

Rejection letters: 17 better ways to handle it

Author: Lindah Mavengere . September 2020

The job-hunting process can be one of the most anxiety-inducing times in one's life. The expectation is always for a positive outcome, however, you may get turned down instead. This may be in the form of a *rejection letter*. According to Brice & Waung (1995), a *rejection letter* informs employees that they have not been chosen for a job. *Rejection letters* give them this information formally and respectfully so that they can continue their job search. They are also known as employment *rejection letters* or candidate *rejection letters*. This article will highlight the best ways of dealing with a *rejection letter*, should you find yourself receiving one, and turning it into a positive situation.

1. Ask for detailed feedback

The key thing to do after receiving a *rejection letter* is to think about what happened, and how you can learn from it. Asking for, and listening to feedback is the most valuable thing you can do once you fail to land a job (Baker et. al., 2006). Start by gathering all the feedback you can from the recruiter – and through them, the employer. If the feedback feels a bit unclear to you, don't be afraid to ask for a more detailed assessment. This feedback will be useful in helping you prepare for your next challenge.

1. Don't take it personally

The most common response to a *rejection letter* is to take it as a personal attack on one's capabilities. In the competitive world that is the employment industry, employers need to make a decision based on the candidate they believe is best suited for the role (Baker et. al., 2006). That being said, it is highly likely that another candidate's experience or personality resonated more strongly with the hiring manager, resulting in them getting the job. As an individual, your next step is to focus on bettering yourself to get that next job.

1. Use the rejection as a learning opportunity

Rejection can be frustrating, especially if you are not sure why you were turned down. It may be in your best interest to inquire with the hiring manager as to why you did not get the job. Not all hiring managers will provide this but a simple phone call or email can potentially give you a clearer idea of why you didn't receive a job offer (Baker et. al., 2006). If it turns out there are gaps in your skillset, consider enrolling in a course. It could give you a real advantage when you apply for other roles.

1. Build a personal development plan

Through continuously asking for feedback after receiving a *rejection letter*, you may be able to point out any outstanding shortcomings you may have. Make a note of any weaknesses or issues that you can do something about, and use them as a focus for the way you approach your preparation next time (Jablin &

Krone, 1984). Turn these shortcomings into a development plan. Depending on the issue, there may be some training or informal coaching you can undertake to help you develop.

1. Focus on your strengths

It is important to always remember that as an individual, you are bringing your unique skill-set to the table. Focusing on your strengths can be a confidence booster especially after receiving a *rejection letter*. You will be able to channel these skills into finding a job that is more suitable for you. The *rejection letter* may therefore come in handy in making you aware of areas you may not be particularly strong.

1. Make a list of key contributions you've made to previous workplaces

Taking note of your achievements in a previous role may work as a confidence booster especially after being rejected. It will also come in handy in the next interview you attend as you will be able to demonstrate to your prospective employer how you will be a valuable asset, and in turn, help you to get the job.

1. Self-Introspect

Consider how you present yourself to others. Take this opportunity to go over your cover letter and resume for areas that could be improved. Think about how you answered key interview questions, and whether you highlighted your experience in the most favorable light. This will help you in identifying any areas you may be lacking and improve yourself for the better. (Baker et. al., 2006)

1. Stay positive

Remaining positive is an important part of dealing with a *rejection letter*. Maintain a strong outlook by treating rejection as a learning opportunity. Focus on the next step, which is picking yourself up and preparing for the next opportunity that may come your way.

1. Keep the job search active

It can be tempting to put your job search on hold after receiving a *rejection letter* as it might be demotivating, but it is important to keep your job search in motion until you have found a job. Continue to stay in touch with your network of professional contacts and maintain contact with your recruitment professionals. This hands-on approach nurtures your confidence, and also helps to prevent you depending solely on a role that doesn't land in your lap.

1. Remember that rejection is part of the process

It is a fact that you will not get every job you apply for. You need to bear this in mind and accept it as the reality of life. This will help you in accepting that a *rejection letter* does not mean that you are not worthy of employment, but rather that you are not suitable for the job in question. Remain positive and

intensify the job search, you will find that opportunity that is suitable for you.

