

This Recruiter Uses a Late-Night Text Message to See if Candidates Are a Good Fit for a Job

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You go to a job interview at 1 p.m.

At about 10 p.m., you get this text: “Hey, Tim. This is Ben. I work at Vanderbloemen. I was out of the office today. I heard you were there. Heard that everyone was really impressed with you. I’m sorry I didn’t get to meet you. I would love to connect with you sometime. Hope that can work.”

Do you reply? If so, how long does it take you?

Your decision might affect whether you’re hired.

The test’s creator and occasional proctor is William Vanderbloemen. He runs an executive-search firm in Houston. Vanderbloemen’s company uses the text-message test after job interviews for certain roles at his own hard-charging firm or for jobs where clients expect workers to be super responsive.

Texting back quickly might up your chance of snagging the job, at least at Vanderbloemen’s 45-person firm.

Sounds simple enough. But the text is also a reminder of the always-on pressure that’s pushed some workers to ditch hustle culture. Trial by text message joins other offbeat quizzes meant to help determine whether a job candidate should get an offer letter. There’s the spouse interview over dinner. And there’s the coffee-cup test: A hiring manager shows those who come for interviews where the kitchen is, offers them a coffee, and then rejects those who don’t bus their dishes

afterward.

The text-message test is also a reminder of how it can be difficult to land a job even as the overall US unemployment rate is low and many industries are hard up for workers. But in areas like tech, where many big employers have trimmed jobs in the past couple of years, some workers are left sending out huge numbers of résumés. And when job seekers do get a bite, interviews can drag on for round after round.

Vanderbloemen is quick to note that how you respond – or don't – to an after-hours text from someone saying they're with his firm won't keep you from getting a job. And he said that even responding within 24 hours would put most candidates far ahead of their competition. "We're just terrible as humans at responding," he said.

But text back within the one-minute response time his sales and marketing teams operate by? "Then we're like, 'Yeah, no, he might be the same kind of crazy that we are,'" Vanderbloemen said. "Is that normal for every job? No. Would it work for every company? No."

The test came about after Vanderbloemen hired some people who seemed promising but then didn't deliver on the company's fast turnaround time for clients, which he said is essential for some roles. That led Vanderbloemen to determine he had to measure for speed – before making a hire – for jobs in areas like sales and marketing.

So about a decade ago, Vanderbloemen asked one of the people on his team to text someone who'd been great in an interview. The colleague sent the text at about 10:30 p.m., and the candidate responded right away. Bingo.

William Vanderbloemen. Courtesy Vanderbloemen Search Group via BI

Vanderbloemen, the founder and CEO of Vanderbloemen Search Group, decided the text-message test could be a good measure of whether a candidate would mesh well with a client with a move-fast culture. He compared it to pulling off a successful organ transplant by finding tissue that matches. “Oh, you do things the way they do,” he said. “Doesn’t make it normal. Doesn’t make it right. But you guys match each other.”

Switching the interview location

Vanderbloemen doesn’t rely just on the text-message test. One time, in New York City, he got turned around and realized he

didn't have time to make it to the coffee shop where he'd planned to meet a job candidate. So he contacted the man and asked whether they could meet somewhere else. The man responded: "No, I don't mind. I like change."

Vanderbloemen was impressed. Now he'll sometimes change the location of an interview 30 minutes before it's set to take place to see how a candidate responds.

He said it's not something he does all the time. Some jobs don't require that kind of flexibility or speed. Even with the text message, he said, it's often someone at his firm, not him, who might send it. As the boss, he realizes it's more intimidating if it comes from him. "It's not fair because I'm the guy with the name on the door, and now I am being kind of just abusive," he said.

Setting up some rules

Vanderbloemen, who has a degree in religion and philosophy, said his company has guidelines meant to protect its workers from needing to be on at all hours. After-hours emails should get a response within 24 hours, he said. Evening Slack messages are rare but should get a response that night "because that's like Defcon 3," he said. "Defcon 2 would be if I text you after hours, I need an answer like now," he added. "And if I call you after hours, pick up."

He said the firm enforced the rules. It meant he and some colleagues had to quit a group text about "Game of Thrones" on Sunday nights.

Vanderbloemen said the text-message test still has its place in a world where some workers are trying to avoid being on call all the time.

"For our company, particularly certain teams within our company, it's a direct indicator to us of whether you are

dysfunctional like us,” he quipped.

<https://www.entrepreneur.com/business-news/recruiter-uses-after-hours-text-test-to-weed-out-candidates/471904>