

HOW TO GATHER FEEDBACK ON FAILED JOB APPLICATIONS

Summary: Learn how to get feedback from potential employers about failed applications.



Question: As a recent graduate looking to start my career, I have applied to several multinational corporations' graduate training programs. The applications are long, time-consuming, and require a cover letter. I haven't been able to get any feedback from human-resources personnel when I have been rejected. I am frustrated that these companies require so much from their applicants but refuse to give even the slightest bit of feedback. Any suggestions for me?

Answer: Approach your investigation from the front end rather than the back. To guard employees' time and to protect themselves from potential discrimination lawsuits, most companies will not discuss the particulars of their hiring decisions with individual candidates. Therefore, focus your attention on the pre-application process. You'll still have to dig for details, but any guidance you can get around the process and priorities will help you to tailor your responses.

Appeal to your college career-services staff to work with you on the application process. As representatives of an educational institution, they may be able to gain easier access to useful information about the process in a well-placed telephone call than you as an individual candidate could achieve. Also, ask for a critique of your written application for potential enhancements in both content and writing.

Recent graduates who have made it into the programs you are targeting are another source of information. Check to see if there are any alumni (or any other contacts) who would grant informational interviews about their individual experiences and about gaining a competitive advantage as a candidate. They might offer some insight into whether the disconnect you are experiencing is related to your qualifications or to your approach to the process.

In the meantime, to ease the cumbersome nature of the process, create a template you can plug in over and over that covers your core responses yet allows for customization to the specific company and program.