

No promotion? Feel like quitting? Relax

Didn't land the job? Didn't get that promotion? Yes, your ego is bruised, but try not to take the rejection too personally. After all, when 250 candidates are going after one job, 249 people are going to get snubbed. There are ways to bounce back – and maybe even find another job with the employer – even after hearing the dreaded, “We’ve decided to go with someone else ...”

ASK WHY NOT?

If you made it to the third round of interviews, make a follow-up call or schedule an appointment and ask why you were passed over, says Dr. Beverly Kaye, co-author of *Love It, Don't Leave It: 26 ways to get what you want at work*.

“We owe it to candidates to make every interview a growing experience. Not just something we check off a list,” she says.

Don't call when you're upset. Calm down and arrange a time with the hiring manager so you're not putting him on the spot – a guaranteed way to get a half-baked, vague answer. Once you've got his ear, however, have some questions ready, don't argue and thank him for his time.

It doesn't hurt to ask for a referral while the iron is hot too, says Craig Lund, account director with Aquent LLC, a marketing and creative staffing firm with an office in Toronto. Maybe the employer knows a colleague who might hire you.

“They're already feeling a little guilty because they didn't give you a job so they're probably going to want to help you out,” he says.

A CUT ABOVE

Be a gracious loser, even if you feel like tearing your hair out.

Lee E. Miller, author of *UP: Influence Power and the U Perspective – The Art of Getting What You Want*, says he learned an important lesson when a colleague lost out on a promotion at a large retail company. The man had every right to be resentful, but instead, he explained he would do whatever it took to ensure the winning candidate's success. The powers-that-be took notice and the losing candidate has since been promoted numerous times, eventually



Tawnya Sutherland founded The Virtual Assistant Networking Association, after failing to get a promotion. LAURA LEYSHON FOR THE GLOBE AND MAIL

What not to be:

THE INSANITY CASE: Some senior executives rant and rave. What they don't realize is that they're revealing their true colours and are unlikely to get another call.

THE HIGH MAINTENANCE: This rejected candidate wants to analyze – for hours – every detail of why she didn't get the job.

THE ESCALATOR: Some candidates go directly to the company's hiring manager to find out why they didn't get the job, bypassing the executive search firm the company hired. The hiring manager doesn't want to turn down someone directly, that's why she used an executive search firm.

THE REPROACHFUL: Someone who blames everyone and everything for not getting the job.

THE DEPRESSIVE: Sometimes a candidate goes AWOL. One candidate was so depressed he disappeared for three weeks – and missed a terrific opportunity.

» Source: Dora Vell, Vell & Associates Executive Search

landing the position of executive vice-president.

“Show class. It's recognized, appreciated – and rare,” Mr. Miller says.

IT'S NOT YOU, IT'S US

Sometimes the reason candidates don't get the job has nothing to do with skill or personality. That's what Tawnya Sutherland, founder of The Virtual Assistant Networking Association in Surrey, B.C., discovered seven years ago when she went after a promotion at a computer service company and was turned down.

“I couldn't figure out why I didn't get it,” she says now. “They just said I wasn't the perfect fit.”

Two weeks later the company folded. Now, Sutherland is self-employed and says she makes nearly five times the salary she brought in when she worked for the company. Everything happens for a reason, she maintains.

Other employees are rejected internal positions because organizations prefer to hire outside candidates. Promoting someone creates two staffing changes, but hiring an outside

candidate only makes one. If a candidate is effective, employers are even less likely to want to replace them.

“Irreplaceable people are never promoted,” says Donald Asher, author of *Who Gets Promoted, Who Doesn't, and Why: Ten things you'd better do if you want to get ahead*.

How to get around this jam? Ensure there's someone below you who can do your job if you're promoted – make yourself replaceable.

DON'T TAKE NO FOR AN ANSWER

No one wants to be seen as desperate, but Brent Thomson, co-managing partner for Peak Sales Recruiting Inc., in Ottawa found that a lot of gump-tion can turn a no into a yes.

Ten years ago when he was in his mid-20s, Mr. Thomson was turned down for a technology sales job he coveted. Determined to win the prize anyway, he asked if he could come to the office and work for free. The next Monday he showed up – and kept showing up – until another division gave Mr. Thomson a job.

“I think back on it now and

it was kind of an odd thing to do, but to be honest, I'd do it again today,” he says.

LET THEM DOWN EASY

As a hiring manager, what's the best way to give bad news? Mr. Asher has given this “you didn't get the promotion” speech countless times: “As you know, it was a national search. We drew some applicants who were just unbelievable – radioactive – in how strong they were. I argued for you, but I was overruled by the committee decision. I have to tell you that you didn't get selected. It wasn't your skill set, your talent or your abilities. It's just the applicant pool that we faced. I want you to stay in there and slug it out. I'm going to find you a spot that I know matches your ability.”

That wasn't so bad, was it? Share the responsibility, put the decision off on someone else, soften the blow with qualifiers – and always give hope, Mr. Asher says.

“If you don't give hope, you're really just telling them that you want them to quit.”

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THE UPSIDE

Sometimes a no is a no. But sometimes it's a not now.

Razor Suleman, CEO of I Love Rewards Inc., in Toronto

THE DOWNSIDE

Often an employer doesn't provide feedback. Maybe it's a time issue, but more often than not, it's discomfort. They don't want to get the person on the phone and tell them why they didn't get the job.

Craig Lund, account director for Aquent LLC in Toronto