

hiring horror stories part 1 - candidates

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[00:00:00] intro music

[00:00:35] **Laura:** Hello, and welcome to a special Halloween edition of what is wrong with hiring the podcast, where we talk about why hiring people and getting hired are both absolute nightmares. I'm Laura Klein, a once and future hiring manager.

[00:00:49] **Amy:** And I'm Amy Santee, a jaded, horrified, and pissed off career coach.

[00:00:57] Just feeling a little bit salty today, especially [00:01:00] after reading these stories we're about to tell you.

[00:01:04] **Laura:** I'm really enjoying your descent into madness over the course of the podcast. I'm very much, I think that's great. Welcome to my world. Please be advised that this podcast may contain drinking, swearing, and screaming into the abyss, pretty much like most podcasts.

[00:01:20] **Amy:** Yes, and today there may be a bit more of that than usual with the spine chilling tales we will be sharing.

[00:01:27] Mwahahaha.

[00:01:29] **Amy:** That was good.

[00:01:30] **Laura:** You're absolutely leaving all of that in. Okay.

[00:01:34] **Amy:** We asked listeners to share their worst experiences with the shadowy realm of interviewing and hiring. So thank you to those brave souls who did. And within just a matter of days, we received over 50 hellish stories from job seekers and hiring managers ranging from the pretty frustrating, but expected type of bullshit one is likely to come across, because humans are just that way.

[00:01:58] Sometimes. [00:02:00] Or oftentimes. Or always. Yeah, always. Pretty much. This is all because of humans. To some pretty nightmarish encounters where things went horribly wrong. I

[00:02:11] **Laura:** have to say, okay, even we were surprised by some of these. But we've seen a lot as, job seekers. I've been looking for jobs since the 90s.

[00:02:18] And It's terrible, and, also I've been a hiring manager, and I've coached people, and Amy has coached people, and talks to people all the time about this. And I gotta say, a few of these were really something, and kinda wanna give all of y'all a big hug, and tell ya it's not your fault.

[00:02:40] But for the rest of you who are just here in it for the schadenfreude buckle up, because some of these you may find yourself questioning reality. All right, so there were definitely a lot of themes to the stories we got. We're gonna concentrate on ones from candidates today. If you don't hear yours, apology, we may do a second episode.

[00:02:57] There are way more of these. But we want to do one [00:03:00] for hiring managers as well, because some of Those were some spooky stories. Yeah. Let's talk about our first theme cause we got a whole lot in this theme and we picked a few of our favorites. And this is, we're calling it ghosted or turned down after doing a lot of work.

[00:03:16] Pero Like

[00:03:20] **Laura:** Amy, do you want to, do you want to read this

[00:03:22] **Amy:** first one? Yeah, absolutely. I'm a senior level IC and I was looking for work after a layoff and had a string of very good interviews with digital agencies. Three times in a row, after four to five rounds of interviews, I was told, we loved you. We're just not hiring right now.

[00:03:40] So baffling behavior, honestly, because usually a company will wait till there's a job open to start interviewing instead of wasting weeks of everyone's time. I may have burned some bridges pointing out the 16 to 20 wasted hours on my end prepping for this farce.

[00:03:58] **Laura:** Oh my god, [00:04:00] Amy, I would have stabbed somebody.

[00:04:01] I, like, all I can say is if you are an agent, hell, if you're anybody, don't do this. It's fine to have general talks with folks who might be interesting, but if you are making anybody do an actual interview, at much less 16 to 28, Hours of work? This is not okay! Even if you're just lying, that, because you actually hired somebody else, Stop it!

[00:04:26] You're it's terrible!

[00:04:28] **Amy:** Yeah look, things happen, right? Things change whatever, but... I think it's easier than we might expect to prevent this sort of thing from happening in the first place. And I will never fully understand why this is so common because I have several clients right now and over the course of my coaching work who have gone through this and honestly, I have to say it seems even worse now during this downturn.

[00:04:55] Yeah

[00:04:55] **Laura:** and the real question is, as a hiring manager, who's got that kind of [00:05:00] time? All I will say is, and I don't, I want to offer some useful advice, perhaps, to folks who find themselves in a position, sometimes, if you can clarify ahead of time with the company, not in a weird way, but the first call with the recruiter so tell me about the open role that you have, right?

[00:05:20] You shouldn't have to, but you might want to consider it. I don't know if there's any other good advice there.

[00:05:24] **Amy:** And, I think it's just cathartic. To share and hear these stories because this is happening to a lot of people and folks out there, you're not alone.

[00:05:36] **Laura:** Not at all. We this was not the only story we heard like this.

