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What Happened When Bob Stopped Negotiating From Fear

The Coffee Line Conversation That Changed Everything



Erik Forrester

Erik is an educator and ensemble builder who spent more than three decades shaping world-class talent at Interlochen and the USC Thornton School of Music, developing performers and leaders who now hold significant positions across the global music world.

BOB, THE MAN IN LINE

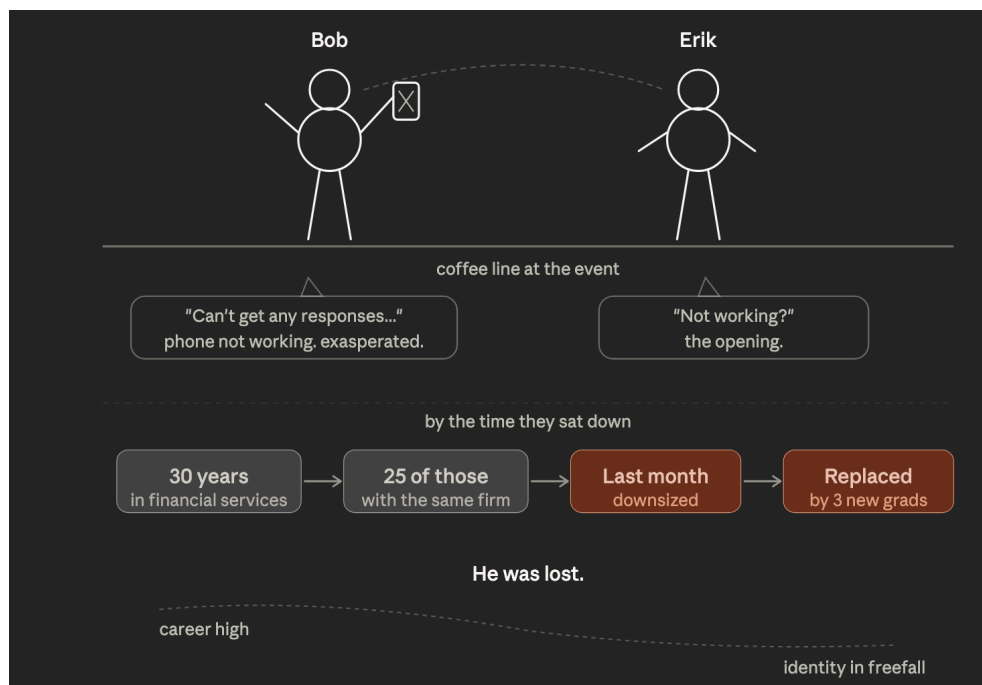


Fig 1. Erik's coffee line encounter — the moment Bob's story began

Bob was ahead of me at the coffee line of a large marketing event. He was staring at his phone — frustrated, getting nothing back. He looked up, caught my eye, and threw up his hands.

"Can't get any responses."

By the time we sat down, I had the full picture.

Thirty years in financial services.

Twenty-five with the same firm.

Last month, downsized.

Replaced by three kids fresh out of business school.

He was lost.

THE REAL QUESTION

Most people in Bob's position are focused on what was taken.

The right question is: What do you own that they can't downsize?

Bob had thirty years of client trust and institutional knowledge.

That's not a liability. That's a premium asset, and the new guys didn't have it.

I told him: They will call you. Be ready.

THE PROCESS

Two things. That's all.

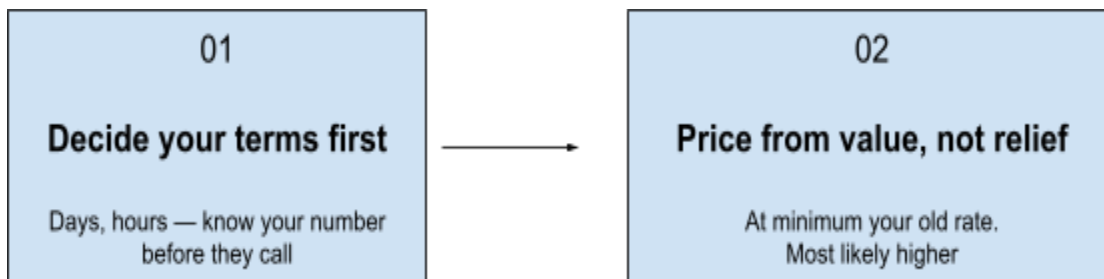


Fig 2. Erik's two-step readiness framework applied to Bob's situation **WHAT HAPPENED**

A week after he left, they called. Bob named his terms: \$350/hour.

They accepted immediately. He knew it was too low.

Weeks later — \$500/hour, consulting and mentoring the new hires on his own schedule.

THE REFRAME

The crisis wasn't the termination.

The crisis was the story Bob was telling himself about what it meant.

"The asset they tried to retire is exactly what the market will pay a premium for."

BEFORE ERIK

- ✗ Identity defined by the company that let him go reputation
- ✗ No terms, no rate, no posture
- ✗ Negotiating from shock and desperation
- ✗ Casualty of downsizing

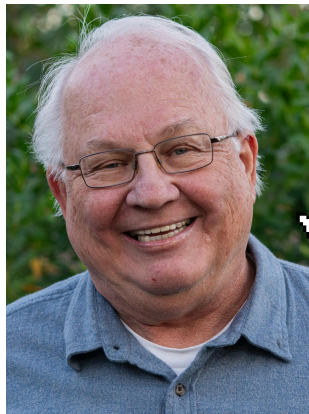
AFTER ERIK

- ✓ Identity grounded in what 30 years actually built
- ✓ Clear day count, clear hourly rate, ready when the call came
- ✓ Accepted on his terms, immediately
- ✓ Consultant and mentor at \$500/hr on his own schedule

The Four Forebears



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Architect & Design Thinker



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