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How to Depersonalize Rejection
By Dr. Kathleen Begley, Book Author and Professional Speaker

Note to Readers: *Here's another offbeat blogletter on business communication and current events from Write Company Plus, a corporate communications training firm located outside Philadelphia. In respect for your busy schedule, writers and editors have arranged seven at-a-glance ideas at the end of this article. Skip directly there if you lack the time to read the entire document.*

As you probably know, President Barack Obama recently announced his selection for Supreme Court justice: Court of Appeals Judge Sonia Sotomayor. If approved by the U.S. Senate, Sotomayor will become the first Hispanic woman ever to have achieved such an exalted legal position. I never would have chosen her. Now you might be assuming that I share the sentiments of hordes of public figures who immediately came out against Sotomayor for being both too empathetic or too brusque, which seems to me like a direct contradiction but what do I know?

I would have passed on Sotomayor out of blatant bias. I can't stand her voice. It gets on my nerves big time. Stupid? Ridiculous? Nutty? You bet. I feel utterly ashamed of myself, though my distaste for Sotomayor's speech stems from a vocal quality other than a Bronx or Puerto Rican accent. I can't stand to listen to her because she speaks reallllllllly, maddeninglllllllllly, slowlllllllllly. When I heard Sotomayor's acceptance remarks, it was all I could do not to reach through the television screen and beg her to speed it up. But you know what? It's not her. It's me.

Somewhere in my past, I bet anything I had an unpleasant experience with a woman who spoke like Sotomayer, I suspect it might have been Sister Catherine of the Dog-Eared Catechism, but I'm reluctant to say for sure in case the venerable nun is somewhere nearby still swinging her ubiquitous yardstick. The point is that human beings make all kinds of snap judgments of others based solely on whims.

At a time when many Americans are looking unsuccessfully for jobs and for clients, I bring up this fact in an effort to help you depersonalize rejection. Yes, being told a company selected a different applicant or vendor hurts, but the reason probably was some X factor completely out of your control. So, if you're feeling really down about recent rejections, I offer you some techniques to reframe your interpretation:

Forget objectivity. While most people want to believe that organizations hire on the basis of quantifiable factors, they're wrong. For heaven's sake, I would have rejected Sotomayor, who possesses impressive credentials, simply because of her speaking pattern. Note to Sotomayor: my bad. I'm utterly positive that I've been turned away professionally because of interviewers' dislike of my roundish face and shortish fingernails.? How could you? Whim-ful decisions pop out of nowhere.

Value practice. All over the United States, millions of people are looking for work with absolutely no experience doing so. If you're been at one company for 10, 20, 30 years, recognize that your early job-hunting efforts are simply pre-season workouts. Try to embrace every interview-gone-bad as part of a good learning experience – after you have another long cry, of course.

Trust the process. Too often in life, people settle for getting into the first broken-down taxi that comes along. I suggest that you hold onto the belief that there's a town car, a stretch limousine, or even a private jet close behind coming specifically for you. While you're at it, visualize a uniformed chauffeur, upholstered seats, and fresh flowers. Be patient.

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Rewrite the script. In the midst of a really painful divorce years ago in Seattle, I gave custody of the Pacific Northwest to my ex-husband and relocated to my native East Coast. For several years, I deeply regretted the move. Then, one day out of the blue, I found a way to reframe the experience to my advantage. I deliberately chose to start believing that the universe had saved me from a horrific tragedy had I remained in the same city with that man whose name I dare not speak. What exactly would have happened? Who knows – but in my fantasies I might have drowned in Puget Sound, crashed head on with a tractor trailer on Interstate 5, choked to death at Pike Place Market. Aren't I lucky to have escaped such a bleak fate by making a move that eventually led to a second marriage and a beautiful home in suburban Philadelphia?

Stop analyzing. If a recruiter tells you that someone else was chosen for the job because he or she was a better fit, believe it. A better fit might mean that the successful person was a milquetoast who would be unable to recognize a creative idea even if it came from ext-Beatle Paul McCartney or Apple founder Steve Jobs. You're much too edgy and feisty to work for an outfit with those hiring criteria, anyway.

Keep going. One of my core beliefs is that many people miss out on phenomenal opportunity, success, and happiness for one reason: they give up too soon. You know that old adage about the road to success being lined with failure? Guess what? It became a popular saying because it's true. Knockouts are disastrous only if you refuse to get back into the boxing ring of life.

Take back your power. Do not, under any circumstances, permit a job turndown to define you. Individuals who reject you without logic or facts aren't worth another thought. While you may feel that you're currently losing in the career game, it's totally conceivable that the naysayers are losing a much more precious thing: you.

Dr. Kathleen Begley owns and operates Write Company Plus communications training outside Philadelphia. She has written seven books and gives corporate seminars on topics such as writing persuasively, presenting confidently, and managing positively. You can call her at 610-429-1562 or e-mail her at KBegley@writecompanyplus.com. She responds to everybody.