[00:05:39] Alright, next one. I did seven interviews over several months with a company for a junior UX design role. I did a whole essay answering a list of questions about my marks and excellent achievements in high school and the like. Two different psychometric assessments, one on IQ like qualities, one on personality.

[00:05:57] Two different take home exercises, quite [00:06:00] complex, which I presented to them. For the final three interviews, I was on vacation, by the way, and I took time away from it to do this. I got to the very last round, and after all of this, they rejected me with a template email. No feedback, no in person conversation, nothing.

[00:06:14] Disappointment is an understatement. I literally cried. Maybe I should have seen the signs. The glass door was also pretty clear on this company, and I shouldn't have wasted so much of my own time, but as a junior candidate, I just wanted to do all I could to find my entry into the industry. Ugh, what the fuck?

[00:06:31] God, that makes me sad. First of all, the idea that you need an essay about somebody's achievements in high school and an IQ test for a junior UX design role, much less Seven interviews for, again, I just want to be clear, a junior UX design role. I'm sorry that is, I can't deal with that. That's that is so [00:07:00] unrealistic.

[00:07:00] And those people have no idea what they're doing. They have no idea how to hire.

[00:07:03] **Amy:** That's my only takeaway here is they literally just are incompetent at interviewing people. Maybe they're being too picky. Yeah.

[00:07:11] **Laura:** Good point though, about checking Glassdoor. I think everybody should try to back channel or figure out, if they've got any hints.

[00:07:18] So just not so much to like completely leave a company out if, one or two bad reviews, but just so that you know how to contextualize it if you

[00:07:26] **Amy:** get a bad experience. Yeah. And the whole IQ test, the personality tests, just run away. If you ever see that run away.

[00:07:35] **Laura:** It's, yeah, those are bullshit and racist and biased and also just terrible. And again, have very little to nothing to do with what you would actually be doing. Alright, next story.

[00:07:46] **Amy:** Yes, it all began in late February. On from a layoff, On from a layoff, my former manager introduced me to a head of design at a company that shall not be named. [00:08:00]

[00:08:00] Nothing was open then, but a position that perfectly matched my skills and experience might be approved and I would be told when it did. I got an email alert from LinkedIn where I spotted the position in April. I waited two to three days for a message letting me know I could apply, but nothing appeared.

[00:08:17] I decided... Not to read too much into it and apply it anyway. In May, I finally had a conversation with Talent Acquisition. I'd been selected for the shortlist from my CV and portfolio. I told them I had already met the hiring manager.

[00:08:32] But this was new information for them. Almost a month later, I was to meet a panel of two designers to show my work and talk about my skills and past experiences. Only one of them showed up, but I made nothing of it. Even though these red flags were harder to ignore at this point I spent one hour with a great person with whom I shared more than our profession I presented one of the prepared case studies and then got asked to show more practical design [00:09:00] system work I'm normally ready to show actual work files in these interviews, so I happily obliged until the other side was convinced about my ability to do the job.

[00:09:09] Another green light. The Last Step of the Process was a culture interview that came only in late June after the first date was cancelled. I met two more great humans and was then told they would come back to me soon. After 10 days without news, I asked if there was any information missing or anything I could help with to help them reach a decision.

[00:09:29] Their reply was, We are collecting the feedback from the panel as we speak and will soon be in touch with you. 10 more days go by and I message the hiring manager to get some news. This was a month ago and I am still awaiting a reply. I rarely complain about being ghosted, but getting the silent treatment after 6 months of interviews, For a position I'm a strong match for and have a reference for is a new experience.

[00:09:53] Still no answer two more months later.

[00:09:57] **Laura:** Yeah, this one was actually shared as a LinkedIn [00:10:00] post from the person who had written it. And that two more months later is the follow up. Yeah, eight months of, Going through this process and just nothing like no communication from the hiring manager that they originally talked to And it just it's so frustrating because it feels like the writer did everything, right?

[00:10:18] Like everything there was correct. They weren't above and beyond yeah rolled with the kind of shitty interview experience, but it's fine. Talk to people made a good connection you know followed up but not in a weird stalkery way like Really did the only thing I might have suggested would have

been reaching out directly to the hiring manager as soon as they saw the job go up, instead of waiting.

[00:10:40] And I will tell you why. Having been that hiring manager, like you have a bunch of conversations about it and two months later you don't always remember all the people you had conversations with to send it to them. Sometimes you do and sometimes you don't or, you're on vacation or whatever.

[00:10:54] Pinging them to just make sure you get in. But this person got selected based on their resume anyway, clearly [00:11:00] qualified for the role to just not follow up with that person. Man, what a shitty taste that

[00:11:06] **Amy:** leaves in your mouth. It really does. And I think a lot of people are willing to move forward with a process that is really just taking way too long.

