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*You Are a Box of Cereal*

**Y**ou are a stamping press, a gearbox, a software package, a centrifuge, or an electric motor. You are a box of corn flakes competing with every other cereal to catch the eye of the customer, to get plucked off the shelf, to get purchased.

You are a product.

When companies hire, they make an investment. Hiring someone—paying compensation—is no different from buying a lathe, a copy machine, or a forklift. Hiring someone is precisely like buying any productivity-improving product. Just as the hiring company wants its investment in a new retail store design to increase sales, so too it wants its investment in people to increase sales. Just as the hiring company expects its investment in new CAD/CAM software to reduce production costs, it wants its investment in new people to eliminate scrap and waste.

You are a product and the employer is the customer, the buyer. You are a product the customer will buy if the customer feels good about you, and if you solve a problem. As with a box of cereal, the customer will feel good about you if he or she likes your packaging. And your packaging, because you are you, is how you look, listen, learn, laugh. The customer will feel good about you if you fit the organization's culture, if you have "chemistry," and if you ask thoughtful questions. The customer will feel good about you if you are genuine, if you have done your homework, and if you are enthusiastic about betting some of your life on the hiring company. More importantly, however, the customer—the hiring organization—will only hire you if they think you can solve their problem, if you

fill their need. You are a product the customer will buy if you are affordable, and if in solving his problem the customer will earn more from your work than the amount of money you will be paid for that work.

You are not a robot, but you will be purchased as if you were a robotic assembly machine.