

# The Joy of Being Wanted

## (Case 1003)

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### The Case:

You graduated with outstanding grades from one of the top engineering schools in the country about six years ago, went to work for a well-known engineering design firm in the local area and have progressed rapidly to the point where you are doing some project management work and your clients speak highly of your capabilities.

You have been so intent on furthering your career that until a year or so ago, you had little social life. However, through a mutual friend at work you were introduced to someone who became very special in your life and you have decided to get married. In your discussions with your future spouse, you both have decided to look for employment in an area of the country some 2,500 miles away, but a lot closer to your prospective spouse's family, as well as many of the outdoor attractions you both enjoy, such as skiing, backpacking and bicycling.

You informed your present employer of your plans to relocate several weeks ago, and you recently contacted the one firm in the new location that you knew. They asked you to come for an interview, sent you money for an airline ticket, as well as a separate allowance check for your expenses, and you went to see them. While you were there, you decided to stay another day or two, called three other firms in that city and talked to each of them in person. As a result of these interviews, each of the four companies has indicated that they will most likely make you an offer for a very good position at an excellent salary.

You were so impressed with the new area that you now have no doubts about moving there. In addition, it is now especially important that you do secure a position in the new location since your intended spouse has completed arrangements to be transferred to an office in that city with the company for which s/he is presently employed. Since you have not received a firm offer from any of the engineering firms as yet, you have told each one of them individually that you are very much interested in working for their company. You feel positive that you will soon have firm offers from all four of the firms.

While you wait to hear from these firms, how do you feel about your job interview process, and is there anything else you should do at this point?

## Alternate Approaches and Survey Results for “The Joy of Being Wanted” (Case 1003)

1. I feel fine about it. There wasn't anything wrong with scheduling other interviews although one firm paid for the airline ticket and gave me expense money, they would have had to pay the same amount even if I didn't see the other firms. I was in the area and should have taken advantage of the situation. When you are good at what you do, you deserve options that are available to you. There is nothing else to do except wait for the job offers to come in and choose the most desirable.  
Percentage of votes agreeing: 10%
2. I should call the first company and tell them that while I was visiting there, I took the opportunity to interview with three other firms, so they are aware that I am not putting all my eggs in one basket. Perhaps that will prod them into making me an offer soon.  
Percentage of votes agreeing: 7%
3. I feel fine about it, however I want to make a decision as soon as possible. I should contact each of the firms I interviewed to tell them that my intended spouse has already made arrangements to relocate and that I need a decision, one way or the other, from each of them within a week.  
Percentage of votes agreeing: 1%
4. I should call the first firm and tell them that I am considering offers than might come in from other firms in the area, but that I feel an obligation to consider their offer first. However, since my intended spouse has already made arrangements to relocate, I do need a firm offer within a week. If their offer is fair, I will accept and will not consider offers from the other firms.  
Percentage of votes agreeing: 10%
5. By staying an extra couple of days, the trip cost me more than the first company provided. This is an excellent opportunity to see if I can collect additional expense money by letting each of the other three firms know what my expenses were on the basis of having interviewed with them only. Hopefully they will each send a reimbursement check for the indicated expenses.  
Percentage of votes agreeing: 0%
6. I'm a bit uneasy about having used the airline ticket and expense check from the first firm and seeing three additional firms during the same trip. Nonetheless, I should wait to see if the first company offers me the job I want over the others, and if so, forget about mentioning my having seen the other firms.  
Percentage of votes agreeing: 0%
7. I realize that even in large cities, the engineering community can be relatively small and that even competitors talk to one another. As a result, I should inform the first company that I did interview with other firms in the area, and that I am willing to

reimburse them whatever portion of the airline and expenses money they feel appropriate.

Percentage of votes agreeing: 12%

8. I should inform the first company that I did interview with other firms in the area, and that I am willing to reimburse them the entire amount of the airline and expenses money they sent to me in order to be fair and impartial (and to not be bound by perceived obligations which may cloud my final job acceptance decision).

Percentage of votes agreeing: 22%

9. I should inform the first company that I did interview with other firms in the area, and that should I accept a position with another firm, I will suggest to that firm that they reimburse the first firm for the airline and expenses money originally sent to me for the trip.

Percentage of votes agreeing: 2%

10. I should inform the first company that I did interview with other firms in the area, and that I should I accept a position with another firm, I will personally reimburse the first firm for the airline and expenses money originally sent to me for the trip.

