

Turn Overqualified Into Perfectly Qualified

Oct 21, 2013 by Brittney Tavello, *The Job Scholar*

Pursuing a job well below your pay grade or experience level may be more of a challenge than one would expect. Many of the hiring managers we spoke to admit to flagging, or even worse, disqualifying “Overqualified” candidates right from the get-go due to the fact that they may be a potential flight risk. We asked the experts to share some of their concerns about hiring a candidate who is clearly taking their career down a notch, or “downshifting”, and how an overqualified job seeker should best approach the interviewing process.

Customize your resume to the specific job requirements.

“Managers see many overqualified candidates these days, but what they focus on is whether a specific candidate has solved issues that directly align to the role posted. So, if you can articulate how you have met the needs of the position in an impactful way, it may not matter whether you are overqualified,” explains Lora Poepping, founder of Plum Job Search Strategies. Poepping recommends customizing your resume so that it highlights the right information and eliminates the excess. Corey Harlock, creator of Skills to Achieve, recommends that you “Create a resume that will focus the hiring manager on the right experience instead of all of your experience.”

Be proactive in explaining why you are choosing to downshift your career.

“Being overqualified is not the real issue. The reasoning behind seeking a lesser position is what matters,” Timothy Wiedman, certified PHR and associate professor of management and human resources for Doane College, states. Wiedman says the key is to be honest and upfront about your motivations for changing careers. Stu Coleman, partner of accounting & finance contract staffing for Winter Wyman, one of the Northeast’s most recognized recruitment firms, says that instead of waiting for the hiring manager to bring it up, it is up to the candidate to address any questions or objections that the hiring manager may have about your qualifications and ability to fill the position. “Make sure you address them proactively,” Coleman explains. “You need to get past the preconceived notions and biases from the beginning.” Once you get the proverbial ‘elephant’ out of the room, you can move on to explaining why and, more importantly, how, your experience will add value to the organization.

Reassure the hiring manager that you are not a job hopper.

Hiring managers have reported that they often worry that overqualified candidates are simply looking for a position to hold them over until a better, more challenging opportunity comes along. Nicole Kennedy, program coordinator for professional development at consulting firm Polishing the Professional advises job seekers to ease the interviewer's mind by emphasizing the amount of time spent at previous jobs. "This will give them comfort that you don't job hop and will maintain your track record," notes Kennedy. Joshua Polk, director of Human Resources Management at family amusement park, Holiday World & Splashin' Safari, advises that job seekers address any questionable resume patterns right off the bat. "This way, we can be sure whether or not they truthfully want to join our team or if they are simply looking for greener grass," Polk says.

Explain how you will thrive in this position.

Our experts also advise job seekers to highlight the wealth of knowledge that you possess and can bring to the position, keeping in mind that there is a reason the job exists and has yet to be filled. "There's some 'need' that is causing them to interview at this time. All the things that make someone overqualified are the exact same things that prove you can solve this need they have," says Elene Cafasso, founder and president of executive coaching firm, Enerpace, Inc. Cafasso recommends that you talk about what aspects you DO find challenging about the position and what you are interested in learning from the organization instead of only focusing on the areas you will excel in. This strategy will alleviate the employer's concern that you are over qualified for the position.

Our experts say that reassuring the hiring manager of these points will help them see you as perfectly qualified, not overqualified.

Happy Hunting,

The AllCountyJobs.com Team



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As Chief Interviewer for TheJobScholar.com, Brittney Tavello has her finger on the pulse of what recruiters and hiring managers are looking for in their candidates, as well as job market trends as a whole. Her main objective in this role is to guide job seekers through each stage of their professional journey by gathering and publishing critical and insightful information from industry experts. Brittney also serves as Marketing & Events Generalist for AllCountyJobs.com, the Northeast's largest regional job board, as well as HR consulting firm, Operations Inc.