

Turning Rejection Into Opportunity

How coping from internship rejection has inspired me to work even harder to get to where I want to be.

Regardless of what stage you may be throughout your career – just starting out, getting additional experience, working as a freelancer or wanting to move somewhere new – rejection is always disheartening. No one wants to go through it. In my personal experience, where I'm currently in my final year at university and leading up to my upcoming graduation, I have been more focused and devoted to finding new opportunities than ever, to step foot into the working world. Unfortunately, it isn't as easy as I had once naively anticipated it was going to be. That doesn't mean I can't create my own opportunities from it.

Growing up I knew I always wanted to go to university because I thought it would help me achieve the best, idealised version of myself – both academically and personally. So growing up I've always had this idea that I would go to university, graduate, and with my hard-earned degree everyone would be eager to employ me. Yet it's clearly come to my attention that this isn't the reality of what the working world entails, and rejection has essentially become a part of the experience altogether. Frankly, it's something we all inevitably go through. But it doesn't have to be a negative experience, it should do just the opposite.

Firstly, the essential point is to always remember that these rejections aren't a poor reflection on you as a person or as an employee, otherwise you'll end up in the wrong mindset. Quite simply, this is a reflection of the current competitive job market, especially as we are all struggling to get through this pandemic. The market was already competitive for students and graduates, there's always someone with more experience to offer. On top of this, we now have to navigate this everchanging domain while living through a time where there is so much added uncertainty in the world. In a world that is looking so bleak, more than ever we need to stay optimistic.

That is why it is so important to keep a positive mindset during this time. At every dead end, I find myself more inspired and more determined than I was before, because I know I will get there. I believe it's all part of the process.

Admittedly, I didn't always think like this. During the first lockdown, looking for ways to spend the time is when I started to really consider where I wanted to be in life, and looked for ways to further my career. I restarted my blog properly, worked harder at perfecting my writing style and was constantly on the look-out for new job prospects. And regrettably, I found myself getting tired and hopeless, it didn't seem to be going anywhere, and I just kept thinking – what's the point? I felt jealous at seeing other people succeed because I wanted it to be me, and so I knew I needed to get out of that negative headspace. Getting stuck in a slump was not going to get me anywhere. I knew I had to turn a new page in this job search story (cheesy metaphor – I know), and work on turning these rejections into new opportunities.

I've spent countless hours scrolling through job searches, potential internships and pitches, amending my CV and reflecting on how to better advertise myself to potential employees. If faced with rejection, as simple as it may be, I have found that asking for feedback can be one of the best things to do to improve your chance next time – you should always ask questions. With this new information, you can edit your CV, and look for ways to gain experience in the places that you may be lacking it. Make an impression and they could keep you in mind for next time.

I think that one stand out thing for me during this entire process, is about working on who I want to be as a journalist – and working on finding your niche is important in any industry too, not just journalism. It's about focusing and developing your voice and ambitions, and then focusing on what to aim towards next.

On one hand, it's important to not let yourself get trapped in one area, as it is so easy to, but developing a niche can work towards your advantage. On the other hand, if you increase your horizons, you increase your opportunities and make new contacts at the same time, constantly expanding and creating new ventures. Networking is an essential skill to have, and an indispensable part of developing your career.

So, my personal advice following rejection can be broken down to just two key points: always keep a positive mindset, and always be on the look-out. Positivity is key, and although this may be overly cheesy I will always think that it's the best attitude to have, especially in a situation that can lead to the opposite. As for keeping on the look-out, it's the little things that help to build experience. Don't compare yourself to others, just because their career started at 20 doesn't mean yours can't start at 35. Focus on you and where you want to be. Sign up for career advice and listings, take advantage of every prospect, keep networking and turn those rejections into opportunities.

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