer your notice to terminate, tell the recruiter.

Presenting a document with false information, withholding employment details from the recruitment or search firm, will only label you as a cheat and liar.

1. Cancelling an interview last minute, or not showing up at all

Wrong: We have set you up to meet our client's CEO, and the big day arrives. But you call us in the morning to say your boss has asked for an urgent meeting. You can't go. Never mind that our client is a regional manager who came in the night before from Shanghai just to meet you.

What could be worse than that? Only one thing – cancelling the appointment *without letting anyone know* you do not intend to come. No-shows are totally incomprehensible and wildly inappropriate. And yet, it happens.

Correct: Take half a day off from work and focus on the new opportunity. If you are not really taking the interview that seriously in the first plan, then have the courage to tell the recruiter in advance that you are not ready to consider a new job right now. That way, we will not end up red-faced. You'll spare yourself from being blacklisted, all for a lack of common courtesy towards people who could be important for you in the future.



Tom Sorensen
Partner, Boyden Thailand

Tom Sorensen is an executive search veteran with 35 years' experience recruiting in Asia, Europe and Africa. He has worked in retained executive search in Thailand for 15 years, and is recognized as one of the country's top recruiters. Along with an extensive network, Tom has broad industry expertise, and has successfully completed a number of challenging searches for highly specialised roles.