

News & Tools

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'We went with someone else'

How you deal with rejection can define your job search

It's a word that sends chills down the spine of any diligent job seeker: rejection. Whether through spoken words, an e-mail message or no response at all, job rejection usually feels the same way - awfully frustrating. While being denied a job can deflate your ego and leave you wondering whether you'll ever land a break, it's important not to get sucked into depression because of rejection.

In fact, rejection can often be the best thing to happen if you reflect on the experience and make necessary changes.

Here are a few tips to help you rebound with renewed confidence:

Don't take it personally

Thousands of job seekers face rejection every day, whether through a letter, unreturned phone call or their resume quickly finding its way into the trash receptacle.

In some cases, this has little to do with the person, but a lot to do with the intentions of the hiring company. Several factors may be in play, such as the company decided to promote an internal candidate or changed its business model and eliminated the position, both of which have nothing to do with you.

In other words, the odds of landing a job aren't always stacked in your favor, so don't take the rejection personally, says Julie Moore Rapacki, president of the career coaching firm Polish Your Star.

"As much as rejection stings, it's easy to lose sight of the fact that hiring decisions are complex and have nothing to do with your value as a human being," Rapacki says. "When an employer is looking to fill a position, it looks for a particular set of skills, knowledge and abilities that match the needs of the job, the culture of the organization and chemistry of the team. As much as it feels personal, it's a business decision."

Don't blindly apply for jobs

Often, job seekers pursue several positions at once, even though many may not be compatible with their interests, skills and education level.

Sending out your resume to a bunch of companies for the sake of simply



▶ Don't let rejection ruin the rest of your search. Once you know it's a no, move on and learn from the experience.

landing a job as soon as possible will ultimately lead to a lot of rejection and wasted time, says B.J. Gallagher, a Los Angeles workplace consultant and author of "Yes Lives in the Land of No" (Bk Life, \$19.95).

"Be grateful that they may very well have spared you from a painful work experience in a job or company where you would have been miserable," Gallagher says.

Instead, assess your talents and career goals and align them with particular jobs, Gallagher says. At the very least, make a list of things you liked and did not like about previous jobs and take those into consideration when focusing your job search.

Get feedback

It may be awkward to ask a recruiter to give feedback on why you weren't hired, but hearing comments and criticisms will give you insight into how you're perceived by employers, says Monique A. Dearth, president of the Incite Strategies, an Atlanta-based human resource consulting firm.

"This can be very uncomfortable for certain hiring managers and recruiters, but I find if approached in the right manner that people will generally give one or two good nuggets that can help with future interview," Dearth says.

Keep in contact

You may have narrowly missed landing a job, so staying in contact with a hiring manager or recruiter could give you an edge when the next opening surfaces.

Occasionally checking in with a company not only could give you a chance to learn about job openings that haven't been made public, but it will also remind the employer that you're interested and keep you on their radar screen, says Lindsey Olson, founder of recruiting agency Paradigm Staffing.

"Today's rejection can be tomorrow's offer letter," Olson says. "If you keep the lines of communication open and handle the rejection professionally, another need within the company may arise in the near future and your candidacy remains intact."

Build a support network

Dealing with continual job rejection may make you want to crawl into a shell and isolate yourself, but withdrawing won't do much good.

Instead, find ways to boost your self esteem through a supportive network of friends, family or career advisers, says Donna Flagg, president of The Krysalis Group, a human resource and management consulting firm in New York.

"If an individual starts to obsess or beat up on themselves, it starts a slippery slope of self doubt, which will surface at future interviews and increasingly hurt the chances of being hired," Flagg says.



Also, avoid venting about your job search frustration to people who may have influence over your future career.

"Vent your frustration or other feelings to a supportive friend or partner, not a professional contact," Rapacki says. "Even though a potential employer or contact may appear to empathize with you, they may also doubt your professionalism and maturity if you bring up your feelings or react emotionally to a decision."