

SUCCESS GUIDE



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DON'T GET DEJECTED WHEN YOU'RE REJECTED: How to Come Out a Winner When You Lose

By JoAnn R. Hines

Rejection. All of us have experienced it at some point in our lives. It never feels good. Call it what you want, but accept the fact that ultimately you lost. You were not selected for the job or the promotion you wanted. You didn't get the contract or the speaking engagement you were counting on. Got any rocks lying around that you can crawl under?

Stop! Before you go there, think about how you can turn this most negative of experiences into something positive. For instance, I recently was courted to speak at a conference. I jumped through all the proverbial hoops and was excited about the opportunity. Then, guess what happened? I was uninvited. Yes, my ego was dented. After all, they wanted me. They courted me. Something queered the deal. Was it that

they didn't want to pay my fee? I guess I won't know. I spent about five minutes feeling sorry for myself and trying to determine the perfect plot to get "even." Then I got over it. This wasn't the first time I had been uninvited to speak or rejected in some other fashion. What I've learned is that you can turn the situation to your advantage. In this case, I decided to write about the experience. I realized that my advice could be helpful to others, because we all face rejection at some point.

I love the proverb that says, 'When one door closes, another will open.'

What Should You Do If It Happens to You?

First, don't mope. You can feel sorry for yourself and plot for exactly five minutes. After that, get over it! The rejection probably has nothing to do with you; the reason is something so obscure that it's not worth the effort to try and figure it out. Keep in mind that it could be a result of budget issues.

Let's say you're dealing with rejection when it comes in the form of a big fat "no" to your sales pitch. Before you become disillusioned when door after door is closed, consider the law of averages for a sale. The average sales person completes 20 calls to make one sale. Yikes! That's 20 appointments. Did you know that it takes a minimum of seven repetitions of a message before someone assimilates that piece of information? Moral: don't give up.



Photo by EyeWire

OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF BABES

'They want women to think like June Cleaver, look like Miss America and—in a nod to modernity—have sex like Madonna. Hello, Stepford.'

—Author Jennifer L. Pozner, critiquing un-real reality-TV shows such as *The Bachelor*, *Married by America*, and *Joe Millionaire*.

CARDS THAT SAY 'REMEMBER ME'

Put your creative hat on when it comes to staying in touch with those who have rejected you once, and improve your chances for getting a better reception next time. After Thanksgiving, I found some honeycomb turkey place cards at 50 percent off. At the time, I couldn't imagine what I was going to do with them. But I bought them anyway. Then it came to me. There are quite a few people I have lost touch with during my recent move. I've got it! I'll send the cards with a note that says, "I am a turkey for not staying in touch." When they arrive in their bright orange envelopes, I know the recipients will get a laugh and remember me next time they need a consultant or speaker.

Second, see rejection as an opportunity. If it didn't work out this time, maybe it will the next time. Many times, when we are rejected, we feel angry because we've invested a lot of time and emotional energy (especially if you have done a lot of preparatory work, as I had in this circumstance). Use that energy and emotion to your advantage. Are there different opportunities that you can leverage, or other programs where you might be a better fit?

In my case, the advance research I did on my topic demonstrated to me that there could be dozens of other conferences that would be interested in hearing me speak. I love the proverb that says, "When one door closes, another will open." It did for me, and it will for you.

Third, try to establish a bond with the person who has rejected you. If this won't work now, is there another time or place that we can work together? Can she refer you somewhere else? Will she tell you the real reason you didn't make the cut?

Finally, be prepared to laugh about the rejection. Turn it into a funny personal sound bite. It's not the end of the world. If this was your first or only rejection, you must be really special. Send the person who rejected you a funny card—something that will make her feel good about rejecting you (just kidding). But do send something that will lighten the moment and make her remember you. Rejection, after all, is uncomfortable for

everyone involved—even the rejecter. It's important for the person who rejected you to be left with a good feeling about you, so that she will call you the next time she needs someone with your expertise.

When You Hear 'No Thanks' After a Job Interview

There is probably no worse ego-crushing rejection (skip the ones in your love life) than the one associated with the job search. How many resumes do you have to send out to get one call back? Consider this before you get depressed about a string of rejections: It takes, on average, six months to get a new job. Add to that the rule of thumb that for every \$10,000 of salary, you can add one month to the job search. So prepare to be turned down most of the time. Always remember, however, that rejection can open a door, too. Just because they say no now, doesn't mean they mean no forever.

Here are a couple of ways to nudge that door open a little wider next time.

Make sure to follow up. I don't just mean after the interview. Do so also after you hear you weren't selected for the position. My favorite technique is sending a clever card. I've created a series of cards for just that purpose. My personal favorite is one that says, "I think I bombed the interview," and it has a big bomb on the cover.

Continue to keep in touch. The person that did get the job may decline it. Continue

to send relevant articles, news clippings about your success, or about upcoming industry conferences, (especially if you are speaking), along with a short note. If something significant happens to you, such as an award or promotion, make sure to write a press release and send a copy to all your job contacts.

A word of caution: don't go overboard. Your goal is to soft-sell yourself, not bombard the company with information.

Don't Take It Personally

To help you get over the emotional distress:

Share your story with others. You are not the only one who has had a "rejection" experience. The more you can talk about it the better you will feel. It can become a funny story or icebreaker when you are with associates. Better yet, find someone whose opinion you value and relate the experience to her (don't sugarcoat it). Ask her to critique what went wrong (if something did) or make

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suggestions on how to handle the situation next time.

Work out alternative rejection scenarios in your head.

The more you become comfortable with rejection the less likely it will be to take you by surprise again.

Put yourself in the rejecter's shoes. Was there something that caused the situation to occur, or was it just happenstance? Above all, don't take it personally. It's a business decision that didn't turn out in your favor.

Last, but not least, get back on that horse! Seek out a better job or a better promotion. There is always another opportunity waiting in the wings. The biggest loser is someone who can't get over rejection.

JoAnn R. Hines' career advice is recognized in many circles. She has been invited to the White House to speak, has led a trade delegation to China, and has served as the online packaging expert for the Small Business Administration. For more career guidance, or to purchase her latest book, "Packaging Yourself," visit www.packagingcoach.com.

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