

# How Self-Serving Thinking Makes You a Career Loser

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Frequent job changes because every boss is a jerk? Constant rejections after interviews because everyone else is incompetent?

## Key Points:

- Many people fall victim to their own self-serving thinking, which leads to application and career failures.
- Recognize this dangerous thought filter in yourself.
- Self-serving thinking is particularly harmful in the job market, causing you to repeatedly make the same mistakes without realizing it.

## Meet "Daniel", the Eternal Career Loser

Say hello to "Daniel." He's currently job hunting and knee-deep in the application process.

After yet another interview, Daniel receives another rejection. It's becoming a pattern. A bit of reflection leads him to conclude that he's been treated unfairly.

Daniel thinks: "They can't get anything right with their amateurish processes." "The HR person was completely incompetent." "They'll fall for a fraud who sells himself better than I do."

The interviewers must have been too clueless to recognize Daniel's true potential. He's convinced: Daniel always gets rejected just before the finish line. And when he does land a job, he leaves it within a year.



The reason is obvious - his bosses are always idiots and, of course, narcissists. Daniel can't help it if his true value is never recognized. Clearly, the problem is always someone else's.

### **A Vicious Cycle**

Interestingly, this kind of thinking follows people like Daniel throughout their lives. They spin in circles, trapped in a pattern that endlessly repeats itself.

Even in their personal lives, more and more people distance themselves from them. It's a vicious cycle.

We all have phases and areas in our lives where we're blind to our own shortcomings. After all, the truth can be painful.

It's easier to pat our own bruised egos and indulge in self-serving thinking.

A rejection or refusal always stings a bit, even if we'd never admit it. But self-serving thinking is dangerous, and it's crucial to recognize it early in ourselves.

### **Competitive Thinking - Be an Athlete!**

Facing self-esteem threats like an athlete can be liberating. The opposite of self-serving thinking is "competitive" thinking.

The job application process is a great example of how competitive thinking can be beneficial. What does competition mean in this context?

Simple: When you step onto the field, you have to want to win. When you enter the "applicant game," you need to want to win.

Specifically: You want that job offer. That's your one and only goal (whether you ultimately accept it or not is up to you).

### **Adopt a Learning Attitude**

If you view the "applicant game" as a competition, adopt a learning mindset. Like an athlete working toward victory, analyze your setbacks.



“What can I do better next time? What can I improve?”

Welcome to the playing field of life! Where not everyone gets a medal.

It's not the interviewer's job to intuitively grasp your strengths. It's your responsibility to communicate them effectively.

So, let's be application and career athletes! How can you present your strengths more authentically and impactfully?

And not: “The only thing that matters is networking and brown-nosing!” That's the self-serving thinking of job career losers.

These individuals are often resistant to criticism, self-righteous, lacking in diplomatic skills, and see themselves as the center of the universe.

### **Get Rid of Your Mental Filters!**

Self-serving thinking is a dangerous thought filter. It distorts our perception of reality, just to spare us too much pain.

We create our own little “safe space” in our minds and end up deceiving ourselves.

It's easier to believe that someone else got the promotion because the boss likes them more, rather than admitting they might simply be doing a better job.

We all carry our own mental filters with us. I wish you courage for self-reflection and, of course, much success on the playing field of life!

### **About the Author**

*Lucas Zehnder has been placing and coaching professionals and executives at all levels since 2012, gaining insight into the job market's inner workings. He studied social psychology in Zurich (MSc University of Zurich, 2011) and has been a Senior Consultant since August 2020 and a Partner since February 2024 at Rockstar Recruiting, a DeepTech recruiting agency in Switzerland.*

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