

FIRE UP Weekly Challenge 1

Rejection Therapy

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Disclaimer: I keep very detailed notes, almost like a blog. For the <1000 word self-reflection where I explain my takeaways and the perspective shift I've went through, please see the last section of this document on page 7. You can have a look at the previous sections to see exactly which challenges I undertook and how I completed them if you are interested. I am leaving these sections mostly as an example sheet for current or future FireUp challengers.

Contents

Precursor to the Challenge: Video Presentation of Jia Jiang.....	3
The Challenge	3
Principles (Self Imposed)	3
Rules I Believe that Should Be Followed in Such Random Asks.....	3
What to Ask?	4
The Results	4
Ask to Visit a Bowyer's Workshop (Rejected with Followup)	4
Ask for a Free Cookie with Your Coffee in Starbucks (Rejected).....	4
Ask to be accepted to the BIGG Start-Up Program (Rejected).....	4
Ask How to Make Money off of Your Patents from a Patent Office (Accepted)	5
Ask for a LEGO Sample (Accepted).....	5
Ask for a Free Small Coffee at a Coffee Shop (Accepted)	6
Ask for a Free Donut (Rejected)	6
Ask for a Free Hotel Room (Rejected).....	6
Ask for a Free Hotel Room (Again) (Rejected)	6
Self-Reflection and Takeaways.....	7
References	8

Precursor to the Challenge: Video Presentation of Jia Jiang

- If you are not doing something because you fear rejection, it is helpful to numb yourself to the pain of rejection.
- After you get rejected, you should push a step further, a few steps further to see if you can convert that no to a yes.
- If you can address the doubt the askee is having before you can get a no, you stand to gain their trust by proving you are not just some random weirdo and increasing your chances of a yes. This one was, for me, the most important outcome of his philosophy. I have employed this strategy throughout my requests and I realized that not only does this help the askee to see me as a normal person; but it also helps myself to not think about if they are going to think I am some weirdo. So it reduces any anxiety I might have about getting misunderstood, very powerful tool.

The Challenge

- Ask a stranger for something. Get rejected 5 times.

Principles (Self Imposed)

- The request shouldn't be causing any harm,
- The request shouldn't be involving money of any form unless the askee is relatively rich for the request or the money being lost is from a rich establishment. (Giant franchises like Starbucks etc. where the managers have the ability to grant your request are on the table.)
- The askee shouldn't be in an obligation to say "No" due to administrative restrictions. The request should have the potential to be fulfilled if and only if the askee wills it to.
 - Ex: Don't ask for a free bus ride from a bus driver, even if it is cheap he is obligated to say "No".

Rules I Believe that Should Be Followed in Such Random Asks

- It is great to enter the conversation by saying "I was going to have a weird request" like I've explained in the video section.
- Always ask nicely and with a kind face.
- Always say thanks anyways after you get rejected. We are not trying to ruin someone's day by making them feel remorse.
- Don't get emotional as you are asking for something that you think you will get rejected for. You will get rejected a lot of times in your life and you can't afford to get emotional every time you do.
- If they look like they are having a bad day, they are more likely to say no.

What to Ask?

1. Ask for a free hotel room for a night at a big hotel.
2. Ask for a free coffee.
3. Ask for a LEGO sample.
4. Ask to visit a bowyer's workshop. (Some background: I also do traditional Turkish archery in my free time and a bowyer is someone who makes bows)
5. Ask a patent lawyer to teach you how to make money from patents.

REMEMBER: You should push for a "Yes" but learn to get a "No" anyways.

The Results

I have recorded all my experiences just after I have experienced them and offered my own critique to myself whilst I am preparing this paper. Whilst wandering around, thinking of different situations I could get rejected in I also did some requests I didn't plan beforehand on the list above.

Ask to Visit a Bowyer's Workshop (**Rejected with Followup**)

I have asked to visit a bowyer's workshop. (Who is the bowyer who made the bow I use right now.) I have gotten rejected as he apparently doesn't let anyone in his workshop but he has invited me for tea any time I am around his workshop which was a pleasant outcome.

Ask for a Free Cookie with Your Coffee in Starbucks (**Rejected**)

I have asked for a free cookie after paying for my coffee. The cashier turned and asked his manager. His manager turned back to me and told me they don't do that there. I said ok and thanked them anyways. I thought I would've pushed further for such a simple request but I didn't in the heat of the moment. It didn't even occur to me to ask "Why?" or something similar. I should have asked "Why?" but even then the answer would be "We don't do that here".

Critique: I preemptively accepted their "We don't do that here" as the answer to "Why?" as well and refrained from pursuing the matter further. I should gain the habit of asking for "Why?".

Ask to be accepted to the BIGG Start-Up Program (**Rejected**)

I actually had started this process last week and had my pitch meeting at the noon of the Wednesday we first had our FireUp meeting. As of Friday I have been informed that I was rejected from the BIGG program preliminaries. During my pitch meeting I actually had understood that I would probably be rejected as they asked questions about the R&D innovations of my project. It didn't come as a surprise to me and I didn't experience any feelings. (I go deeper into this phenomenon in the self-reflection section.)

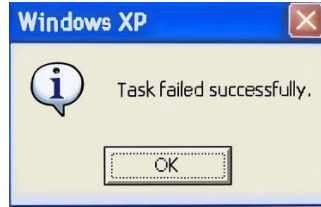
Critique: Innovation was never the selling point or the aim of my project and as far as I can tell they are looking for completely new technologies to be fast tracked to industry applications.

Ask How to Make Money off of Your Patents from a Patent Office (Accepted)

Precursor: This was something I wanted to do for a few months but I was very hesitant as I thought this should probably normally be something they should charge for. I took this opportunity to cross this one off my own list.

