



# 2024 JOB SEARCH GUIDE

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This guide is designed to help job seekers find their next role, including everything from how to stay positive through your job search, resume tips, working with recruiters, building your personal online brand, how to choose a staffing firm, how to identify the right company to work for, interview tips, red flags to look for, how to negotiate, and crafting a thank you note.

# STAY POSITIVE THROUGHOUT YOUR JOB SEARCH

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Looking for a job is a difficult task, and over time it can take a toll on the best of us. As the job search drags on from weeks into possibly months, it can be difficult to remain positive. But positivity from start to finish is crucial to your success.

Some days are harder than others, so when your confidence is under siege, here are a few tips from the Planet Forward team to stay positive throughout your job search.

## **Talk About It**

Everyone needs a sounding board, and keeping your frustrations to yourself may not be the best idea when you are job hunting. Whether you're looking to commiserate with fellow job seekers, or you need a friend to keep you focused and put things into perspective after a rough week, don't be afraid to lean on your support system.

## **Be Realistic About Your Timeline**

Job offers don't typically appear within the first few days of your search. A common source of frustration comes from an unrealistic expectation of how long it actually takes to land a new job. So, when you begin job hunting, mentally prepare yourself for a drawn out process that could span months. Setting realistic expectations at the outset can spare you a lot of frustration later on, and help keep you motivated when things get tough.

## **Don't Focus on Your Search 24/7**

Focusing on your job search and nothing else is a good recipe for burnout and negativity. Treat your search like a full-time job. That is to say, set boundaries, take breaks, and give yourself a healthy work-life balance. Like with any project, stepping away can provide renewed focus and a fresh perspective when you get back to it.

## **Break Your Search into Smaller Tasks**

If you look at your job search as a huge hurdle that you have to get over, it can feel insurmountable. To that end, help yourself maintain a positive attitude throughout your job search by breaking the process into smaller tasks and easily attainable goals. Perhaps one week, do some research on ways to make your resume stand out and revise yours; the next week, tackle cover letters and so on.

# STAY POSITIVE THROUGHOUT YOUR JOB SEARCH

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## Conduct a Self-Assessment

When you're facing rejection regularly, and the sound of crickets is deafening. Take a moment to remind yourself of what you're capable of, the things you've accomplished, and your professional achievements. Not only will this boost your confidence a bit, reminding yourself of the value that you bring to the table for any organization will help you sidestep knee-jerk reactions to just any job offer that comes your way.

## Celebrate Small Victories

As you make your way through a long and drawn-out job search, one thing the Planet Forward team suggests is that it's important to celebrate your victories along the way — no matter how small, no matter how few and far between. If you received a callback, consider that a good thing; if an HR rep sends you an email to say they were impressed with your work, consider that a triumph as well. Even though it may not lead to a job offer from that company, it's still an acknowledgment of what you've accomplished professionally.

## Put More Irons in the Fire

If you find that you're sending out applications one at a time and waiting for a response, you might be going about your job search all wrong. Sending out solo applications forces you to focus on one thing only — a response to that application or lack thereof.

## Focus on What You Can Control

When your job search feels like it's dragging on forever, it's important to remember that you need to focus on what you can control. You cannot influence whether someone calls you in for an interview or actually extends an offer. You can control how good or bad your resume is, how effective your cover letter is, and how much networking you do. Do what you can and let the rest sort itself out.

