



THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS OVERQUALIFIED



In today's job market, great candidates are being given one of the most disappointing and confusing reasons for not getting the job of their dreams....they're overqualified. The idea of being rejected for a position is frustrating, however, being told that you're overqualified makes the rejection and underlying reason difficult to accept. It defies logic to some job seekers. How is it that I can be removed from consideration due to an abundance of talent or experience? Isn't this what good recruiters and hiring managers should be looking for? If being overqualified appears to be a convenient excuse for a reason they won't tell you, then take heart – it is. In fact, there's really no such thing as being overqualified. That's right, no such thing as overqualified. Let me explain:

How would you feel if while purchasing something of great importance, the clerk offered an additional and complimentary item? This bonus item was of course free of charge and represented something you needed but didn't have the money to purchase. Odds are that you'd accept the bonus item and feel the transaction was a better value since you received more for your money. What if the bonus item was something that you didn't want and you couldn't decline the offer? You might make a different purchase decision.... right? Hiring managers look at the hiring process in a similar manner. They have a specific need and welcome anything that represents a bonus or greater value, but not something that's unneeded or creates a problem. The more talent or experience they can get for the same salary level is what they're trying to achieve. However, candidates equate increased education, skills, or experience with higher salaries and often have additional expectations of their managers and workplace. The company might be looking for someone who can perform the basic tasks and your education, skills, and experience allow you to go far beyond this. Because of this, you might require greater compensation or have other ex-

pectations which aren't consistent with the company's needs at this point in time.

During the hiring process, these types of disconnects can be highlighted. As a result, the company might reject a candidate claiming a generic reason which masks the true issue. This generic reason is often labeled as being "overqualified" which generally means one of five things:

1. Monetary issues arise when candidates with increased education, skills, and experience require a higher salary than the payroll allows.
2. Adaptation risk is when a candidate might not be able to adapt to a new environment, team, or process due to prior experiences. This can increase training costs, reduce innovation, and impact the productivity of a work center.
3. Ego risk is when a candidate's experience might rival or exceed that of a boss or management team. This can create conflict in a work center, reduce morale, and impact productivity.
4. Transition risk is when a candidate might depart the position and/or company as soon as they find a position which



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better aligns with their expectations. This can increase turnover, training costs, and reduce productivity.

Not being selected for a position due to one these reasons is generally considered to be legal and sometimes masked by the euphemism of being overqualified. Companies may take this approach to make candidates feel better about their applications and to maintain public relations. With exception of monetary risk, the others three risks can be minimized by the way you present yourself during the hiring process. Being passionate about the specific position and a team player that subordinates personal interests to the company's objectives are great ways to minimize these risks.

There's a fifth and possibly illegal side to being labeled overqualified and it's when organizations attempt to mask discriminatory practices, most commonly age discrimination. The same reasons discussed previously can be at play since these tend to align with increased age. However, when age is the true reason, there might be other options to pursue.

An easy way to remember the five applications of the euphemism of overqualified is to put these in reverse order which gives you the acronym A-TEAM (Age-Transition-Ego-Adaptation-Monetary). Preparation and practice continue to be the best ways to ensure you frame yourself in a positive manner, avoid sensitive topics, and minimize discussions that might result in you being labeled as overqualified.



ask the hiring manager

I received an offer for a job I like, but would prefer a higher salary. Can I negotiate this?

Answer: This is a great question that we often get during workshops, career fairs, and in one-on-one coaching sessions. We'll provide a few suggestions, however, believe this topic requires an entire newsletter if not an ebook to help our readers understand. The real question isn't "can I negotiate" . . . it is "should I attempt to negotiate?" Of course, the answer depends upon your individual situation and what's right for one person might not be the same for others. In general, we recommend that candidates accept offers if they can live with the starting salary. Notice that we said starting salary. If you demonstrate your value to an organization within the first 6-months, you'll have a better chance of negotiating a higher salary at this point or during your next performance review. Consider delaying your salary negotiation until you've demonstrated your value. If you elect to negotiate before accepting the job offer, we suggest that you introduce the topic in a general and open manner such as asking if there's any flexibility in compensation. If there's any resistance, you shouldn't pursue a negotiation. In today's economic environment, companies have been known to quickly retract job offers. Consider if you can live with the starting salary and delay your negotiation until they know that an increased salary would equate to a worthy investment in a strong performer. We believe this is a much better approach.

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