[00:11:17] It's unfair. It's not helpful to a person who's, trying to find a position for their livelihoods to make someone wait so long to not really give any feedback or timely updates. So this person was being very patient. And I would say, if this is happening , take a pause and go, does this organization seem like a place that I want to work at based on what I'm experiencing as a candidate?

[00:11:45] What is this going to say about the internal politics or bureaucracy? And I hate to say it, but this could keep going on. It could. Be that they learned that they don't get the job. And then what was this all [00:12:00] for?

[00:12:00] **Laura:** And you just got to keep interviewing, keep going out there, keep starting new. Processes, you can't wait on these folks. They have proven themselves to be unreliable. If something comes through, maybe, but I like your point about, hell, if it takes us long to hire somebody, how long is it going to.

[00:12:16] Take to make a change to their design system.

[00:12:20] **Amy:** Do they even have a design system? Yes.

[00:12:22] **Laura:** They've been talking about it for five years, they'll get around to it. Anyway, I want to move on to our next section and Some of these last ones could have fit into here But there were some that were just the worst scheduling and disorganization On the part of I think probably the recruiting team, although maybe a little bit from the hiring managers.

[00:12:42] Just terrible. And these are incredibly frustrating because again, often these don't reflect the rest of the organization,

[00:12:49] **Amy:** if it's just the recruiter,

[00:12:51] **Laura:** but also. Man, if you're interviewing in a lot of places, you're running into a lot of this these days. Here's our first one in this category.[00:13:00]

[00:13:00]

[00:13:02] **Laura:** Years ago, I applied for an on site contractor position at a large government organization, which was being hired through a staffing agency. I had responded to a specific job description and I'd had a phone interview with the staffing agency. For the next round, I was invited to do an in person presentation for a panel of the organization's staff.

[00:13:19] I spent All weekend preparing my slides and practicing my presentation. When I got to the interview, one of the interviewers said, thank you for interviewing for the role of X, Y, Z, which was not the job for which I had applied or the job for which I had phone interviewed, I looked at the staffing agency contact who was in the room with me and expected her to jump in and address this confusion.

[00:13:43] She did not. I reluctantly explained that I was under the impression I was being considered for the ABC position, not the XYZ position. They said, no, this interview is for XYZ position, and asked me to proceed with my presentation. I did give the presentation, [00:14:00] but it didn't land well. Because it was for the wrong role, and for a role I wasn't qualified for.

[00:14:05] The staffing agency had clearly given me the wrong information and just didn't want to own up to it in front of their client. They never apologized to

[00:14:11] **Amy:** me. Oh yeah I've actually been here. I think a common one is confusing UX researcher and UX designer. And so I've, Applied for roles and, I got there and they were like tell me about your UX design skills and in the moment, it's like what do I say, if you're maybe not as experienced or you're really trying to get this position, how do you answer that?

[00:14:36] Is it what are their expectations and why is there that misalignment?

[00:14:40] **Laura:** I got to tell you, it is so hard. I think it's so hard to do this in the moment. Just know that this is going to happen. Especially as you say, like the researcher content designer. And often like this happens in engineering as well.

[00:14:52] You'll have a, Oh, you're looking for back in engineer. Yeah. I am a react person. Like I don't, I am not the person to optimize your [00:15:00] database queries. Sorry. And I think here's, one of the ways to do it. Which would be extremely satisfying, but takes a lot of guts, is to just turn to the staffing agency person and ask them to weigh in.

[00:15:12] Oh, I thought we were talking about this other role. Just, to make it clear that you weren't, and you weren't at fault, because then if they have a different role open, maybe you can apply for it in the future. And other than that it's not going to, Save you the time of preparing the slides, I get it.

[00:15:26] But you can just end the interview. At any point, if you're uncomfortable, if it turns out they're looking for something different, you can just be like, I'm so sorry. I was under the impression it was for this other thing. I do not believe I am qualified for this role. If you would like to tell me about it for five minutes, that's great.

[00:15:40] And we'll see. And if it is, then I can present. And if it's not something I can do, I'll... I will go and you can have an hour of your day back and I can go get a snack and complain

[00:15:50] **Amy:** about the staffing agency. Yeah, and I agree with this person's take, which is that the staffing agency fucked up it could be that the recruiter wasn't [00:16:00] aware of the nuances between different roles and they didn't want to look bad. So it was easier to just stay silent and perhaps make it look like the candidate was, in the wrong here that the candidate messed it up.

[00:16:11] But I totally agree. Just, pause and end the interview. Yeah. I think people feel a lot of pressure in these situations to somehow make sense of and move forward in a conversation like this so that they don't look bad or so that they don't ruin any kind of opportunity that might come out of this.

