

Turned Down for That Job?

12 Reasons Why Employers Reject Some Applicants

If you are turned down for a job for which you feel adequately (even superbly) qualified in today's brutally-competitive employment market, ask yourself as objectively as you can, "Why?"

Could it be because you have had too many jobs in recent years and, thus, you frighten a potential employer that the cost of hiring you might be too high because you'll soon quit again?

This is the number one reason applicants for executive and technical positions are rejected, according to a survey by National Personnel Associates (NPA), a recruiting network of independent management-level personnel services.



Or could it be because you reveal an apparent reluctance to relocate? Surprisingly, this is the number two reason applicants for jobs are turned down, the NPA survey disclosed.

Or could it be that your personality and the personality of the employer just don't match?

This is the number three reason for turndowns — a reason that those surveyed admitted involves highly-subjective factors.

The survey came up with 12 "most common reasons" why applicants don't get the jobs they are seeking —

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- Turned Down for That Job?
- Qualities an Employer Looks for When Hiring

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- Interviewing
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information you may find of critical value whether you're job-hunting now, or will be job-hunting sometime in the future.



No. 1 — Job-Hopping

"Generally, in a beginning career of five years experience, ideally an employee should have no more than two jobs; in 10 years, no more than three jobs; in 15 years, no more than four jobs," says Charles W. Marks, NPA's executive director.

(Exceptions are such industries as engineering and data processing, where employees should be exposed to continuing change).

"There's a difference between having had too many jobs and too many careers. Too many jobs within one career area is far better than too many careers," adds Dr. Arthur A. Witkin, a psychologist with Personnel Sciences Center of New York.

"There are advantages of a diversified background and disadvantages in staying too long in one job. Some employees claim 20 years of experience but it's only one year of experience repeated 20 times."

No. 2 — Won't Relocate

"It is important for an employee to project willingness to move," observes Alice I. Johnson of Allis-Johnson Personnel in Livonia, Michigan. "Employers are trying harder to accommodate employees who must be relocated, but a dragging of the feet turns a company off."

No. 3 — Wrong Personality

“If it’s clear that the employer feels your personality is wrong for the job, don’t waste your time,” Witkin advises. “In six months, you’ll be looking for another job, citing ‘personality conflict’ as the reason for leaving your old one.”

No. 4 — Unrealistic Salary

If you’re looking for a 20 percent increase in salary, compared with about 10 percent in the past, this is unrealistic. Also, study the non-cash incentives, such as a company car, club membership, and the like.

Don’t fall into the trap of making your salary requirements too high. Just tell the employer he already knows your salary history; what you’re looking for is a reasonable raise and a career opportunity.

No. 5 — Background

If you do not have the background the employer says is needed, try to show that the education and training you do have may have many advantages over the typical background for the position. There are advantages in a fresh point of view.

No. 6 — Employment Record

That’s an area in your work history that you cannot hide. Like your salary history, your employment record cannot be falsified. Do your best to explain and that’s all.

No. 7 — Being Unprepared

You may lose out for being unresponsive, uninterested or unprepared during the initial interview. The opposite problem — being too aggressive during this talk — is less common.

It would be a sound idea to prepare for the interview by practicing answers to questions you’re sure will be raised (previous job changes, willingness to relocate, salary requirements, why you left your last job, why you want this one, etc.).

No. 8 — Wrong Negotiation

This reason is in the same class as Reason No. 7 — being unresponsive or too aggressive.

No. 9 — Little Potential for Growth

Employers sometimes look for growth potential in a candidate when it’s not required for the job. You can ask employers if they need some workers instead of bosses.



You might emphasize that you’re dependable, you work hard, you’re willing to work to the limit of your own potential, and you will still be at the job producing for the company long after other, more ambitious employees have gone on to something else.

No. 10 — Personality Conflicts

These conflicts may show up in subsequent meetings, or in the reference checks made. The key point is that this reason is related to the No. 3 reason for job turn downs — personality judged inappropriate during the initial

meeting. It is an extremely subjective explanation.

No. 11 — Long Unemployment

“For management-level positions, 90 days is considered a long unemployment period,” says Marks. “Point out the productive things you did between jobs,” adds Witkin. “Describe how your travels, studies and free lance work prepared you for the position.”

No. 12 — Ineffective Boss

Perhaps you hate this type of responsibility. If so, waste no time looking for a supervisory job. Move on.

In General

“Avoid arguing about company policy during the first interview,” cautions Marks. “Show decisiveness — ‘May I call you tomorrow? I want to think about it,’ is good. ‘I want to talk to my wife about this’ is not as good.”

Many employers will give a “stress” interview to learn how you handle stress; be prepared for it.

“It’s a rule of good management not to tell the employee why he was rejected,” explains Witkin. “You can ask why, and it will show your interest in the job, but don’t be misled by what you’re told. It may not be the real reason.”

In sum

Ask yourself which of the 12 reasons was the real reason. Learn from your answer what to do to improve your chances.



Department of Workforce Development