ASK ELLEN – why you didn’t get called for an interview

11/4/11

Q: I sent my resume and cover letter in application for a job I KNOW I was well qualified for, but did not get called for an interview, in fact I heard nothing back. Why?

A: This is very common, especially these days with the economy in the state it’s in. There are a number of possible scenarios – here are *some*:

- The hiring manager did not think you were as qualified as YOU thought you were. (Yes, it could be.)

- You were very well qualified, but failed to convey that clearly and specifically for that position, in your resume and cover letter.

- The hiring manager was impressed by your resume and cover letter, but did not like something you had posted online. Some employers start checking on the social media presence of candidates very early in the hiring process.

- There were other applicants, maybe many others, who were just as qualified or even better qualified than you are.

- There was another applicant who had an edge re: this position due to his/her networking.

- The employer had already decided to hire a specific candidate, but was required to post the position or interview a certain number of applicants due to union or internal rules.

- The hiring process may be on hold for any of a number of reasons (financial, interviewer(s) temporarily unavailable, hiring freeze, etc.). In these cases the job posting may be pulled from wherever it was posted, or it may remain on view pending a final decision, or because someone forgot to remove it.

- The employer was able to identify a suitable number of strong applicants to have come in for first interviews before ever getting to your resume. This is more likely when a job has hundreds of applicants, which happens a lot in this economy. Some hiring managers will give at least a glance at every resume/cover letter, but for others this may not be worth the effort and time spent, especially when applications are still coming in each day. Once they have found what they are looking for, they stop looking.

Please note: this is not an exhaustive list. As you can see, some of the reasons for not getting called for an interview have nothing to do with you, are not in any way a rejection of you or your application documents, and are completely outside of your control.
This is why you must, when job hunting, apply for multiple positions on an ongoing basis. Even if the job description sounds like it was written just for you and you are sure they will call and hire you for your dream job, keep looking. Always keep looking and applying.

As for not hearing back from the employer, some will respond to each applicant, many won’t. Lots of HR departments don’t have the staff or the time to respond to each and every applicant, plus there are no consequences, really, for not responding. Don’t expect it.

**Added 9/26/12: This article discusses some other reasons why an applicant might not be hired:** [http://money.usnews.com/money/blogs/outside-voices-careers/2012/09/26/6-reasons-employers-wont-share-why-they-didnt-hire-you](http://money.usnews.com/money/blogs/outside-voices-careers/2012/09/26/6-reasons-employers-wont-share-why-they-didnt-hire-you)

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**Website:** ALA JobList [http://joblist.ala.org/](http://joblist.ala.org/) Lots of resources, links to articles, and of course, job postings.

**Just for fun:** Librarian job interview (Monty Python) [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ukJmF6f0JdQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ukJmF6f0JdQ)

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Please keep the questions coming!

Thank you,

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