

The Upside of Rejection

Here's how to turn setbacks into stepping stones for success.

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Getting passed over for a development position is an experience that stings. It can leave you questioning your abilities and wondering about your place in the organization. But here is the thing: failure is not just a part of the growth process; it is arguably the most crucial element. If you ask me, I will take a failure with excellent feedback over a success any day when it comes to developing. Successes are encouraging and keep us going, but it is the failures that sharpen our edge, deepen our understanding, and make us better.

I have been passed over multiple times by multiple organizations. With each one, I learn a little bit more. One of the biggest frustrations, though, is the lack of good or honest feedback on why you were not chosen. The comments are typically vague, something like, “We went with a more qualified candidate,” or “You need more leadership experience.” Rarely do you receive constructive feedback that highlights specific areas for improvement.

So, what do you do when you do not get the role for which you were hoping? Here is a roadmap for transforming rejection into an opportunity for personal and professional growth.

Self-Reflection: Character and Competency

Every rejection letter or call is a moment for introspection. I recom-

mend approaching this from two angles: character and competency.

Character

Character traits are the foundation of your leadership style. I remember them with the acronym JJ DID TIE BUCKLE: Judgment, Justice, Decisiveness, Integrity, Dependability, Tact, Initiative, Enthusiasm, Bearing, Unselfishness, Courage, Knowledge, Loyalty, and Endurance (both mental and physical). These traits are not rank ordered, but loyalty should never come before integrity.

As a leader, you need to evaluate how each of these traits manifests in

ing you back.

One way to bolster your competency is by acquiring new certifications or taking on projects that allow you to develop the necessary skills. For instance, I pursued the Certified Professional in Healthcare Quality credential to strengthen my qualifications and improve my chances of being noticed by potential employers.

Maintain Enthusiasm and Positive Intent

Rejection can be disheartening, but maintaining your enthusiasm is crucial. Enthusiasm is not just a leadership trait; it is a mindset that keeps you

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your behavior and decisions. For instance, transformational leaders might excel in initiative and enthusiasm, but they also need to monitor their team's morale to prevent burnout. It is crucial to balance enthusiasm with empathy and unselfishness, ensuring that your drive for extraordinary outcomes does not come at the expense of your team.

Competency

Competency involves the skills and knowledge you need for the position for which you are aiming. After each rejection, take a detailed look at the job responsibilities you are interested in and assess where your strengths and weaknesses lie. For example, if you are aiming for a Chief Medical Officer role, look at your experience with quality management, and identify gaps that might be hold-

open to learning and growth. Whenever you face rejection, remind yourself that it is an opportunity to evaluate and improve. This perspective is essential for reaching your full potential.

It is helpful to approach situations with a mindset of positive intent. When you are passed over, believe that the decision was made with the organization's best interests in mind. You might disagree with the outcome, but trusting in the integrity of the decision-makers can help you stay positive and open to future opportunities.

Decide Whether to Stay or Go

Determining whether to remain with your current organization or look for opportunities elsewhere is a complex decision. It involves weighing factors such as your social environment

Continued on page 58

Rejection (from page 57)

(i.e., friends, family, familiarity) and work-related factors (i.e., purpose, organizational culture, financial stability, quality of leadership).

Statistically, there are more opportunities outside your current organization than within it. If you are considering expanding your horizons, remember that your chances of finding a suitable position increase as you widen your geographic search.

For example, I recently made a significant transition from a beloved organization to one in a different state. I evaluated the risks and benefits, considering everything from family impact to career development potential. Ultimately, the decision came down to two key factors: purpose in my work and the ability to advance.

Purpose and Growth: The Driving Forces

When you find yourself in a com-

fortable position, it might be a sign that it is time to grow. A mentor once told me that if you are comfortable and everything seems to be running smoothly, you might have become complacent. Growth often requires stepping into the unknown and challenging yourself in new ways.

If you are not receiving meaningful feedback from your current organization, take the initiative to identify your development needs and seek out opportunities to address them, whether within or outside of your current workplace. This proactive approach demonstrates resilience and a commitment to personal growth.

Crafting Your Success Story

In the end, my journey led me to a new role as a chief medical officer after five years as a service line medical director. The path was not without its challenges and rejections, but each setback was an opportunity to learn and grow.

Success, then, is not about avoiding failure. It is about embracing it as a teacher, using it to refine your character and enhance your competencies. With each rejection, you become better prepared for the opportunities that lie ahead, turning what feels like a setback into a springboard for success.

In your own journey, remember that every “no” is a stepping stone to your next “yes.” Stay committed to your growth, keep your enthusiasm alive, and use each experience to become a more resilient, capable leader. **PM**



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