

From Repeated Rejections to a Career in Testing & Compliance

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STARTING POINT

B.Tech Mechanical Engineering, Bundelkhand University, Jhansi, 2019 to 2023. In third year I wanted to learn AutoCAD and CATIA but kept postponing, and I was unsure which career path to choose

CAMPUS PLACEMENTS

Rejected at JBM after a written test of 80 questions in 30 minutes, and then at Dyson for a maintenance-engineer-type role

THE SEARCH

Kept appearing for interviews and found my mistakes: the same resume everywhere, weak fundamentals, an unprepared favourite subject and no clear career path

THE DECISION

Selected for a marketing job at about Rs. 6 LPA, but said no because it involved fieldwork

TURNING POINT

Joined a paid internship, was noticed for my performance and moved to a better position with improved compensation. Developed an interest in the testing industry

TODAY

After one and a half to two years and a third offer, working remotely in testing and compliance with a better package

What I would tell you

1. Start learning practical skills early.
2. Research the company before every interview.
3. Never underestimate your engineering fundamentals.
4. Prepare your resume for the job.
5. Treat internships as opportunities to learn and demonstrate your potential.

Sometimes, your first job is not the career you imagined. Sometimes, repeated rejections help you discover the path that is right for you.

The beginning: dreams, confusion and missed opportunities

In my third year of Mechanical Engineering, I started thinking about learning additional technical skills such as AutoCAD, CATIA and other design software. I knew they could improve my career opportunities, but I kept postponing the decision.

I also wasn't sure which career path I wanted: design, manufacturing, production, quality, or something else? Like many engineering students, I had heard about these options, but I didn't clearly understand what each role involved or which one would suit me.

Before I knew it, I was in my final year without any specialized skill beyond the regular curriculum. I had tried exploring options, including design software, but my confusion about the right direction made it difficult to commit to one. That confusion became more noticeable when campus placements began.

My first major rejection: the JBM interview

My first campus interview was with JBM. The selection process included a challenging written test with 80 questions to be attempted in just 30 minutes. Out of approximately 56 students, only four were selected at that stage, and only two eventually received joining letters.

I wasn't selected. It was disappointing, especially when some of my friends were. I started questioning myself. Was I less capable? Was I missing something other students had?

Looking back, I learned that not every rejection means you lack knowledge or ability. Sometimes the process is highly competitive, the time limit is demanding, and only a very small number of candidates make it through. The lesson was to learn from the experience rather than judge my entire potential based on one result.

The Dyson interview: preparing for the company

I kept applying and appeared for several interviews, including one at Dyson for a maintenance-engineer-type role. I wasn't selected there either.

This taught me to prepare according to the company and the role. Dyson is known for technology-driven consumer products, including electronics and home appliances. The general Mechanical Engineering syllabus may not be enough when a role requires knowledge of a particular product, its working principles, components or related technologies. As freshers, we revise our college subjects but forget to research the company itself. Before an interview, it is important to understand:

- What products the company manufactures
- What the advertised role actually involves
- Which technical concepts are most relevant to those products
- What basic and application-based questions the interviewer might ask

This preparation connects theory with practical applications, and makes it easier to explain why your engineering background is relevant to the position.

The mistakes I discovered during my interview journey

As I continued appearing for interviews, I began to recognize patterns in my challenges.

1. Sending the same resume everywhere

Like many freshers, I did not always tailor my resume to the job. But a resume for a design-engineering position should not be identical to one for a quality, manufacturing, production or testing role, because each needs a different combination of skills, technical knowledge and responsibilities. A resume should highlight the most relevant academic projects, technical skills, internships and achievements for that job. Even without professional experience, presenting your skills in a role-specific way makes your profile more relevant.

2. Neglecting the fundamentals of Mechanical Engineering

In some interviews, I was asked questions from Fluid Mechanics, Material Science and other fundamental areas. We had studied these subjects, but passing an examination and explaining a concept confidently in an interview are two different things. Interviewers may ask very basic questions, such as how a piston works in an engine, what a particular component does, or how a basic mechanical principle applies in a real situation. Preparation should not be limited to advanced topics. A strong understanding of fundamentals is equally important.

3. Choosing a favourite subject without preparing deeply

A common interview question is “What is your favourite subject?” We study numerous subjects, so it is tempting to mention several, or to pick one simply because we scored well in it. But if you name a subject, the interviewer may explore it in considerable depth. If you choose Automobile Engineering, be prepared to explain engine components, piston operation and the functions of different mechanical systems. If you choose Fluid Mechanics or Material Science, be comfortable with fundamental questions from those subjects too. The key is not to name the maximum number of subjects, but to choose one you genuinely understand and prepare it thoroughly. Mentioning multiple subjects is not wrong either, as long as you are honest about your strengths and ready to support your answers with sound technical knowledge.

