

ASK THE CAREER ENGINEER!

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Q: I was terminated from my job in January of 2002. I have not been able to get a permanent job since then. . On my applications I am always honest and state my reason for being terminated. I was doing a good job, until my mother became ill and passed away. My stats began to fluctuate after that and I could not meet their demands. Do you think this is keeping me from getting a permanent job due to termination? D.B. (unknown city,state)

A: Dear D.B., I am sorry to hear of the loss of your mother and your job. However, keep your head up, stay focused and... go forward. Let's look at a few things.

1. Honesty is the best policy; I applaud your statement of being truthful on your application. However, let me suggest the following, in terms of answering the "Why did you leave your last employer question." If asked the question on the application, in the case of terminations, state "will discuss at interview." This will hopefully, get you through the first door and at least the opportunity to share your position during the interview.
2. When it's time to explain your situation, never...and I mean NEVER "bad mouth" the previous employer. That is a sure fire way to not get hired.
3. Your response should convey your acceptance of your responsibility in the termination situation and your improved resources/abilities to ensure that you have made steps to balance work/family life.

Now I know this may not be a popular response, but it's the response that a potential employer may accept and respect in terms of considering you for the next position. You stated your stats were reduced and you could not keep up with the employer demands. Not knowing your actual situation, this could be the actual termination reason that is listed on your record. Your exit interview would have been a good time to "ask" exactly what your termination code is. Also, it may be "okay" to ask a colleague or co-worker for a "personal reference" which could assist your efforts during your next job search.

What can you do now? Here are some suggestions. When you explain your situation consider this technique: **"I enjoyed working for "ABC" company where I routinely met my goals and objectives. However, a sudden family illness and subsequent death allowed my focus to shift and unfortunately, I was not able to continue the level of excellence that my employer expected from me. Now, I am ready to return to the workforce and pursue my career goals."** Also, for currently employed workers, talk to you HR professionals about the Family Medical Leave Act or their "leave of absence" policy now. That way you will know your options and resources so that you shouldn't have to choose between the family member you love and the job you need. Stay encouraged D.B.

If you have a question for "The Career Engineer" send an email to francina@thecareerengineers.com . Author of the book, *A Mind to Work: The Life and Career Planning Guide for People Who Want-Need to Work!* For more information on Harrison & Associates, call 757-420-1109 or visit our website at www.thecareerengineers.com.