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“Reasons Why People Don't Get the Job” By Sean Duffy

Jinfo Newsletter

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'Although men are accused of not knowing their own weakness, yet perhaps few know their own strength. It is in men as in soils, where sometimes there is a vein of gold which the owner knows not of.' - Jonathan Swift

If you applied for a job and weren't successful in getting an interview, it doesn't mean you're not a good candidate. It is likely that other candidates simply better matched the requirements of the employer, had more relevant skills or experience to offer, or were in some way more suited to the post.

Don't be disheartened! Perhaps you were ambitious in applying for the role -- there's nothing wrong that -- but you should of course be prepared for competition from other candidates. The more ambitious your applications, the less likely you are to be offered an interview. And, whilst it is worth being ambitious, the most effective, well-presented CV and application in the world can still fall short compared to those from applicants who have more relevant skills to offer.

If you have spent time applying for lots of jobs and are persistently unsuccessful, you may need to look at the way you are selecting and applying for jobs in the first place. Do you have an informed view of the job market? Are you aware of the kind of salary you can command?

It is important to make sure that you're setting your sights on opportunities that are realistically within your grasp, and you can ensure this by looking carefully at job specifications to try to understand the criteria by which the employer will be selecting applicants. Employers advertise to attract candidates with at least the minimum level of skills required for the role. If you don't meet most of these minimum criteria, it is unlikely that you will be offered an interview.

On top of these minimum criteria, there are often 'desirables' -- skills or experience an employer would like to see, but which aren't required for a position -- which will also affect your chances of success.

Naturally, candidates tend to apply for jobs based on what they feel they would get out of it (hence them applying in the first place). However, they would also do well to consider what the employer will get out of it. Candidates who say: 'I realise you want legal experience, which I don't have, but I do feel that I would fit in well to this environment.' or: 'I realise business online sources are essential, but I'm a quick learner and very willing to be trained,' are unlikely to be offered an interview.

The point is that the employer may not always want to have to train someone, and is trying to attract candidates who don't need this training. If they ask for someone with legal experience, they want someone with legal experience.

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Questioning the validity of their job criteria is not likely to commend you to employers.

You could also be rejected for having skills and experience over and above the job requirements, particularly if it's a permanent job. Generally employers are not looking for candidates who are prepared to take a drop in salary and responsibilities because they are desperate for work. They would much prefer candidates for whom the job would be a positive career move, and who will be able to grow with their organisation.

So, it is up to you to search for opportunities that demand your skills, and to highlight these effectively in your applications. Selling your skills involves assessing them in the first place -- considering what skills you have built up and where you applied them. Your achievements in previous roles will also help prove your abilities. The final step towards a successful application is to match these skills and achievements to the job specification and explain clearly why you are applying for the job.

Understanding what you have to offer (your professional worth) is the first step towards selling yourself well. So, how to go about assessing your skills? Well, a good starting point is to consider your previous roles and make a list of skills you used or acquired. As well as identifying them, you should also be able to back them up, give examples of where you used them, and list relevant achievements.

Through this exercise, you will hopefully start to think much more clearly about how you contributed to your previous roles, what value you brought to the organisation, what you achieved, what you introduced, what you developed, what you would have done differently, what you enjoyed doing and what you didn't. Taking the time to do this will give you a much clearer impression of your own worth, and can be both confidence-boosting and revealing. It may also be useful as a way of identifying what future prospects you'd like to aim for. Most importantly, it improves your ability to select and apply for jobs, thus increasing your chances of success.

The most successful people are those who know themselves well and can move in the direction of their best talents. They know the kind of culture they thrive in and how they can benefit from that culture. To know yourself is to unleash your potential.

About the Author

Until recently Sean Duffy was on of the team of consultants at Sue Hill Recruitment. He recently took unpaid leave to do a 3-month temporary contract at the BBC Proms, indulging his life-long passion for classical music, and has just joined the BBC full-time in a PR role. Whilst at Sue Hill Recruitment he gave several presentations to library and information groups on all aspects of job seeking and has written several informative articles, all of which have been published by the LIS press.



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