[00:16:31] **Laura:** Yeah, it's, and it's just incredible. I just want to, once again, I just want to reiterate, you can end. Any interview, at any time, for any reason. Yes. And I know it can feel really weird and uncomfortable, but 90 percent of the time, if you end it for the reason Wow, I was given the wrong information, and I apologize, and I'm gonna go.

[00:16:50] The people who are interviewing you will be thrilled, because they don't want to sit there and listen to it either. Alright. I've got another one. You want to

[00:16:59] **Amy:** read this one?

[00:16:59] [00:17:00] Yes. All right. I'm an experienced product designer with some experience in both hiring and interviewing. I just received a template rejection at 8.30 p. m. last night after five rounds of interviews. The timing is inconsiderate to say the least. The role was senior product designer. The process dragged on for seven weeks during which the recruiter has repeatedly communicated an inaccurate format and duration of the interviews.

[00:17:25] In retrospect, there was a total lack of clarity and transparency on both the process and progress during the hiring process. The fifth round was a second round of case study with two additional people. When I asked explicitly whether there were specific aspects of the initial case study that prompted feeling an additional case study was required, it was simply ignored. After that interview, I did not hear from them for more than one week till I followed up and offered to address any remaining questions and concerns.

[00:17:56] Again, I received a non answer and a false signal that it [00:18:00] looked positive. Among all the miscommunication, lack of communication, and confusion, as a candidate, I did not feel my work and my time were respected, nor was I set up for success. And yeah that's one of the running themes here is a disrespect for the candidates time the fact that they have a life the fact that they're not getting paid for any of this, that they're taking a risk and putting a lot of effort in, and it does not feel reciprocal.

[00:18:29] Candidates have to be respectful, and there's that power dynamic there. Yeah, it's,

[00:18:36] **Laura:** Honestly, we all get bad recruiters sometimes you gotta realize a lot of times they are incentivized to find a person to fill the job, and they are not at all incentivized to give anybody else a good experience that's, it is frustrating, and Man, that just getting told the wrong thing over and over is is bad.

[00:18:54] If you are a hiring manager listening to this work with your recruiters and just make sure that they've, that they're giving people the right answers [00:19:00] and, give them a little slack if it seems like they're coming in unprepared and fighting. It might not be their

[00:19:05] **Amy:** fault.

[00:19:05] Yeah, and this isn't to say that, recruiters across the board are inconsiderate. Like we know that's not true. They do get a bad rap. I think because there are a lot of bad recruiters, frankly, but there's a lot of people who are just bad at their job in general. This takes a lot of human touch.

[00:19:25] It takes empathy. You have to be highly organized. There's a lot going on. And so some people aren't good at that. Some people in recruiting roles are facing a lot of internal pressure to get things done in a quick amount of time to manage lots of conversations, to work with different stakeholders, whether it's the hiring manager, the candidates, other people on the team.

[00:19:46] Decision makers who feel like they have to like swoop and poop and be involved in, hiring every candidate that comes through. There's a lot going on there too. So it's good to have empathy for the other side as well. I

[00:19:59] **Laura:** [00:20:00] agree. And I, it's funny 'cause I complain about bad recruiters mostly because I have worked with a few really good ones.

[00:20:05] And differences night and day. Alright next story. I get contacted by a recruiter for a company associated with technology for the Internet of Things. They work with major manufacturers across multiple industries, including consumer products and goods. This was for a UX researcher role.

[00:20:22] I scheduled the interview with them. Then I wait on a Friday morning for the call, only to hear from said recruiter that the hiring manager was on vacation, so they would need to reschedule the interview. Okay, I get it, it happens. I reschedule again for next week, wait near my phone when the interview day comes, all prepared and dressed up, never get a call.

[00:20:38] Send an email to the recruiter who claimed they could not reach me. I decided to reschedule again, show up about two or three days later for the interview, and... Ghosted again. Emailed this person one more time and got the same explanation. Then I checked my call log and of course there's no sign of the number from the recruiter.

[00:20:55] Now, why would you contact someone for an interview, jerk them around, and then not even call [00:21:00] them? If I'm not who you're really looking for, don't waste my time. I

[00:21:04] **Amy:** had been through job searches

[00:21:05] **Laura:** before, but this was the first time where I had a recruiter straight up just not even show up for the interview. Can I just and multiple

[00:21:13] **Amy:** times. I just want to clarify one thing, which, they actually said, if I'm not who you're really looking for, then don't waste my fucking time.

[00:21:24] **Laura:** Yeah, you skipped the curse. Oh, that's true. Oh my God. I did. I'm so sorry. Yes. Don't waste my fucking time. Okay. They did. I skipped over the effing time. All right. Look, first of all, cursing is required on this podcast. Second of all, I hate this so much because that recruiter is trying to make it.