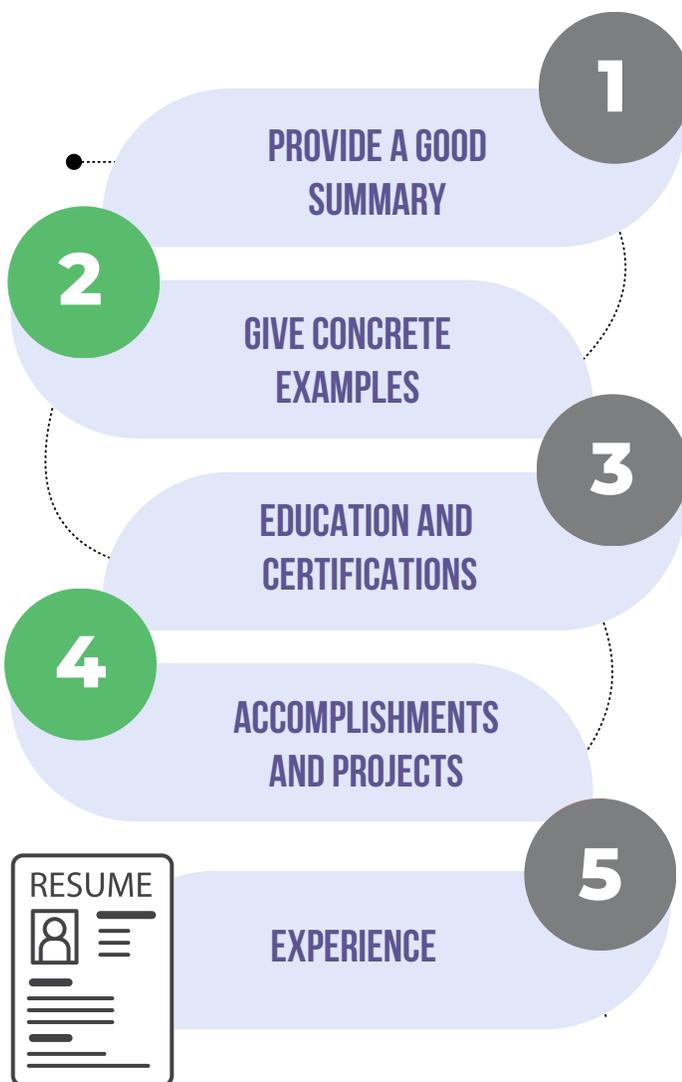
When your job search drags on for what feels like forever, staying positive can be incredibly hard. To get past the hump, lean on your support system, control what you can, and don't forget to give yourself a break.

# UPDATE YOUR RESUME

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## Tips for Building Your Resume

Your resume is the first impression hiring managers will make about you. If your resume is not concise about who you are, what you do, what projects you've completed and what skillsets you have, it very well may be the last impression too. Planet Forward believes that a well-formatted resume with the right amount of detail can be the ticket to scoring an interview, so it's important to take your time and get it right. Here are a few tips to follow when updating your resume:



1. You'll want to use this space wisely; include highlights of relevant career experience rather than soft skills. EX: Years of experience in Project Management.

2. Here you provide concrete examples of your skills and experience. You should only include those you're comfortable using.

3. A lot of companies prefer to see formal degrees, including anything from Associate's degrees and licenses. This section is also where you'd include [certifications](#) and boot camps.

4. This section is the highlights reel of the work you've done. Successful projects, accomplishments, and specialties.

5. The last, and longest, section of your resume will be your job experience. Pay close attention to formatting here; you'll want it to be easy for the hiring manager to skim.

# BUILD YOUR ONLINE PRESENCE

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## Why an online presence?

You may be thinking, “Why do I need to do this? My resume and accomplishments speak for themselves.” Well, yes and no. While it’s important to update your resume, recruiters go looking for talent online on job boards and other websites, especially in a tight marketplace. If you don’t have a social presence, you’re making it harder for hiring managers to find you.

## How to Engage Online

Find interesting posts on LinkedIn, Monster, CareerBuilder, Indeed, and Zip Recruiter and repost them with your perspectives. Link to interesting articles. Join professional groups that reflect your passions. Get involved in discussions around this topic and follow companies and people who are leaders in that area. Increase your connections and build your network. Anything that gets you more active will get you more visibility.

## Get on the Job Boards

If you’re posting your resume on a job board, make yourself as accessible as possible by filling out all fields. Don’t be afraid to target the type of job you want. When you apply for an opening, highlight the content in your job history that matches key words in the description. Search tools are run by AI algorithms that can find you if you’re doing the right things. So, if you are reviewing specific job postings, you may start seeing similar jobs forwarded to you. Even perusing job openings will drive traffic to your profile.

## Be Who You Are

Above all, don’t be afraid to be who you are. Sharing your passion helps employers who share the same passion find you. Focus on building an authentic online presence and be proactive in your job search. Getting yourself out there is the key.

## Remain Current

To remain relevant online, you have to remain current. Recruiters like the team at Planet Forward will usually set their search criteria back no more than 30 days. The default setting on most career sites, with the exception of LinkedIn, is 30 days. In order to be seen, you must update your profile or resume in that time frame, or you’ll no longer be searchable to recruiters when they filter for availability. Fortunately, updating your profile is as simple as logging out of the site, and then logging back in.

# HOW TO CHOOSE A STAFFING FIRM

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Searching for jobs has changed dramatically in the last decade. The good news is it's never been easier to search for a job online. The bad news? It's overwhelming. Even trying to identify the right keywords to send you alerts for jobs is a challenge.