4. Not knowing which career path to choose

Perhaps the biggest challenge was my uncertainty about my career direction. I explored design software, manufacturing, production and other opportunities, but struggled to decide which to pursue seriously. Without a clear target role, it was difficult to decide which skills to prioritize and how to structure my preparation. Eventually I understood that students don't need to know their entire future from the beginning, but they do need to start exploring career options early, understand the skills different roles require, and make informed decisions rather than endlessly postponing them.

The Rs. 6 LPA marketing opportunity

In the middle of these experiences, I was selected for a marketing position offering approximately Rs. 6 LPA. For a fresher, it was an attractive package. However, the position involved fieldwork, and I had concerns about whether the role and its practical working conditions would suit me. I decided not to pursue it.

This taught me that a good salary alone does not make a job the right choice. Responsibilities, work environment, personal comfort and long-term career goals also matter. A job decision should consider the complete opportunity, not just the compensation in the offer.

The turning point: a paid internship

Eventually, I came across a company offering paid internships. I applied, appeared for the interview, got selected and started working as an intern. This became an important turning point. For the first time, I could move beyond classroom learning and experience a professional environment: understand workplace expectations, learn practical processes and demonstrate my capabilities through actual work.

But I also understood that an internship was not necessarily a permanent job. So, alongside it, I kept exploring and appearing for interviews.

When performance started creating opportunities

During my internship, I received another job opportunity from a different organization. When I told my internship employer that I was considering moving on, I learned that my onboarding for a better position was already underway. The company had recognized my performance and offered me a better position with improved compensation.

That moment showed me the value of demonstrating your capabilities through your work. An interview may provide the first opportunity, but consistent performance, willingness to learn and professional behaviour create further opportunities. Instead of moving to the other organization immediately, I considered the opportunity within my current workplace and decided to continue there. By then, I had also started developing an interest in the testing industry.

Discovering testing and compliance as a career

As I gained exposure to the testing environment, I began to see its possibilities. Testing laboratories offer opportunities to work with products, test methods, technical standards, quality requirements and compliance processes, combining engineering fundamentals with practical evaluation and documentation. I also found the working environment and the nature of the role appealing. What initially felt like an alternative opportunity gradually became a career direction I wanted to explore.

I continued working in the organization for approximately one and a half to two years, gaining experience and developing my skills. I became more confident about my direction. I was no longer simply applying for any available engineering position. I was building experience in a field that interested me.

Eventually, I received another offer from a third organization, which opened the door to the next stage of my journey. Today, I work remotely in the testing and compliance industry with a better compensation package and a clearer understanding of my career goals. My journey did not follow the straightforward path I had imagined during college, but it helped me discover an area where I could build a long-term career.

Five lessons I want every engineering student to learn

- 1. Start learning practical skills early.** Don't spend years thinking about learning AutoCAD, CATIA, SolidWorks or other relevant tools. Explore the options, choose one based on your interests, and start learning consistently.
- 2. Research the company before every interview.** Understand its products, the job description, the relevant technical concepts and the responsibilities of the position. Generic preparation alone may not be enough.
- 3. Never underestimate your engineering fundamentals.** Revise the basics of subjects such as Fluid Mechanics, Material Science, Thermodynamics, Manufacturing Processes and other subjects relevant to your target role.
- 4. Prepare your resume for the job.** Highlight the skills, projects and knowledge most relevant to the particular position. A carefully targeted resume is more useful than sending the same generic profile everywhere.
- 5. Treat internships as opportunities to learn and demonstrate your potential.** An internship can help you gain practical experience, understand workplace expectations, build confidence and discover which career path suits you. Continue developing your skills and evaluate opportunities based on your long-term goals.

A message to students who are still figuring things out

If you are in your third or final year of engineering and feel confused about your future, I want you to know that you are not alone. You may see your classmates getting placed while you are still searching for your first opportunity. You may experience rejection after rejection and wonder whether your degree has prepared you well enough. I experienced those feelings too.

But your first rejection does not define your potential, and your first job does not have to define your entire career. What matters is how you respond to each experience. Identify what you need to improve, work on your fundamentals, prepare more thoughtfully, and remain open to career opportunities you may not have considered before.

You don't need to have everything figured out today. You need to take the next step with greater clarity than before. Your career journey may not begin exactly where you expected, but with consistent effort and the willingness to learn, you can build a direction of your own.

Your first rejection does not define your potential, and your first job does not have to define your entire career.

— Swejal Chaturvedi, Mechanical Engineering Graduate (2019 to 2023)

Difficulties I faced

- No clear career direction, and no specialized skill beyond the regular curriculum by the final year
- Rejected at JBM: a written test of 80 questions in 30 minutes, with only four of about 56 students selected
- Rejected in the Dyson interview for a maintenance-engineer-type role
- Mistakes along the way: one resume for every job, weak fundamentals and an unprepared favourite subject
- A tough call on an Rs. 6 LPA marketing offer that involved fieldwork
- An internship that was not a permanent job, so the search had to continue alongside it

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