[00:21:47] It's Oh, I tried to get ahold of you and I get it. Phones are weird. And sometimes my phone doesn't ring and it's frustrating and, but not three, like after three times, no, they're just lying to you. Like they're getting some

[00:21:57] **Amy:** sick, they're in pleasure and gaslighting. That's [00:22:00] like gaslighting.

[00:22:02] **Laura:** It is. And it's very bad. And I had a similar story for myself. I had a weird thing where an interview that I was doing wasn't moving forward. And I happened to actually know the hiring manager and had been recruited directly by her. So I pinged her and I was like, Hey, what are the next steps?

[00:22:15] You said you wanted to keep talking. And she was surprised that we hadn't set up the next steps yet. And she was like, Oh, the recruiter says he's waiting for your resume. The recruiter was not waiting for my resume. He had it. He just told her he was waiting for it because he had dropped the ball.

[00:22:28] That was fine. I was like, Oh, sure. I'll just make sure that he has it. He had it. But so this kind of stuff happens all the time, and sometimes the candidate can get made to look like the person who's the problem. And you just have to know that you've dotted your I's and crossed your T's and just, move on with it.

[00:22:46] It sucks, but that's gonna happen.

[00:22:48] **Amy:** It's, again, there's a lot going on internally that recruiters have to deal with. And I get it, we all make mistakes. And it's hard for people to own [00:23:00] up to mistakes, especially in competitive environments, especially if it means that they're maybe not meeting their targets on time, or not getting things done in a timely manner, or if it causes a lot of grief for other people but I

also think if people have a pattern of making mistakes like this it could be worth a discussion for how to lighten that load a bit.

[00:23:22] Or be upfront about what's broken in the process that's causing these kind of snafus. And then of course the, personal responsibility of owning up to making mistakes. Because it happens.

[00:23:36] **Laura:** All right, I want to talk about a few problems after the offer.

[00:23:39] These will actually make you cringe. These are terrifying for anybody who is in the process of searching for a role. I am sorry, but it is spooky season and this is what you get.

[00:23:51]

[00:23:54] **Amy:** I went through nine interviews to work at a company, including a case study and presentation.[00:24:00]

[00:24:00] They offered me the role after a ton of work and effort. The recruiter called me the next day and asked me for my salary range. It seemed she had neglected to ask in the beginning. I told her my expectations and that I was flexible about compensation. She called me the next day to say they were no longer considering me because I didn't have media Which I told them from the start.

[00:24:20] I'm just glad I hadn't quit my job at that point. They also cancelled on my references last minute, which was embarrassing. Ugh.

[00:24:30] **Laura:** Yeah. Oh my god. Yeah. First of all, nine interviews? Fuck you. There is no world in which nine people need to talk to me to decide whether or not I can do a job.

[00:24:40] Especially not separately. Also. Just remember, if somebody asks you for your salary range, verbally, you are free to push back on them and say, oh, I'm interested in knowing what the range is, just to make sure you're not wildly out of the scope. But Man, what a good example [00:25:00] of, don't quit your job until you've got a signed offer in hand.

[00:25:02] **Amy:** Exactly. And it's not even signed offer.

[00:25:05] Don't quit your job until you have a signed offer. But, these days we're seeing all kinds of stuff where people get offers rescinded for reasons that

have nothing to do with them. And this excuse about not having experience in a particular domain, that's such bullshit.

[00:25:23] Obviously, they knew that from the start. And I had the same thing happen to me I don't know, back in 2014, I interviewed locally here at a company that makes software for I. T. Automation. Software used by back end developer types, highly technical.

[00:25:41] I went through the process and the feedback was, Oh, you don't have experience with our highly technical software that you never would have actually had a reason to use in your entire life. And I think it's just a way to hide some other rationale, which in this [00:26:00] case, it sounds like it might have been something related to the compensation.

[00:26:05] **Laura:** It certainly is pointing in that direction. But yeah, that's even if it wasn't, that feels a little weird that you were told you're getting an offer. What are your, what's your comp and then, Oh, you're not getting an offer now. Like the, it feels like that's, that was the problem. Even if it wasn't, that was badly

[00:26:21] **Amy:** handled.

[00:26:22] One thing I will say though, is. This needs to be discussed up front and if the recruiter doesn't bring it up, it, I think, is the responsibility of the job seeker to bring it up. Someone needs to bring it up. This discussion really does need to happen at the beginning of the process because otherwise people are making assumptions about the pay and the total compensation.

[00:26:48] You don't want to waste your time. Recruiters don't want to waste their time. So I think it's just. Better for the whole process. It's healthier to discuss that up front.