Let's say you apply for a mechanical engineering job at a company via their website. Many organizations have a very specific keyword sort to review – or more accurately, screen out – your resume. If you don't hit the right percentage of keywords in the job description, your resume literally goes nowhere, filtered out of the system and sent to a dark place in the database. Enter recruitment firms like Planet Forward and their more personalized approach to helping you find a job.

## What's Happening Behind the Scenes?

Let's take a step back, before the job is posted, and look at the relationship between a hiring employer and a staffing firm. Why would a company choose to work with a staffing firm? There are plenty of reasons but some common ones are: they've exhausted all their resources, they need someone right away, or they don't have the bandwidth to deal with all of the resumes submitted. So, they turn to a trusted staffing firm to send them good candidates.

## Why Work With a Staffing Firm?

When you're working with a staffing firm, you gain quick access to the people who are hiring right now. And recruiters know which positions are available, how these various organizations operate, and what their hiring processes entail. In one phone call, you could learn about a dozen open jobs that fit your parameters. Plus, a good recruiter will prepare you for a successful interview. They should be able to coach you in the best practices and give you inside information on what the company is looking for. Your recruiter can also shepherd the interview phase so things happen faster and negotiate on your behalf.

## How to Choose a Staffing Firm

If you are going to work with a staffing firm, you should interview them to see if they are a good fit. This is an important relationship, and you want someone who listens to you, asks thoughtful questions, and wants to help you find a good match. You also want a firm that specializes in your field, and a recruiter that wants to build a long-lasting relationship with you.

# WORKING WITH RECRUITERS

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A good recruiter can be the key between settling for any old job and securing a position that fits your true skills, interests and ambitions. Recruiters are not an extension of a company's HR department. They are independent contractors working on a commission basis. The best recruiters do this job because we truly like people, are interested in their stories, and want to help them succeed. We are here to help you.

## **Be Transparent**

In order to truly help you, recruiters need to have the full story. Far from being the ticket to that job you have been dreaming of, hiding or distorting key facts about your background from your recruiter could wind up sinking your chances. Telling a recruiter you have particular experience, when in fact you don't, never ends well. The company invariably discovers this, to their frustration, after a few days on the job.

## **Don't Be Evasive**

Nor does it pay to be evasive with a recruiter about gaps in your resume or why you left a role. We've seen it all, and can help you make your best case, but only if we have all the correct info. Honest communication enables recruiters to effectively advocate for you as a candidate, matching your skills and preferences with suitable opportunities.

## **Keep Lines of Communication Open**

All that said, honesty and communication must be a two-way street. If something doesn't go well in the interview, the recruiter is going to hear about it from the employer. It's important for recruiters like our Planet Forward team to discuss this feedback with their candidates to identify potential issues and correct them. There are other situations where there is no feedback or response from the company at all for several weeks after an interview. In this case, it's important for a recruiter to stay in regular touch with the candidate, even if there is no new news to pass on.

Hunting for a new job is never easy. But working with a recruiter could make all the difference. So, the next time a recruiter leaves a message, return the call. It could just be the big break you have been looking for.

# BREAKING THE STIGMA OF CONTRACT ROLES

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Oftentimes when people are looking for work, they are hesitant to work with a staffing agency like Planet Forward or to take on [contract work](#). But sometimes that hesitancy is based on misconceptions. Many people think that they don't have access to benefits, or that it's never as good as getting hired directly. Would it surprise you to learn that none of these things are true?

## How Does Being a Contractor Work?

Before getting into the advantages of contract work and dispelling some myths, you should understand how being a contractor works. When you take on contract work, you are actually being hired by an agency that will place you within a particular company for a set amount of time. Contracts are usually six+ months. You'll typically be paid by the hour as a W-2 employee. At the end of the contract, you will either move on, extend into a new contract, or the company may show interest in hiring you directly.

## It's a Foot in the Door

A lot of employers that do direct hiring may be looking for candidates that have several years of experience or a laundry list of must-have skills. You may notice they're often far more flexible when it comes to contract positions, seeking lower levels of experience. That's why contract positions tend to be a great way for recent graduates or newcomers to an industry to get their foot in the door at a large company.

## You'll Start off with a Higher Rate

Because employers don't provide the same suite of benefits to contract workers as they do their salaried employees, they are able to offer more competitive wages.

## You Still Get Health Insurance

Yes, it is true that the company paying for your contract does not provide you with benefits – but that doesn't mean you won't have any. Since you are actually employed by the staffing agency, you can still get access to benefits like health insurance and a 401(k) through them.

