

So, why was I not offered the job?

Recently a friend who had interviewed for three separate positions but had not yet secured a job offer recounted his frustration with the current market. With a strong track record, excellent reputation and high scores in every annual review, he was mystified as to why he was not being selected. "To make matters worse" he told me, "in the past ten years, I have been offered every job I have interviewed for.....what is going on?"

This is an increasingly common situation. In today's climate, employers will have a short list of strong candidates to choose from; all highly qualified. As a result, the interview is becoming an ever more important tool in helping employers select candidates.

With this in mind, it is useful to look at some reasons why employers turn down candidates for a position. Frequently, it comes down to these three simple factors:

Lack of Passion: As a recruiter, clients have often given me the feedback on unsuccessful candidates; "There is no doubt they could do the job, but during the interview they were on auto-pilot and failed to convince me that they really wanted *this* job." Remember that an interview is a brief snapshot of you at a single point in time. An employer must infer a lot from this encounter. You must present yourself in a positive, enthusiastic manner to show an employer the positive energy *you* will bring to the company.

Not selling yourself: In interview, many people fail to highlight major career accomplishments; instead taking a passive role and waiting for the correct questions to be asked. Remember that many interviewers, particularly those in smaller companies, have little formal training in conducting interviews and may not be able to draw out the most relevant information. You need to ensure that you "manage" the interview process and highlight your key achievements and strengths in the allotted time. This requires tact and diplomacy – you do not want to take over proceedings!

Focus: Interviews normally last 30 to 60 minutes. This is a short period and must be used wisely for maximum impact. You should have an executive summary of your career and have clearly thought about what you can bring to that role and company. Concise answers for commonly asked questions are essential and they must relate to the employer's needs. Focus on the employer's needs and tailor your experience to match that role.

Many of the factors holding people back from successfully securing a job offer are basic and can be easily remedied. Time spent preparing for each interview is crucial. It will ensure that you clearly understand your own strengths and accomplishments, tailor these to the company's needs, thus significantly increasing your chances of being the chosen candidate for the job.