Percentage of votes agreeing: 21%

11. I should discuss my interview trip and the present status in full with my intended spouse prior to taking additional steps, if any.

Percentage of votes agreeing: 15%

### **Forum Comments from Respondents**

1. If the engineer really has had no social life over the past six years, and really has done as well as indicated, the cost to reimburse the travel expenses should not be any hardship. The cost of travel for purpose of interviews is a good investment, since ultimately s/he will be receiving a good salary. As a result, s/he shouldn't be trying to get a "freebie".
2. If the spouse-to-be already has a position secured, there shouldn't be any urgency about landing a job in the next week. Wait for the firms to make up their minds, and don't risk coming to a company with a "bad feeling" that you have put them over some sort of barrel.
3. Call the first firm and explain what a fool you were for interviewing with other firms. Beg forgiveness and send a check to them right away for all the expenses they paid. Ask them to please consider your application for employment and desire to work for them, disregarding your poor judgment in this case.
4. By accepting the expense paid trip, an implied contract has been entered into by the parties. By interviewing other firms the implied obligation to interview the only original firm has been broken. The first firm should be informed and an offer to reimburse them extended.

5. A combination of solutions 4 and 7 would satisfy my concerns. You have been truthful with the first company and expressed a desire to share the expenses. You have also stated your intentions in a direct and honest manner.
6. Instead of offering to pay back all of the expenses, I would write a cheque for 75% of only the airfare (no reimbursement of the other expenses portion). In the cover letter, I would inform them that I will be moving to the new area, since my future spouse has been relocated to that city.
7. Even though I chose solution 8, I do believe I would wait for the first company to ask for reimbursement before I freely returned the money.
8. You just have to use basic negotiation skills in this case. Because s/he found other offers while s/he was there does not make anything improper. S/he was simply smart and making the most of the time available. It is not smart to tell the firms that an answer is required within a week because the spouse-to-be has been relocated to that city. That would give more power to the prospective employers to suggest a lower salary. Wanting to give the original company the best chance because they paid for airfare and expenses is a typical "nice guy" approach where the end result is that the nice guy gets taken because s/he's too timid to make a move for the other prospective employers who could be substantially more lucrative.
9. I would return the expenses and the amount of the airline ticket, with a letter expressing my thanks and continued interest in the firm. Explain that since I did visit other firms in the area, I would not feel right accepting their generosity. In addition, I am so impressed with the level of professionalism of the firm that I would strongly consider an offer.
10. The firm paying the airfare and expenses should be given the first opportunity to present an offer and that offer should be fairly evaluated first. If it is not competitive with others that may be received, the first firm should be so notified and given the opportunity to make another offer. If the firm does not choose to do so, the airfare and trip expenses should be returned to the firm and an offer from another firm accepted.
11. So many people these days are willing to pass responsibility off onto someone else. The applicant took the plane ticket for the one interview. If s/he truly wants to live in that community, s/he should take some time off from work, and scout out the spot. It's not an employer's job to pave the road you choose.
12. Ohh, this is a good one! I am in the same predicament. I am going to an interview for an entry level position in Denver with a firm, but at the same time I thought about using an extra day to interview with a contact I met this summer for another type of position in a different company. My predicament (or is it?) is that I want to

stay an extra day - - so all I would be requesting is that the first company push my return flight date back another day, with no extra expense to be paid by them. I would stay at a friend's place for the extra night, and pay for my own meals for the extra day, so if you really thought about it, all the first company is paying for is my flight and for the two days (not the extra one) that I will be in that city.

It wouldn't be unethical, since I was going to be flown there in the first place. I wouldn't be lying to them if I told them that I was going to take care of personal business and I have already asked to others about this situation and they agree.

13. It would have been better to contact the other firms prior to the visit to see if they were willing to share the travel expenses.
14. No employer wants an employee who would prefer to be with another firm, therefore s/he should follow solution 10. In negotiations with other firms, s/he should tell them of this obligation and ask if this would be considered in their offers. There remains the obligation to the first firm, notwithstanding reimbursement from others.
15. Be more up front in the beginning with the first firm and don't schedule the competing interviews so closely. Or, as is actually done by some departments, allow the inviting company to make your travel arrangements for you. Also keep discussing these issues with your spouse-to-be, since surely they will have justifiable reservations about making such a serious commitment to someone who would be so blithely fickle, opportunistic and egoistic. I don't like this engineer enough to identify with him/her much longer!!