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Ron Ashkenas' blog post on Forbes
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Make the Most of Rejection

There are few experiences more painful [than being rejected](#). We vividly remember the hurt of not being picked for a sports team, not being invited to a social event, or not being accepted to university. Our [basic human need to belong](#) causes these incidents to stick with us through the years.

Even as adults, at various times in our careers we're [not selected for jobs](#), promotions, or projects; or even less significant benefits such as parking spaces, preferred offices, or new computer equipment. Whether it's fair or not, the [hard reality](#) is that everyone cannot have everything.

Accepting rejection however is not an easy process – for children or adults – and many of us handle it poorly. When this happens repeatedly, it often leads to two types of dysfunctional patterns in organizations: entitlement and resignation.

Entitlement is when someone feels that he deserves certain benefits, no matter the reality of the situation. For example, I recently worked with a company that reduced costs by moving staff members into smaller offices and having them share meeting rooms, printers, and other services. A few people refused to accept the new standards, arguing their unique needs for privacy, space, and administrative support. They felt entitled to these benefits and considered anything less to be a rejection of their status and personal self-worth.

At the other extreme is **resignation**, when people avoid situations where they might be rejected. In the example above, some people resigned themselves to the reduced space by not engaging in conversations about how the design of the office would work. By passively accepting the new constraints, they made sure that none of their ideas were rejected (because they didn't offer any). This may have been psychologically comfortable, but the organization didn't benefit from their contributions and their buy-in to the new facility was minimal.

In light of these behaviors, leaders need to encourage a more conscious and healthy toleration of rejection. While all employees should feel comfortable offering ideas, raising issues, and making observations – they should do so with the knowledge that they may be rejected. If they get discouraged or angry about not having their ideas accepted, they might shut down and stop contributing. Similarly, if employees feel so self-important that the organization should never turn them down, their sense of entitlement will make it difficult to drive constructive change.



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It's easier to talk about learning from rejection than to actually experience it. Rejection often triggers painful emotional doubts about our own competence and self-worth, so we either try to avoid it or pretend that it doesn't matter. A more constructive approach is to remember that rejection can be beneficial: It can force us to come up with more ideas, redirect us to different paths, and keep us humble and open to learning.

How has rejection helped or hindered your career?

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<http://www.forbes.com/sites/ronashkenas/2013/10/07/make-the-most-of-rejection/>