

Recruitment: It's not me, it's you!

Your relationship with a recruitment firm can be quite intimate. Your relationship with a recruitment consultant starts a little like a love affair. Firstly, you're interested in each other. Sometimes mutual respect and admiration blooms, sometimes it doesn't.

When it does, it can be fast. You're sitting at home on the internet one day, then it's surreptitious phone calls, sneaking out of the office to spend an exciting hour together, and then waiting for the phone to ring. The little thrill when it does.

And after you've been introduced to the clients, and it's all gone well, you get the phone call. And it's not good news.

Your recruiter has been seeing someone else behind your back. You react with disbelief. How could that other person have been better, more committed, more involved than you!

You pick yourself up, and hopefully maintain your dignity. After a few days, you ring back: "Hi, it's me. I was wondering if now that that opportunity has gone, do you have anything else on that might interest me?"

Sometimes, your recruiter will be very positive. A smart recruiter will know that you are a good candidate -you made a shortlist -and they have invested time in you. You are, in fact, a saleable product. At other times, not so.

It really comes down to a fundamentally different point of view. Bluntly put, a recruiter is employed to find the right people for their client. That is their number one job.

If they are a bit light on for work, or terribly efficient, or working round the clock, they might also have the time to work with candidates to help them in their careers in a proactive way.

Let's change analogies.

Ignoring the fact that many recruiters are warm "people-people"; think of them as shopkeepers. And you're a can of kidney beans. A premium brand, of course.

The shopkeeper was interested in you because he has a customer in his shop looking for legumes.

The customer likes kidney beans, but on this occasion, they bought the lentils. Simply a better fit for the Lamb Dhansak they are making.

Now, if many legume-purchasing customers traipse through the shop each day, then the shopkeeper will give you pride of place, wipe your can with a duster on a regular basis, and recommend you to customers.

However, if it's a service station that sells petrol, chips, cigarettes and drinks, and has half a shelf of odd assorted groceries down the back for the desperate after-hours crowd, then you don't get a lot of love.

So there's the issue. To you it's a grand love affair. To them it's a simple transaction, ring the till and on to the next customer.

Changing just a few words, I'll remind you that, in the movie Casablanca, Humphrey Bogart said: "doesn't take much to see that your problems don't amount to a can of beans in this crazy world. Someday you'll understand that...Here's looking at you kid."

Maybe he was considering a career in recruitment.