1. Build resilience and confidence in yourself

Developing a mindset of resilience is essential for long-term success, especially after receiving a *rejection letter*. You must be able to see this setback as a challenge to grow both your confidence and your ability to bounce back and deal with disappointment. Overcoming obstacles on your career path will increase your chances of landing the right role, so make a point of staying constructive, and do all you can to learn from the experience to help you get ready for the next opportunity.

1. Refine your job search (Wilding, 2020)

Sometimes, a *rejection letter* can be a blessing in disguise. Not getting a particular job can make you realize that, although it's disappointing to be rejected, the role was not the right one for you. If there were aspects of the role that didn't quite suit you, the interviewer may have picked up on this as well. Use this experience to help you in your future searches, as you will be able to look at the job as a whole and identify any areas that may not be suitable for you.

1. Ask your interviewer to keep you in mind for future positions

A *rejection letter* is not the end of the world. Sometimes, when a new manager comes in and needs to hire, companies keep a record of former applicants they liked so they can fill open positions. Other times, companies will reject applicants for a full-time position, but offer them contractual work. By indicating interest in the company even after being rejected could lead to a job down the line (Taylor, 2009).

1. Focus Back On Your Goals

Getting that job may probably be one of the goals an individual has in life. Getting a rejection may momentarily make you lose sight of your goals, but you have to look at the bigger picture. Ask yourself what your long term goals and focus on them. By doing so, you will be able to forget about the rejection and focus on ways to ensure that you successfully meet your goals.

1. Recognize This Wasn't Your Only Chance

Opportunities, especially in today's competitive world, can feel like they only come once in a while, and once you receive a rejection for a job you would have applied for, you may feel discouraged. This however is not true, as opportunities will always be there, as long as you look at the right places. In this regard, you have to intensify your search for more opportunities. Being rejected by one organization does not mean you're not good enough, it just means that particular job was not for you.

1. Remember what you did right, do not only focus on the negative

While you could beat yourself up, for not getting the job, you may not have done as badly as you think.

Job search rejection should not cause you to despair and start thinking that you're not as qualified for the position as you thought. Review the interview, figure out where things did not go as well as you would have liked, and reflect on what went right. If you only focus on the negative, you won't be able to see the positives, too. Instead of blaming yourself for the failure, applaud yourself for landing an interview with a great company, and know that if you were able to do it once, you'll surely be able to do it again.

1. Remind Yourself of the Odds

Depending on the industry and job, there might be hundreds of people competing for that same job opening. Always remember that you are not the only candidate with the right education and skill set and that the company may have already been conducting interviews by the time they received your application (Baker et. al., 2006). This perspective can have a positive impact on your mindset as you continue to job search, as you are aware that you missed out on the job because of other factors rather than you not being qualified for the job.

References

Brice, Thomas S., and Marie Waung. *"Applicant rejection letters: are businesses sending the wrong message?"* Business Horizons, vol. 38, no. 2, Mar.-Apr. 1995, p. 59+

Baker et.al., *"Improving Applicants' Reactions To Rejection letters: An Application Of Fairness Theory"* Wiley; Volume 54, Issue 3 December 2006

Taylor, Lynn., *"Tame Your Terrible Office Tyrant: How to Manage Childish Boss Behavior and Thrive in Your Job"* Wiley; 1st Edition (July 20, 2009)

Fredric M. Jablin, Kathleen Krone, *"Characteristics of Rejection Letters and their Effects on Job Applicants"* Volume: 1 issue: 4, page(s): 387-406 Issue published: October 1, 1984

Lindah Mavengere is a Business Consultant at Industrial Psychology Consultants (Pvt) Ltd, a business management and human resources consulting firm.

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/lindah-mavengere-552b32b2/>

Phone: +263 242 481946-48/481950

Mobile: +263 717 988 319

Email: lindah@ipccconsultants.com

Main Website: www.ipccconsultants.com