I went to a patent office in Etiler. As I started talking to someone at the front desk a partner walked out from the office after hearing my conversation. I explained that I was a senior mechanical engineering student in Boğaziçi University and was hoping to learn how to commercialize patents and if they could help. He straight-up asked one of his juniors to help me. We sat down in an empty conference room, they broke down how the patent applications, revisions and objections should be made and at which stages. And they explained that patent offices don't usually handle the commercialization of the patents but they help with the application and especially the objections. However, they apparently work with associations that specialize in matching patent owners with the industrialists. Finally, I gave them my contact info to be connected to these associations and that was it. Great success!

Ask for a LEGO Sample (Accepted)



Precursor: This time, before going into the LEGO store (There is an official one in Kanyon AVM, Levent) I prepared my dialogue in my head. “Hello, good day. I was going to ask you something weird. Is it possible for you to give me a few pieces of LEGOs for fidgeting for free? Piece like rectangle pieces will do.”¹ The LEGO stores normally sell sets of LEGOs so by asking for a sample like it was a patisserie I thought it would be somewhat comedic. I also thought that maybe they had spare pieces in the back that they could give out so it may not have been completely unreasonable.

I went into the store and got to the employees at the cash register (instead of the ones touring the store) figuring if there is a manager that could approve such a request they are more likely to be at the counter. As I approach the counter and prepared to deliver my speech I notice the whole back wall behind the counter is made up of transparent containers holding spare LEGO pieces. And I start thinking to myself “I might actually pull this off.”. So I approached the counter and delivered my line above to the cashier. He started his sentence to reject me but stops mid-sentence and turns to another guy behind him, they talk shortly between themselves. He turns back to me: “Like pieces from a set or..?” I said: “Any two random rectangular pieces will do, I am just looking to fidget² with it”. Another employee joins the conversation; they discuss it shortly, turn back to me: “Ok.” So I got two pieces of LEGOs. [1] Great success!

¹ Merhaba, iyi günler. Garip bir isteğim olacaktı. Bana bedavaya bir iki parça LEGO vermeniz acaba mümkün olur mu? Böyle rastgele dikdörtgen parçalar vs. de olur.

² Tabi düşünürken de yazarken de İngilizce düşünüyorum ama Türkçe söylerken galiba “Böyle boş zamanımda elimde oynamak için” diyerek ifade ettim “fidgeting”i.

Ask for a Free Small Coffee at a Coffee Shop (Accepted)

I asked if I could have a small coffee at a Kahve Dünyası. The barista straight-away said ok which one would you like. I said “Whichever is the easiest for you” to not cause them any unnecessary work. Got a free filter coffee with steamed milk.

Critique: The barista actually made something both easy but also thoughtful by fancying up simple filter coffee with steamed milk. It surprised me how thoughtful she was to make it something special without going against my wish to cause them a lot of work.

Ask for a Free Donut (Rejected)

I asked if I could have a free donut at a Krispy Kremes and was firmly rejected. Pretty straightforward rejection.

Ask for a Free Hotel Room (Rejected)

I have tried this at the Wyndham Grand in Levent. (Above ÖzdilekPark) I simply asked if they have any possible rooms I could spend the night in for free. The receptionist simply said “That is not possible.” I thanked him anyways and walked away.

Critique: For the second time, I didn’t even think about asking “Why?” after getting rejected. This is unacceptable, let me try this again.

Ask for a Free Hotel Room (Again) (Rejected)

I have retried the hotel room request in Hyatt Centric in Levent. I similarly asked the receptionist, he said “It is not possible.”. This time I followed up with: “I know you might not be in the position to maybe offer me a free room, is there anyone we can ask who can offer such a room?”. He said “There is no such person.” I said thank you and got rejected successfully but didn’t go down easily this time.

Self-Reflection and Takeaways

You might have realized that I didn't talk much about how I felt after getting rejected and that's because I don't feel anything already. I realize that this is not usual and therefore did some self-reflection on why this might have been. I have two ideas why this might be:

- **Idea One:** I am a pessimist to the bone, so before starting to do anything I am already ready for a rejection and already planning plans B, C and D on the side. So even though I will give %100 to plan A, I have the relaxation of having a backup plan.
- **Idea Two:** When I was young I was bullied for like the first 8 years of my education and was rejected from society almost completely. And at a very early age I learned how to succeed in spite of rejection. So unlike Jiang who learned to fear rejection at a very early age, I've learnt how to not let it get to me at a very early age.

Ok so we've established that I am not afraid of rejection and I am not uncomfortable in insisting for it. (Not used to insisting for it but not uncomfortable with it) However, if I was not completing this challenge I know that I would've been uncomfortable in asking in the first place. Let me try to figure out why.

I was brought up with the principle to not owe anything to anyone and also to not make people's jobs harder. So I hesitate to simply ask for things from other people in general. Also I've realized that I don't hesitate to ask for things from entities (like from companies) but rather I hesitate to ask things from people worrying it might affect them negatively (loss of money, being a burden on them etc.)

However, one main thing I've learned from this challenge is even if you are asking for something from a person; as long as you are kind in asking and not making them feel remorse in rejecting you, you won't be affecting them negatively and they are actually usually happy to help. In the case that you are kind in asking and also thanking them even after they reject you, the only times you will get rejected are the times your request is unreasonable. (Like a free hotel room) And even if it is unreasonable your request might still be granted occasionally leaving no downside to asking for things as long as you are kind in doing so.

VERDICT: With the right delivery, there is no downside to asking for things. So don't be afraid to ask for things from people, your life can only go up from there.

References

[1] LEGOs that I got.

