

Dealing with Rejection: Job Searching in a Dating Context

Rejection. While this isn't my favorite topic to discuss, I think it's a necessary one. As much as we hope that every effort we make in securing a new position will be positive, it's often not the case. I thought it might be helpful to discuss a few reasons you may be rejected and the best strategy for dealing with that scenario. In order to make it relatable, I'll put it in the context of dating. We've all heard these reasons before, right?

It's not you, it's me. Just because they decide to pass on your candidacy, it doesn't mean that you are the problem. They may realize that their practice doesn't support your interests within your area of law. Or they may not realize just how fantastic of a candidate you are because you have a non-traditional resume/story. Either way, remember that it's not personal!

Timing is everything. You might be the right person, just at the wrong time. I've had firms tell me that they wish the candidate had come through just six months earlier because they would be a perfect fit for the group but they recently hired someone with the same level of experience and now need someone with slightly more/less. I've also had candidates receive offers at firms that rejected them the previous year. Timing really is everything.

Fear of commitment. There are a few firms in every market that are constantly soliciting resumes and interviewing candidates. But when it comes down to making an offer, they can't seem to pull the trigger. These are the hardest situations because I often don't get any good feedback from the firm for my candidate. Recruiters typically know which firms go fishing most often and can give you their insight on them.

There is someone else. This one is a tough pill to swallow, both in the dating and work world. But, at the end of the day, sometimes there is someone else who is just a better fit. It doesn't mean you aren't a great candidate, just that someone else might be better for the particular and present need.

You deserve someone better. This one is probably the most surprising on the list, but it really does happen. If you are coming from a top firm in New York and are interviewing at a ten person firm in suburban Connecticut, they likely are intimidated by your resume. They may think they can't pay enough or hold your interest long enough and actually might pass because they don't think they can live up to your expectations.

As with any break-up, you have to find the best way to deal with the job rejection and use it to your benefit. When a firm decides you aren't the right fit for them, you absolutely cannot get discouraged. It is extremely rare that a candidate doesn't get rejected from a few places before finding a good place to land. Try to take any feedback they give you and improve your resume: sit for a bar exam in that state if you haven't already; gain exposure to a niche area of law within your practice; learn from any interview mistakes you made; bolster your resume in areas they saw as weakness (take more depositions, pump up your deal list, etc.); and above all try to learn from the experience.

As my mom always says about men: you don't have to win them all, it just takes one!