

## **If At First You Don't Succeed...REVAMP, REVAMP, REVAMP!**

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For those in job search mode, the process can sometimes prove to be daunting and even downright disheartening at times. You send out what seems like a million cover letters and resumes for jobs that you know you are qualified to do but get no responses. Please realize that you are not alone. I've been in that place way more times than I can count, and it's not fun.

If the job search is not going the way you hoped it would, it may be time to re-evaluate and see if there is something that may need to be tweaked on your end. Start with your cover letters and resumes. Though we put great effort into drafting these pieces, our information is not always as up to par as we may think it is. Speaking from personal experience, I have learned that you have to treat the cover letter and resume writing process as if they were research papers being submitted for a grade. I learned this lesson the hard way, and here's my story...

Two years ago, there was an opening for a Director position at a university on the base where we were stationed. With my background in higher education, serving as an adjunct instructor for that school, and having learned about the job from the current Director herself (who was PCSing with her husband), I thought I was at least a shoo-in for an interview (if not the job itself). I quickly whipped up my resume, made a few applicable changes here and there, and submitted it to the contact person. Days went by, and I hadn't heard a word. Normally, I would not have been too concerned but I knew the school was trying to fill the position immediately so I e-mailed the contact person to see where things were. I received a generic e-mail back saying that she had received my e-mail and if my qualifications matched what they were looking for, she would call me for an interview. I knew I was qualified so I waited. Well, after a few weeks had gone by, I found out that the new Director had been hired because she contacted adjunct instructors about our Fall courses. All I could think was, "How did I not even get an interview?!?! I know I can do that job!"

A year later, the current Director informed me that she and her husband were PCSing, and her position would be vacant. I took the cover letter and resume that I had submitted before, made a *few* more changes and updates, and submitted my information for consideration once again. Just as before, they were trying to fill this

position as soon as possible so I thought it would only be a matter of time before I was called for an interview. And just as before, I ended up e-mailing and then calling the contact person for the position. I received yet another generic e-mail and the run-of-the-mill response when I spoke with her: we received your information and will call you if we're interested. I never got that call.

After my second rejection, that very same position opened up for the third time in three years. The current Director told me about it, and the other staff members asked me if I was going to apply *again*. I gave them a resounding "No" and went about my business. I simply could not take the rejection again.

My family and I ended up PSCing two months later. When we arrived at our current base, I was on the job hunt once again. After almost two months of searching, a friend told me that the Director position at the same institution would be opening at this base. What are the odds? I figured I might as well apply; I had nothing to lose. This time, though, I handled the application process a bit differently. I researched cover letters and resumes for similar positions on the Internet. I followed my research with an "Extreme Makeover: Cover Letter and Resume Edition" by doing a total overhaul on my information including changing the font, adding and eliminating information, switching to a more appropriate resume format, and shortening my cover letter to a great degree. After my revisions, I e-mailed it to a friend who was the last person to hold the Director position at the same institution at our last base. I figured that she landed the position before so she could give me helpful tips on what the contact person will be looking for in a cover letter and resume. I included her suggestions in my information, had her look over everything once more, and *finally*, applied for the job. I got an e-mail the very next day requesting an interview (from the very same person who did not give me a second thought the first two times I applied for the position) and started the job only five days later! The friend who told me about the job also applied for the other open position in the same office. I was able to help her by editing her resume and sharing my interview tips. Lo and behold, she also got the job and started six days after I did.

The bottom line is that no matter how much faith you have in your abilities to do a job, both your cover letter and resume must positively reflect what you're bringing to the table. In my case, my cover letter was overrun with unnecessary information and probably served as a deterrent for consideration for the position. I was trying to put everything in it to show that I was qualified and did not allow it to simply serve as an intriguing preview to my resume (which is where my qualifications should show). Refreshing my resume made my information easier to read and showed why I was the right person for the job. Using my friendship network as a resource also proved extremely beneficial. If it weren't for one friend, I would have never known about the

opening, and using another friend as a second set of eyes allowed me to see things that I hadn't considered. Though it may require more time on your part, doing these simple things can be the difference between hoping for an interview and actually getting one.