

COMPANIES HIRING ON SHINE



Feedback after the interview

VALUABLE INPUTS Should candidates rejected by organisations need to be told where they went wrong?

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Wondering why you did not get that elusive offer letter from the company that called you for a written test and rounds of interviews? You are not the only one. Most applicants feel this way because none of the companies take the trouble to inform them why they were not selected for the position. Often this makes candidates wonder why they have been rejected despite possessing the necessary qualifications and experience.

HR experts are all for informing applicants why they were not selected for the job, as long as it is done tactfully. Rajesh Tripathi, vice-president, Gujarat Heavy Chemicals Ltd, says that there is no reason why a company cannot adopt an HR policy that lays down that candidates invited for an interview should be told why they were not selected for the job on offer.

"The policy should be framed in such a manner that the modes of communication are soft and well-balanced. The decision should be based upon some proven assessment tools and not on whims and fancies of the recruiter. Any feedback which is not substantiated by a formal assessment tool should be avoided. Intention and motive should be one and should be directed at helping candidates get positive feedback for his/her development."

Seema Bangia, head, HR, Mahindra Defence Systems, says that a candidate is generally rejected for two reasons - fitment reasons such as performance during interview, personality, salary expectations, etc



» The policy to inform job applicants about their rejection should be framed in such a manner that the modes of communication are soft and well-balanced

RAJESH TRIPATHI, vice-president, Gujarat Heavy Chemicals Ltd

and due to change in strategy, plan, etc.

"It is easy to communicate option B to a candidate but as far as option A is concerned, not many organisations explicitly state facts. This may be because they do not wish to project an image that they are biased or racist. In any situation, organisations can adopt a policy where they send a 'rejection' note that clearly explains why a candidate was not selected. In one of the organisations I had worked, I used to send such letters but they were not so detailed," she says.

Many international and developmental organisations have a policy under which they send out such rejection letters but there are several challenges in implementing such a policy. "Such a policy can certainly make the hiring process more transparent and benefit applicants but given the way hiring works today (it is like a lottery

and is based mostly on the gut feel or intuition of the hiring manager and less on data and assessment mechanisms) it is difficult to implement it as an HR policy in any company. Some organisations do use assessment tools but still don't share outputs as there is a lack of precedence in doing so," says Kuldeep Singh, a senior HR professional in Bengaluru.

According to Sanjay Vats, GM, HR, Insecticides India Ltd, "The biggest risk behind sharing a rejection feedback is that it gives a negative impression about the company and the HR person to the candidate. Many candidates can get offended and accuse the company for having such a process. This can impact the bottomline of the company."

Some experts like Bangia feel that too much transparency can also lead to rigidity. "For example, if today due to whatever reasons, an organisation rejects a candidate and later if the same decision has to be revoked, it can prove to be a challenge," she says.

"The complete hiring process from the job description onwards needs to be quantified and documented in detail. Behavioural and managerial skills need to be assessed by certified professionals as the feedback, especially when perceived as negative, may be challenged by candidates. Care should be taken to communicate the reasons for rejection as it may lead to lowering of self-esteem among a few candidates. For the HR departments this would lead to increase in work load, especially during periods of high volume hires," adds Harpreet Datta, vice-president, hr and administration, SMS Siemag AG.



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IMPACT OF FEEDBACK ON HIRING PROCESS

If candidates take negative feedback in their stride, it can help them work on their identified weak areas

- Companies should inform applicants the reasons why they were rejected as it helps them make their hiring process transparent
- It provides valuable feedback to the candidate
- It helps the candidate work on the identified 'weak' areas
- It projects a professional image of a company. Such transparent outlook may encourage candidates to work for such an employer
- If a company has a formal policy that communicates to a candidate why he/she was not selected, it should be based on proven assessment tools and not on whims and fancies of the recruiter
- Any feedback which is not substantiated by a formal assessment tool should be avoided
- Intention and motive should be one and should be directed at helping candidates get positive feedback for his/her development
- Many international and developmental organisations have a policy under which they send out such rejection letters but there are several challenges in implementing such a policy
- The biggest risk behind sharing a rejection feedback is that it gives a negative impression about the company and the HR person to the candidate
- Many candidates can get offended and accuse the company for providing negative feedback. It may also impact the bottomline of the company
- Some organisations do use assessment tools but still don't share outputs as there is a lack of precedence

Handling criticism with caution

Are all candidates open to accepting and absorbing feedback, especially negative feedback? Perhaps not. This is one of the biggest challenges why companies are wary of adopting an HR policy that makes it mandatory for them to inform candidates why they were not selected for the job.

Rohit Aggarwal, CEO, Koenig Solutions, cites instances of candidates who instead of taking feedback in their stride, retaliated with anger and frustration. "Everyone is not open to feedback and may be offended if told that they possess poor communication skills, attitude, is a cultural misfit in an organisation etc. Often candidates question why they were rejected despite years of experience."

While some HR experts say that it is an onerous task to communicate the reasons why a candidate was rejected, others argue that this challenge could easily be overcome with good communication skills.

"What's the worth of a feedback which drives a candidate to depression? It may become a liability for a company if the candidate is sensitive or does not take kindly to negative feedback. Also feedback cannot be differentiated on the basis of how sensitive the individual is," says an HR head, not wanting to be quoted.

Rajesh Tripathi, vice-president, Gujarat Heavy Chemicals Ltd, says, "Talent is contextual in nature. A person who is fit for a particular role in one organisation may not be so in any other organisation. A candidate may be rejected because there is a mismatch between the skillsets of an individual and those required by the company. This has to be communicated in a positive manner to the candidate without denting his self-



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confidence and motivation."

Agrees Sanjay Vats, GM, HR, Insecticides India Ltd, "There should be a definite and tested structure and practice in place for reviewing candidates. The assessment procedure should have no lacunae and should be uniformly accepted. The candidate should be judged purely on the basis of the requirements of the job and the cultural fitment of that person in an organisation and not as an individual. This will prevent the organisation from getting mired in legal issues that may crop up in the future."

"One option may be that the organisation check with the candidate during the initial stage itself whether he/she is open to feedback post completion of the selection process. He/she should be informed that utmost care will be taken in communicating the reasons why a person was rejected without lowering his/her self-esteem," suggests Harpreet Datta, vice-president, human resources and administration, SMS India Private Limited.

- Jeevan Prakash Sharma

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