

# From Interview to Promotion: Handling rejection throughout your career

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Everyone will experience rejection at some point in their career, whether it's for a job application, a promotion, or even within a project. Part of learning to grow and develop your skills as you progress is understanding that valuable lessons can be found, even when things don't seem to work out.

As I've progressed through my career, I've had to both give and take rejection, so I hope I am well-positioned to suggest a few ideas on how to approach it and grow from it. From job applications to promotions, we'll cover my top suggestions on how to handle rejection and how to move forward.

## **Job Applications**

The job search process always provides a challenge, no matter your level of seniority. This is likely the most common place within the professional world where we experience rejection. The best approach to ensure every rejection further strengthens your application and your interview technique for next time is to reflect, take any feedback on board and ensure you can move forward with confidence.

## **Feedback**

You should always get feedback from your recruiter on the progress of your job application, and the same is true for when your application is unsuccessful. Ensure that if feedback isn't forthcoming, you request it! Gaining feedback on your CV and any interviews you attend will put you in a better position for your next application.

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Recruiters view a wide range of CVs every day, and statistics suggest a hiring manager makes a decision on your CV in just 6-8 seconds, so you need to make sure that yours stands out for all of the right reasons. Some of the most common reasons that CVs are rejected are:

- Spelling and grammar
- Presentation and formatting
- Incorrect or lack of contact details
- Missing or misleading work experience information

Once you've been selected for an interview, make sure you avoid the following common errors:

- Lack of preparation and understanding of the role
- Speaking negatively of your current employer
- Poor communication skills
- Not showing enthusiasm or interest in the prospective company or job

Whether or not you've received feedback on your application or interview, taking the time to reflect on why you may have been rejected is vital to moving forward and being successful next time.

### **Reflection**

Hindsight is a wonderful thing. Before applying to another role, you'll gain a lot of information from reflecting on your previous experience. What was missing? What did you do well? How can you

improve? Not only is this the perfect time to reflect on your own performance, but also consider why that job may not have been right for you. Particularly in the case of interviews, as you should use an interview to assess whether that job and company is a good fit for you, as much as they are deciding if you're right for the job. It's a two-way street!

There are a number of things to look over at this stage, both to remind yourself what exactly you're looking for, and where you can develop different aspects of your application and interview preparation. Revisit your CV, cover letter, LinkedIn profile and interview notes.

According to Top Resume, 54% of employers reject candidates based on their social media profiles (Top Resume, 2022).

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Make sure all of your information is up-to-date and thoroughly showcases your expertise and achievements on your social media profiles, CV, and cover letter. Ensure you also check for inconsistencies between them!

The most common piece of feedback we receive for candidates not making it to the next stage of an interview process is a lack of understanding of the role, so next time you find a job advert that you're interested in, dedicate time to research about both the role and the company.

At the same time, make sure the role is the right fit for your experience and your career goals. There are so many jobs out there and it's easy to follow a 'one-click apply' approach on many of the most popular job boards, but using a recruiter will ensure you can tailor your search. Recruiters should take the time to understand your requirements, and have a detailed knowledge of the market to ensure you have the best chance of landing your next job application.

### **Take Action**

Now is the time to put it all into practice! Once you feel well prepared to take on the next interview, contact your local recruiter to get your CV in front of businesses in your area.

This section may be called Take Action, but part of this process should be pausing between applications. Dealing with rejection can be difficult and it's always worth taking the time to check in with yourself throughout the process. Once you're back to job searching, remember to continue to ask for feedback and taking time to reflect as you go.

### **Promotions**

Arguably the second most common experience of rejection within your career is when you're

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seeking a promotion. It can be intimidating to put yourself out there and approach your manager to ask for a step up, especially if your efforts are unsuccessful.

Just as when you're job searching, handling rejection for a promotion doesn't need to be a negative experience. My advice to set you up for success when you decide to take that next step is:

- **Plan for your immediate reaction**

It should go without saying but thanking your manager and congratulating your colleague who was successful is always important. Another common immediate reaction is to consider leaving your current employer. My advice is always to sleep on it! It can take up to two years to receive your first promotion and any kind of knee-jerk reaction when your livelihood is involved can be something you may regret.

- **Take note of what you've done well**

Give yourself credit for your achievements so far. Not achieving a promotion this time doesn't mean you're not capable of doing so in the future. Make a mental note of what went well throughout the

process and where you are within the pathway that you want to create for your career.

- **Ask for feedback**

Speak to your manager about why you weren't chosen for a promotion this time around. Maybe it was experience or something more specific, but it's always something you can work on for next time.

- **Learn something new**

Whether it's directly linked to the feedback you received, or a skill you've always wanted to acquire. Look at courses you can attend, or workshops your company offers, which will further strengthen your next application and will show you're dedicated to improving your own knowledge. Often after you've expressed interest in change, your employer will be happy to offer some kind of concession if they can't facilitate a promotion.

- **Plan ahead**

Lastly, create a plan of what you'll do from here. It's really important to always have an idea of what you're working towards and how you plan to get there. It is a natural time to appraise your situation, and even if you conclude you're currently in the right place, this will help you stay positive about your future career journey.

The key point I would emphasise about handling rejection in any situation is that it can always be turned into something positive. Experiencing rejection is never easy, but if you utilise it to further your knowledge, both about yourself and where you want to go next within your career, it will set you up to achieve your career goals.



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#### **About the Author**

*Ani Pannell is the Country Director for Oliver James Switzerland, an international recruitment agency with 14 offices around the world. Ani has over 9 years recruitment experience and has worked in a variety of industries, supporting people all over the world with their careers.*

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