

What to do when you're passed up for a promotion



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Few things sting more than being passed over for a promotion.

Not only does it seem like the ladder you've been patiently climbing was kicked out from under you, but it also feels personal. After all, your workplace knows exactly what you're capable of. And still, all your hard work wasn't enough?

"We tend to blame ourselves all the time: 'What did I do wrong? What have I not done? How am I perceived?'" said Lee Weisser, Senior Career Counsellor and Life Coach at [Careers by Design](#). "But there can be a number of factors."

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Congratulate the successful candidate

Though your feelings are battered, you don't want to come off as bitter. So the first step is to plant a fake smile on your face and shake the hand of your newly promoted colleague.

"Take the high road," advised Wendy Giuffre, President of [Wendy Ellen Inc.](#)

Have a constructive conversation

Before you jump to conclusions about the reasons for your workplace stasis, seek out the hiring manager to discuss why you weren't the successful applicant.

Beyond giving you closure, this talk could keep you from making the same mistakes the next time a desirable position opens up.

"Put the ego aside and ask for feedback on what you could have done or what you can do to improve your chances next time," said Cissy Pau, Principal Consultant at [Clear HR Consulting.](#)

"Sometimes there are good reasons. Maybe somebody's more qualified, maybe it's your attitude. Ask for feedback."

Start singing your own praises

Sometimes it's hard to get that sought-after promotion without a little self-promotion. If this setback has you feeling worried your contributions are going unnoticed, perhaps it's time to trumpet them a little louder.

"We like to think that if we work hard and we get results that





people who have the power to promote you.”

Improve yourself

Instead of hanging your head, take this as an opportunity to enhance your employability. Take a class, learn a new computer program, seek out a mentorship opportunity, or initiate a new workplace project.

“Look for other opportunities to expand your experience and skillset,” advised Pau.

Check past performance reviews

As much as you don't want to dwell on this disappointment, it's worth looking at whether you've done all you can to please your superiors. Instead of letting your imagination run wild, look at what your supervisors have said in the past. If there's a flaw in your performance or an opportunity for growth, your performance reviews could hold a clue.

“Ask yourself: How positive have they been? Have there been things that have come up that you haven't really addressed?” said Weisser.

Consider the culture

As much as we'd like to think promotions are always based on merit, experts have seen that it's certainly not always the case.

“If you've been consistently passed up, there may be a problem of systemic discrimination based on gender or race,” adds Weisser. “Of course it's against the law, but it



change.”

Eye the exit

Though it's important to not overreact when you're not selected for that big new job, it's also a time to be realistic. Maybe you aren't valued as much as you should be. Or perhaps the potential promotion meant so much to you because moving up at your workplace is a slow grind and opportunities don't come up often. If that's the case, it might be time [to see what else is out there](#).

“There might be limited opportunities at your existing company,” said Pau. “If so, then you need to explore other options or other companies to help you achieve that next career goal that you have.”

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