[00:26:59] **Laura:** I agree I will [00:27:00] also say that is a new thing Yeah, so if this was like if this story is from five years ago, that was not necessarily that was looked well upon for the stupidest reasons.

[00:27:10] But that's just the way people are. People would often say, Oh no, this, Oh, they asked about money. Clearly they don't care about working for us. No, they care about working for you and also the money. That's why we do jobs. So I get why people don't, we've been taught not to.

[00:27:26] And I think that, I think that corner has finally been turned and it is perfectly normal and expected. To ask now, and I encourage all of you to

[00:27:35] **Amy:** do it. I agree. Yeah, and hopefully they just put the salary range on the damn job description.

[00:27:42] **Laura:** Please. Can we just all do that? Can we just all do that? Yes, I agree.

[00:27:46] Here's another good one, and this is, this one actually is a cautionary tale, and I've had this happen to me, and it can be fixed, but you need to fix it before you quit your job. Alright, here we go. The written offer was different than the [00:28:00] verbal one.

[00:28:00] I pointed this out. The RSUs were different. I was told the language was standard, and they'd sort it out later. Also, they refused to budge on any salary negotiation, and that just feels odd to me. The recruiter suggested I talk to the hiring manager. I said sure, but when I did, Wow! Had the tone changed.

[00:28:18] I was informed that they expect people to be team players in this role. Was I no longer one because I tried to negotiate? I pulled out after that call. Oh, good. Okay, fucking good for you. That was the correct choice. I just want to be real clear. Team player does not mean I will accept less money than I was offered.

[00:28:36] That is some bullshit. Also, if they offer it to you. Your acceptance is contingent on that

[00:28:44] **Amy:** actually being what they pay you.

[00:28:46] **Laura:** Look, if the hiring manager's pulling this, Oh, are you not a team player? Shit, before you even join? You can't imagine what fuckery they will get up to after you're part of their team.

[00:28:56] Do not report to that person. They sound like a nightmare. But also, [00:29:00] read your offer letters. This was a good example of somebody I think showing

[00:29:04] **Amy:** good judgment. Yeah. They can tell you something verbally on the phone Hey, here's what we're offering for your salary range.

[00:29:11] There's, this bonus, or these are the healthcare benefits or whatever it might be, but absolutely getting that in writing. And don't, commit to anything on the phone until you're able to see that and actually scrutinize. Every detail you want to pay attention and compare it to what was discussed.

[00:29:29] And be able to have some decent amount of time to think through it, especially if you're looking at more than one offer. So , I'm really glad that they decided to end this. And , there's a lot of pressure on folks, especially these days when there's fewer jobs and more people looking to take Offers without trying to negotiate, and it's a good idea to still do that.

[00:29:54] Feeling pressured to take something because there's a fear that they might not be able to find something else. [00:30:00] And yeah, there are trade offs with accepting a role or not. But I think it's important to stick with the things that we really care about and to really pay attention to those red flags if

[00:30:12] they come up.

[00:30:14] **Laura:** Also we are seeing now some jobs where they really do offer you the best that they're gonna offer you and they won't negotiate and often they'll tell you that up front and You can still try like you should still be able to try and they may come back and say no I'm not gonna like I can't do that the reason hopefully that they do that is because it does take some of the bias out of the the compensation process and they're just like no we have decided that we are gonna pay you X and the fact like whether or not you're a good negotiator shouldn't affect that we think we can afford X We think you're worth X and that's what we're going to pay you and that's fine.

[00:30:46] I got no problem with that generally. All that other stuff though about it being different from, that is not okay.

[00:30:55] **Amy:** Alright, next story. I had a fantastic job and was just promoted [00:31:00] to a principal designer role with a 7 percent pay increase.

[00:31:03] A recruiter reached out from a company I'd worked for previously asking if I'd be willing to chat with a director familiar with my work at that company who was very eager to talk. We set up a call and they shared how impressed they were with the results of an initiative I had led and asked me if I'd consider coming back.

[00:31:20] I agreed to an interview loop which consisted of 12 hours of interviews with a number of

[00:31:27] **Laura:** at a company where this person had already worked.

[00:31:29] **Amy:** Wow. Okay. So the hours are just increasing at this point. Feedback came back almost immediately with a written offer from the recruiter for more than a 50 percent pay raise from my current salary. An assigning bonus that would have paid off our mortgage. Wow, okay, sounds good so far. It was an offer I couldn't reject despite being happy in my current role, so I accepted with a four week runway to give plenty of notice to my current employer at the time.

[00:31:57] I resigned from my role, starting the onboarding training [00:32:00] for the new role. I got my laptop in the mail along with a welcome package two days before the actual start date. On the Sunday night before my start date, I got a call from the recruiter. She said unfortunately they were going to have to rescind my offer, and she had no further details she could share.

