

Overcoming 'Overqualified'

A lot of experience can be too much of a good thing

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There is nothing more frustrating than going through a series of interviews, be considered one of the finalists, and then be told you did not get the job because "you are overqualified for the position."

It makes you wonder what the company or organization was thinking. What kind of a company would reject someone who clearly offers more than what the job apparently requires?

The answer, of course, is that in a weak job market employers have the upper hand. Companies and organizations have learned how to operate more efficiently with fewer employees, so the tendency these days is to be much more selective about the candidates they consider for a position.

Many employers decide to wait for the individual to appear whose qualifications best match the job description. In many cases, employers allow months to go by waiting for this "perfect" candidate to appear, meanwhile passing by someone who has more experience.

Employer Hesitations

There are myriad issues that concern employers about individuals whose experience exceeds what the position requires.

They typically worry about the following things:

- Salary: Why would someone want a job that is below what they used to be paid?
- Hiring, training expenses: Why go through the process of hiring and training someone when, in all likelihood, they will leave as soon as they get a better job offer?
- Job satisfaction: Who would take a job that is beneath their capabilities?

Use Your Resume to Sell Yourself

It is the candidate's responsibility to defuse these objections, and their resume is one of the first ways they achieve this. If you view your resume as your sales brochure, this means it is the first thing that sells a company or organization on your capabilities.

People frequently create multiple versions of their resume, especially if they are applying for different types of jobs. In this case, the key is to revamp it so it appeals to the level of position you are seeking.

Keep in mind that your resume does not have to include all of your accomplishments. Make sure

to be selective about what you include, especially if it is of a more senior-level nature than the position requires.

For example, if the position does not involve any strategic design of meetings, then consider eliminating that information. If the job description clearly states you will handle smaller meetings, then eliminate information about the 10,000-person annual meeting you managed.

Eliminating this information does not in any way imply that you are misrepresenting yourself. It is a matter of choosing which areas of your background you are choosing to highlight. Look for ways to draw a connection to your experience as it applies to the position itself.

Overcoming Objections

You need to present valid reasons why the employer needs to hire you. The best way to approach this is to attack the issue head-on. Address these items in your cover letter. If the company states the salary range, let them know that your focus is on the type of work you do and that salary is not your top priority.

Another way to approach this is to let the employer know that having achieved success in your previous positions, you are excited about the idea of growing with their company or organization. Be enthusiastic and positive about the reasons salary is not your primary consideration in applying for the job.

There is no denying that it costs employers time and money to hire a new employee. The prospect of hiring someone and then having to repeat that process again in three to six months is something that companies and organizations want to avoid.

Use your job history as a way to communicate your level of dedication and commitment to your work.

Consider the Alternatives

One alternative is to offer to sign an agreement that you will stay in the position a specific amount of time, usually a one-year minimum. Another way to approach this is to offer to start out on a consultant or temporary basis. Businesses who are just now beginning to recover from the weak economy may view this as a favorable option. They can use the contracted time to assess whether any of their concerns are realized or not. Doing this would delay your becoming eligible for health and other benefits. So you might consider building into the agreement that health benefits, etc., would initiate automatically once you shift from the temporary/consultant level to being a regular, full-time employee.

Employers worry that someone who has more experience will get bored if the position is below their capabilities. The key here is to identify what it is about their products or services that you find appealing.

Let them know that you did some research about the company or organization and point out how

your experience will be an asset to them. Come to the interview with ideas as to how you can help them achieve greater success with their meetings and events.

If the position is in an industry different from where you previously worked, be certain to show how excited you are to dive into this new field. The same holds true if the position involves working on programs and events that differ from what you did in the past.

Whether it is the opportunity to work on trade shows, seminars, incentives, or some other type of program, let the interviewer know you did not have this opportunity in your prior job and that you are eager to learn as much as you can about these programs.

Don't Scare the Manager

Hiring managers can sometimes feel intimidated by a candidate who has more experience than they do. In some cases, they fear that what the individual really wants is their position. Even if you did hold a management role in the past, let them know that you have "been there, done that" and want a position that does not involve that level of responsibility. Let them know that you empathize with the responsibilities they have and will do anything you can to support them, just as long as they don't ask you to take on any of them!

There is no denying employers hesitate when they see someone who offers more than what the position requires. It is critical for you to communicate how you see this as an opportunity for you to learn and grow. Additionally, you need to absolutely identify how your experience will be an asset to the company or organization.

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