Contract positions are very popular in certain skilled industries and that's not likely to change anytime soon. Especially if you are in the early part of your career, don't overlook these roles because of preconceived notions.

# HOW TO IDENTIFY THE RIGHT COMPANY TO WORK FOR

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Your job has more meaning and influence on your life than you may imagine so it's critical to identify the right company to work for. Since so much of your time and energy is invested on the job, finding a place of employment that's a good fit with your core values is crucial to your well-being. Here are a few important criteria to consider when evaluating your next career move.

### Shared Values

At Planet Forward, we do a lot of recruiting for the energy, oil and gas, or manufacturing industries, and the companies we represent have principles and world views that impact their decision making. In any industry, concerns you have about a company's environmental impact or public policy, should be researched before you apply.

### Culture Fit

Even before you get to the interview phase of the process, we recommend you look for company reviews online. You can learn a great deal about how an organization's management works with its employees, and the expectations for roles that are the same or similar to the one you've applied for.

### Company Size

Pay attention to the size of an organization as well. Company websites, LinkedIn pages, and the same online review sites can give a lot of insight here as well. The number of employees, and the way they're managed, is very important, especially if you're entry level.

### Physical Environments

For candidates interviewing to work on site, an office's physical environment matters. Look around when you're given a tour of a facility. If you can't work in a cubicle, and that's all that's offered, pay attention to your comfort level. The same goes for noise levels; large, shared workspaces; or office space with no access to natural light.

### Due Diligence

Your values, and those of your employer, will affect your day-to-day experiences, and they should mesh enough for you to feel good about being there. By being observant, listening to your gut, and doing your homework, you'll easily be able to identify a company you want to work for.

# INTERVIEW TIPS FOR SUCCESS

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After sending out what seems like countless resumes, you finally get a call for a job interview. Securing an interview is great (congratulations!); you've wowed your potential employer on paper, and now you have to wow them in person. Here are 5 tips from the Planet Forward team to set you apart!

## 1. Preparation is key

Research the industry, the background of the person who is interviewing you, review the job description so you can speak to your skills, and the company as well. If you don't, surveys suggest that [47%](#) of hiring managers will count it against you.

## 2. Limit Potential Distractions

Leave your devices in the car (including that smart watch) or turn them off. Eliminate the potential for anything to buzz you with notifications that mentally take you away from the interview.

## 3. Be Concise (But not Short)

Avoid answering any questions with a simple "yes" or "no" response. Even if it seems elementary to you, a more technical question may not be as simple to a hiring manager with no expertise (this is also an opportunity to wow them with your know-how). Highlight your most relevant skills to provide a solution to the problem.

## 4. Stay Positive

Your past employment history will come up, and even if you had a negative experience, it's best to refrain from bad-mouthing former bosses or coworkers. We suggest that you share negative lessons you've learned in a tasteful way.

## 5. Provide Real-World Examples

Employers want problem solvers, and you have to demonstrate how you're equipped to solve theirs. Using real examples and avoiding generalities improves your credibility. What projects have you recently completed? Highlight your skills and accomplishments from previous positions.

## 6. Prepare Questions in Advance

Along with bringing your resume and something to take notes on, you should also have a prepared list of questions to ask the hiring manager. 5 -10 questions shows your interest in the position while still respecting your interviewer's time.

# RED FLAGS DURING AN INTERVIEW

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During the job search, we know the importance of being well prepared – a crisp resume, on-point interview questions, and a sense of confidence are all necessities. But as a job seeker, in addition to selling yourself, you also need to evaluate the opportunity in front of you. Our recruitment team at Planet Forward compiled this list of 9 interview red flags:

