

pdQ&A

TEN MINUTES WITH . . . Laurie Mitchell



LONNIE TIMMONS III | THE PLAIN DEALER

Laurie Mitchell is usually one of the first people to know about jobs in marketing, public relations and advertising. If you meet her standards, she can probably help you.

Impress the recruiter, and you have your foot in the door

Recruiters often have a reputation for being tough. Why is that? Part of it is that you have to manage your time, and there are lots of people who want free advice. I've heard from three people today already who want to me to re-write their resumes. (She doesn't do that, but she offers resume samples on her Web site, www.lauriemitchellcompany.com.)

But I also have to be the toughest interview that job candidates face, because I'm the gatekeeper. My clients don't want me to send them idiots. They're not paying large recruiting or search fees to have their time wasted.

What's one of the dumbest things people can say to you? That they're underpaid. Somebody might say they're making \$40,000, "but I really should be making \$70,000." An 8 percent to 15 percent salary increase when you're changing jobs is normal. Your next boss is not responsible for what your current boss got away with.

Are most people realistic about how good they are at what they do? Most people think their skills are better than they are. There's a lot of self-delusion at all levels. I've had CEOs tell me, "I'm cheerful and funny, and my people love me!" And I know their people hate them!

What's one of the most important things you convey to young people about the workplace? Often they don't understand the most important part of the job description, which isn't in writing. That is, "Make your boss look good." If you do that, you're home free.

You've been in this business since 1984. Have you seen a generational change in the candidates you work with? I've seen some young people who are very self-absorbed. They've been coddled and overpraised and so they think they are due praise and compliments all the time at work. When they don't get that, they're unhappy.

I have a 23-year-old daughter who recently graduated from col-

Laurie Mitchell is the go-to recruiter in the marketing, public relations and advertising business. As owner of Laurie Mitchell & Company Inc., this Beachwood woman has the reputation of being a straight shooter — and someone who really knows what she's talking about. Her record is proof: She has placed 1,120 professionals in those fields since 1984, at mid-level management and higher. So we couldn't wait for the skinny on what it takes to get hired in the arena that is Mitchell's bailiwick. Corporations and agencies hire her to send them job candidates. She tells **Evelyn Theiss** what it takes for job-seekers to succeed.

lege, and I helped her and her sorority sisters with their interviewing skills. So, besides my profession, I know Gen Y because of my kids. I have some street cred.

You're a frequent speaker. What message do you try to convey to people about the professional world? I tell them it's not OK to cry in the office or storm down the hall when you disagree with someone. You're supposed to be professional and concentrate on your job. Your job is to make other people look good and to accomplish your goals, not to express all your emotions.

What else is something that 20- and 30-somethings have had to learn to deal with? They have to know that ugly e-mails stay around. It's not OK to send insulting e-mails. Young people are comfortable dissing others with their friends, but you can't do it in e-mails. They have a way of ending up in people's "poison" files, and you don't want to be in someone's poison file.

What about people's online presence? If people go to your Facebook entry and see you naked or read about your sex life, that's not a good idea.

But it doesn't even have to be

bring to the workplace or an unwillingness to pay dues. What's your take on that? I tell people, "You are not entitled to anything but a desk, a computer, a business card and your job description. You are not entitled to run the department the first month or to manage people right off the bat. You are entitled to prove you are an excellent employee who accomplishes her duties. You are not entitled to grouse out loud or demand unrealistic perks."

How have the companies that hire you to find candidates changed in the past few decades? Hiring influences have gotten more selective, because the workplace is leaner, and more is required of each employee. Secretaries are a thing of the past, and you are expected to pitch in and help with what you are given that's extra. Employers are more finicky and don't wish to hear a lot of excuses.

What's the good news? As far as I'm concerned, the economy is fabulous. My client list grows daily, and I'm placing everything from midlevel to senior executives in Ohio and beyond. It's like I tell people, "The harder I work, the luckier I am."

What's the best quality someone should have to get a job? Common sense. If your judgment is sound, and your presentation is credible, and you're smart, you'll do just fine.

And the other important thing: Have the humility to want to get better at what you do. The only way you'll get better is if someone criticizes your work and shows you a better way.

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that obvious. I got a resume from a young man, and it was decent; he mentioned his blog on it, so I checked it out. It was about how he's completely opposed to modern medicine, hospitals and doctors. And I told him, "Health care is the largest employer in Northeast Ohio. This is the wrong city to promulgate that view in." E-mail and online stuff lives forever, and employers and hiring influences do Google you.

How are younger workers changing the workplace once they do get hired? I think the workplace could be friendlier, and I think that is happening, in work-lifestyle balance. Employers are more sympathetic to that.

I've heard a lot about a sense of entitlement that some people



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First song you're singing on karaoke night? "Don't Know Why," Norah Jones.

Favorite restaurant? Champpps.

Favorite item of clothing? My pink Uggs boots.

Movies you've walked out on? "28 Days Later."

If you went to hell, what song would be playing over and over? "I Get Around," Beach Boys.

Worst household cleaning chore? Taking out the trash.

What is your greatest trait? Sense of humor.



Emily Morris

23, EMPLOYEE AT GUESS INC., BEACHWOOD

What is your worst? I'm kind of a slob.

Favorite TV shows? "Everybody Loves Raymond," "Friends," "Seinfeld."

Cut No. 1 on your dream mix CD? "Wind of My Soul," Cat Stevens.

Book that everyone should read? "Me Talk Pretty One Day" by David Sedaris.

What do you always have in your fridge? Yoplait yogurt, frozen Diet Coke with lime.

What celebrity do you want to be? Kate Moss or Kate Hudson.

Your house is on fire, what DVD are you rescuing? "Father of the Bride"; reminds me of my dad.

Favorite Web sites? TextTwist, Facebook and cleveland.com, for sure.

Do you prefer e-mail or phone calls? I actually prefer text messaging.

Headline on your obituary? "Life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're gonna get," from "Forrest Gump."

What's in your stereo right now? Paolo Nutini, "These Streets"; Spoon, "Ga Ga Ga Ga Ga"; Van Morrison, "Best Of . . ."

Do you collect anything? CDs, belts.

Your last meal on earth? Newman's Own lemonade, filet mignon, asparagus, Bob Evans mashed potatoes.

Want to contribute to *They Love*? Send your answers (along with a JPEG photo) to the questions above to PDQ@plaind.com; mail them to PDQ, The Plain Dealer, 1801 Superior Ave., Cleveland, OH 44114.

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