[00:32:16] I got an email with the same info and didn't hear back from the recruiter again. Someone I had interviewed with messaged me on LinkedIn to tell me the manager I previously had at the company placed me on a do not hire list after my exit. She said it was unusual because there wasn't an explanation which is normally required.

[00:32:35] Okay, this is the worst thing I've ever heard.

[00:32:38] **Laura:** I would hire a lawyer. I swear to god. Here's the horrifying thing. As a hiring manager in the, at least in the ATS I was working with the whether or not To let them be rehired is often like a checkbox, and it's not real clear in some cases.

[00:32:52] So this could absolutely have been an accident, or it could have just been an ex manager who [00:33:00] got pissed because somebody quit and was real vindictive. And that sucks too. Like it depends on what your relationship was with that manager. But man, everything about this sounds horrible. I, it feels like this, they were specifically trying to harm this person.

[00:33:21] This is, you were cursed. You pissed off a witch. I don't know what to tell you.

[00:33:25] Also as a hiring manager. I know this can sound embarrassing.

[00:33:27] This could feel embarrassing to you if this had happened to somebody who reported to me if I had not already filled their job and I liked the

person I would a hundred percent be like, yep Come back. I would do everything I could to get them back because you can't penalize somebody for taking a job that pays 50 percent more, right?

[00:33:46] That's just business. As a hiring manager, if somebody who reports to you is Hey, I just got this job. That fell into my lap. Somebody reached out to me. It's 50 percent more. I got to take it. I would be like, invite me on your [00:34:00] yacht. Yeah, but that's

[00:34:01] **Amy:** you. That's you.

[00:34:02] **Laura:** I know.

[00:34:02] But it's, I think it's worth reaching back out. I know a lot of good hiring managers, a lot of hiring managers who would. I also know a lot of really petty. Assholes who wouldn't. But all I'm saying is, at least check. Because it is so much easier to bring that person back than it is to go out and find a whole new person.

[00:34:18] Even if the person's feeling petty, they might be like it's easier just to bring you back and then I don't have to train a new person. Exactly.

[00:34:24] **Amy:** Yeah, this is a disaster. And I think when we first started seeing the layoffs year and a half ago year ago or so, I, we heard of a lot of people who were getting new offers and turning down other offers and then getting those new offers rescinded. And I had a couple people I worked with who experienced that, and that's exactly what I said.

[00:34:49] I said, go back to those other offers and say, look, here's the situation. Sometimes it worked, sometimes it didn't work, and they were left in the lurch. And I agree [00:35:00] about talking to a lawyer for something like this because it does cause harm. It causes financial and psychological harm, and I don't know the viability of, bringing I, if it would, I dunno if it'd work,

[00:35:14] **Laura:** but man I would at least get a, I would at least get a stern letter written to them on letterhead.

[00:35:18] **Amy:** Exactly. And share information within your network about these situations so other people can avoid these companies.

[00:35:28] **Laura:** Ugh, what a mess. Alright, I want to move on to our last category titled. Really weird shit. This is stuff that just shouldn't happen. This, I think this one was my very favorite story, honestly.

[00:35:41] And there were so many good ones, but this is my favorite, because it just reminds me of my days working in startups. All right, here we go.

[00:35:47]

[00:35:54] **Laura:** Four years ago, I interviewed for a lead UX designer role at a startup. The first round was at a dive [00:36:00] bar at 4 p. m. Okay, not too bad. We had dinner and we did the second round at the rental house where the CEO lived.

[00:36:06] The interview happened in the hot tub at 11 p. m. All of the multiple co founders were fully naked discussing things unrelated to design. One of the things they discussed were their biggest regrets in life. Ugh, my bad. Whoever submitted this, look, they did it completely anonymously. As was their right. All I am saying is I am begging you, please DM me on LinkedIn.

[00:36:30] I will keep you completely anonymous. I need to have more details and I need to know what company this was, or I will die. So please,

[00:36:41] **Amy:** and in case anybody

[00:36:42] **Laura:** is listening and saying, oh, that can't possibly be true, nobody would actually do that. I will just have to say, I worked for startups. I would bet money that this is true or at least very close to true.

[00:36:54] This is, yeah, that, that is a hundred percent something that very much could happen at a startup. That [00:37:00] wouldn't even shock

[00:37:00] **Amy:** me. And it could be used for an episode of that show Silicon Valley. It seems great. Out of that show.

[00:37:08] There's just so many awful things about this. I don't know the gender of this person. I don't know anything about their identity, but regardless of that, those power dynamics that are happening. Okay, what do I need to do to get this role? I'm just gonna go with the flow. But also this is a great example for the argument for culture fit except in the opposite direction where it's like if this is the culture you, if you don't like this then you are not going to fit into that culture and so yes.