**1 THE MANAGER IS NOT PREPARED**

**2 THEY CAN'T SELL YOU ON THE JOB**

**3 POST-INTERVIEW FEEDBACK IS SLOW**

**4 THE INTERVIEW PROCESS IS DISORGANIZED**

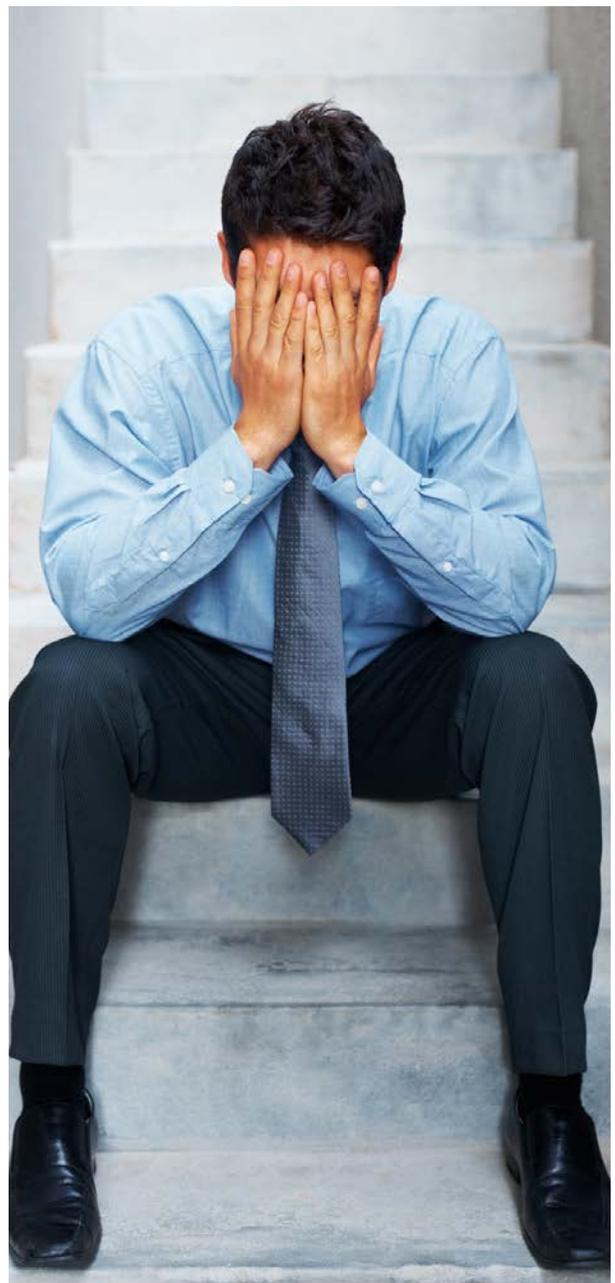
**5 THEY CAN'T GIVE YOU A REASON WHY THE LAST PERSON LEFT**

**6 THEY ARE VAGUE ON JOB DETAILS**

**7 THE COMPANY TRIES TO LOWBALL YOU ON SALARY**

**8 THE COMPANY'S BUSINESS MODEL DOESN'T MAKE SENSE**

**9 THE COMPANY IS STRUGGLING IN A GOOD ECONOMY**



# HOW TO NEGOTIATE SUCCESSFULLY

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Whether you're looking to move up the ladder, increase your salary or just need a change, there's sure to be a position for you. But before you can jump to negotiation mode, you need to do some prep work, both in terms of what you want and what the job market may have to offer. Here are some tips from Planet Forward to help you negotiate successfully for your next role.

## **Spiff up Your Resume**

Part of the preparation for negotiation is sharpening your resume. If you've had a long career, for instance, you may forget to mention earlier experiences. Likewise, if you've been in one position for a while, past jobs may fade. Dust off any cobwebs and dig down, listing for yourself what you did and the results you achieved in each position. Being able to show a new employer what you bring to the table will greatly strengthen your bargaining position.

## **Making Your Case**

In preparation for negotiations, arm yourself with market knowledge. Research salary ranges, industry standards, and common benefits using platforms like Glassdoor, LinkedIn, or salary comparison sites. Determine the typical compensation, perks, and expectations for the role you seek. This groundwork helps you gauge what to expect and ensures your negotiations align with industry norms.

When negotiating, don't fixate solely on salary; consider the entire package. Evaluate benefits such as remote work opportunities, paid time off, retirement plans, and other perks. Assess their actual value in terms of financial gain and their impact on your desired work-life balance. Highlight the added benefits you seek, providing a clear explanation backed by quantifiable data. Ensure your requests align reasonably with industry standards, demonstrating that your negotiation is both practical and beneficial for the employer. Ultimately, approach negotiations with a comprehensive understanding of your worth and needs.

## **What's Happening Behind the Curtain?**

Part of the whole negotiation process is knowing what is happening at the employer – what they most want, what they can and cannot offer in a compensation package. When you work with a staffing firm, you get a peek behind that curtain. The recruiter spends time discussing all aspects of the position with the employer before even bringing you into the picture. All this knowledge puts them in a better position to negotiate for you more effectively.

# CRAFTING YOUR THANK YOU NOTE

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Sending an emailed thank you note after an interview sounds like a good idea until you sit down to write it. What are you supposed to say? Do you send it now or later? Thank you notes set you apart from other candidates and make you memorable. As with most things, you just need a little guidance. Here are several tips and tricks to ace your next thank you note.

## Elements of a Great Thank You Note

**An Interview Recap:** This does not need to be a play-by-play of the interview. Give a two sentence debrief of why your skills would be a great solution for their project needs. Mention that you're excited about how the role fits into the company's broader mission or bring up the fact that you're thrilled to work on an exciting new product feature.

**Reiterate Why You're a Fit:** Go back and re-read the job description and the company mission. What did you say in your interview that shows you fit the criteria of an ideal candidate? Explain why your skills, experience, or work ethic resonate with the specific requirements of the role you applied for.

**Get Personal:** Did you attend the same university or work at the same company? Was there something funny or notable that happened on the call? If you feel you have good rapport with the interviewer, make a reference to the connection.

**Add a "Call to Action":** At the end of your note, you should have something like "looking forward to hearing next steps" or "excited to meet the rest of the team."

**Send Within 24 Hours:** Your interviewer, like everyone else, is doing a million things the day of your interview. To stick out in their mind among the sea of tasks, send your note within 24 hours.

## Thank You Note Don'ts

**Don't Write a Novel:** Time is essential, so keeping it to the point is necessary.

**Don't Template Thank You Notes:** Do not plagiarize your thank you note. While we recommend looking at samples for inspiration, your note should be in your own words and personalized for each interaction. Also, don't send the same note to everyone you meet. Good interview teams share with each other and you don't want to seem lazy or dispassionate.

**Don't Forget to Proofread:** Grammar or spelling mistakes in your thank you note can be a red flag to employers looking for great attention to detail.

# YOU DIDN'T GET THE JOB

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## HOW TO USE NEGATIVE FEEDBACK TO YOUR ADVANTAGE

We've all been there. You get home from a killer interview — you clicked well with the hiring manager, answered all of their questions, even got a tour of the office. But a week goes by and you get a call only to find out you have been rejected. Or even worse, you never hear back.

What went wrong to lead to this job rejection and what should you do now? The most important piece of advice we can give you is to ask for feedback. Finding out exactly why you've been rejected can be super helpful in preparing for future interviews. Below are 7 common reasons for job rejection, and some tips on how to use feedback for the future

### 1. Underqualified

Let's face it. Sometimes job rejection is due to the fact that you are just not as seasoned in your career as the hiring manager needs you to be. If this is the only reason for rejection, ask the manager to keep you in mind for more junior openings they may have coming up.

### 2. Skills Don't Match What's on Your Resume

If you have skills, or abilities listed on your resume, but are unable to speak to them during an interview, that will almost automatically get you disqualified for a role. If this is the reason for rejection, do some resume clean up.

### 3. Internal Referral / Promotion

The hiring manager had an equally impressive internal candidate and decided to go with that person instead. If you can learn more about the job and company than the internal candidate, you'll have a leg up. Do your research!

### 4. Seemed Uninterested / Not Engaged

Tell the hiring manager how interested you are and that you would be thrilled to be part of their team. This seems intimidating to some candidates, but it's an important end to the interview.

### 5. Didn't Dress the Part

Some companies, like startups, have a very laid back dress code, and will think you don't fit in if you show up in a suit and tie. Other companies are very polished and will disqualify you immediately if you show up in anything but business professional attire.

### 6. Late for the Interview

Plan for traffic and ensure your departure time allows you to arrive at least 15 minutes early. If your interview is remote, make sure you have relevant apps downloaded and know how to connect and log in.

### 7. Money

Pay for contract roles is usually discussed up front and is not an issue. But if you're interviewing for a permanent role and are uneducated on the market rate for the position, you must do your research regarding salary expectations. Have a range in mind and try to get this nailed down as quickly as possible so you aren't disqualified for having out-of-this-world pay expectations.

### Stay Positive!

There are many reasons for job rejection. So the next time you get passed up for a role, ask for feedback and use it!

# START YOUR JOB SEARCH



If you've found you are ready to start your job search, reach out to us today. Planet Forward is one of the most respected global staffing and recruitment companies. We provide strategic and innovative human capital solutions for our clients in the Energy, Architectural & Engineering, Manufacturing, Construction, Oil & Gas, Chemical, and Environmental sectors.



Job Openings: [careers.theplanetforward.com](https://careers.theplanetforward.com)



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