[00:37:42] **Laura:** Yeah, no, they have done a fabulous job of showing you who they are and if you are an 11 p. m. naked in the hot tub talking about your regrets kind of person, more power to ya. I'm, I will not tell you that is wrong. I will just tell you that that's what that company's gonna be like.[00:38:00]

[00:38:00] **Amy:** Alright, next up. I was doing an interview for a UX role and I got asked near the end, Tell me a PC joke. And I froze up. It was awkward before then, but I didn't get the role. Yeah, I love this,

[00:38:16] **Laura:** because this is such a good example of just terrible interview questions that you're gonna run into. I do have a terrible PC joke that anybody can use.

[00:38:23] I just want so nobody ever gets stuck in this position. Okay Amy, what do you call a pig with three eyes? I don't know. Pig.

[00:38:33] **Amy:** Wah. Yeah. It's a terrible joke. It's a

[00:38:36] **Laura:** dad joke. That's fine.

[00:38:38] If you're an interviewer, unless this is going to be part of the job, don't ask people this question.

[00:38:46] Don't ask people questions like these. Don't ask people about how many ping pong balls they can fit into a bus. These are bad questions. Yeah.

[00:38:52] **Amy:** Move beyond them. And why did they have to say PC? Oh, I

[00:38:55] **Laura:** guarantee you that the reason that they said it had to be PC is because they had asked for one and they got something [00:39:00] horrifying.

[00:39:01] Although that actually is a more interesting one. If you ask somebody to tell you a joke and they tell you something that is. Wildly inappropriate. Now you've actually learned something.

[00:39:09] **Amy:** Okay, my joke is, how do you make an octopus laugh? With ten tickles. Ah,

[00:39:18] **Laura:** I see. These are all great jokes, people. Alright, next story. I had been interviewing at a few places for a director of design role. At that time, I was a director and had been managing a small but mighty team of six.

[00:39:30] I was looking to jump to a higher company to build in skills, so naturally I was open to both manager and director levels. I had gotten to the final round for two pretty interesting roles. One at the director level and one at senior manager. They were fairly different in scales and culture, so it was hard for me to weigh my options.

[00:39:44] I got offers for both and decided to take the senior manager role as it matched what I was looking for just a bit better. The company I turned down scheduled a flow with me. I had assumed it was to get feedback as to what they could have done, their process, or maybe even try to sell me on their role.

[00:39:59] However, when [00:40:00] I got on that call, they had the hiring manager there and he pretty much just screamed at me for 15 minutes. Told me I strung them along and wasted their time. Even said I was using their great company reputation to get a job I likely wasn't qualified for.

[00:40:14] Needless to say, I made the right decision. Oof. Yikes! Look, here's the thing. I personally love it when I'm immediately proven right. When you turn down a job it's really easy to wonder, Did I just make a terrible decision? Should I have gone with the

[00:40:31] other one?

[00:40:31] It's, it's a hard

[00:40:32] choice. To just immediately get confirmation like this is... 100 percent worth 15 minutes of getting yelled at. You just dodged potentially years of working for this absolute monster. This would have been the person managing you, and they felt entitled to scream at you for 15 minutes and accuse you of things.

[00:40:55] Because you picked a different

[00:40:59] **Amy:** Right. [00:41:00] And I'm sure this person would not have had a problem with stringing this candidate along and then telling them no at the end. Oh, of course not! It's That's the thing. It's personal and it's business. We're expected to just accept not getting an offer after going through all of this.

[00:41:19] Oh, it's just business. And we take it personally, and it doesn't feel good. But then on the other end, if we decide, oh, we don't want this job, or we're going to pull out of the interview process, people take it personally. But again, we're also trying to find jobs to make money, and they are trying to hire

people, but they're also getting paid to do that, and they need it for a business purpose there's just so many...

[00:41:46] Unequal expectations. And, but yeah, this is just totally abusive.

[00:41:52] **Laura:** A hundred percent.

[00:41:54] Alright, that is all the time that we have for today. And we hope you haven't been frightened too much by these [00:42:00] terrible tales. We will be back with another episode with even more horror stories that will make you want to crawl under your bed and never come out again.

[00:42:08] And seriously, thank you to everybody who wrote in with their stories. If we didn't get to yours, I apologize. We might get to it in a future one. Take it from both Amy and me. We are sorry that this happens to you and I personally just want to give everybody a nice consensual hug and tell you again, it is not your fault.

[00:42:27] But thank you for listening to these terrible tales. I am Laura and I'm Amy, and we want to thank you again for listening and wish you all the best of luck with your search, no matter what you are looking for, we are rooting for you.

[00:42:41]