

# GET THE JOB

## What If you're Overqualified?

Maybe you have decided to branch out into a new field or you're returning to work after a period of time spent out of the job market. Perhaps you're taking a lower-level role to catch up on bills or as a way to stay engaged but at a lower stress level.

In any case, you might find yourself dealing with the perception that you're overqualified for the work because your skill set and experience outstrips what's needed for a job posting. This is particularly true if you've previously served in a management role. Here are some tips on how to handle what can become a huge hurdle.

### **PREPARE TO MAKE LESS**

Slow-growth economic conditions inevitably lead to a market glut of well-educated, experienced people who may end up in lower-level jobs. This kind of move back down the corporate ladder will necessarily involve taking home less pay, and that can impact whether a future employer



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brings you on board. Will you be satisfied with this lower pay rate? So-called overqualified candidates need to accept this cash-flow reality, while also being prepared to convince a new boss that you're focused on finding the right position rather than the bottom line.

### **BE PREPARED TO COMMIT**

Often an employee is branded as overqualified

when the prospective employer is actually just worried about career longevity. If you used to run your own department, chances are you won't be satisfied forever as an underling. Filling your role again on a short timeline involves added expense and training, not to mention the inherent difficulties in scheduling around open positions. If this isn't simply a stepping-stone job, however, make that clear. Tell the hiring

manager that you're committed to this new position, in writing if needed. Then they won't have to worry about the role quickly becoming vacant again and your experience once again becomes an added value.

### **TURN WEAKNESS INTO STRENGTH**

You might have to make a larger case for overqualified applicants. After all, they'll be gaining a quality employee

with invaluable experience and an advanced skill set who won't require extensive training. If they're interested in grooming employees for managerial or senior positions, you'll be on a fast track. If that's not something you're interested in at this point in your career, overqualified employees also often serve as great mentors. Even if training is needed, those with deep résumés are typically quick learners since all of that experience helps build problem-solving pathways. Productivity and efficiency will be boosted by your veteran input and ideas, too.

### **BE UP FOR THE CHALLENGE**

Experienced job seekers, especially those who held previous management roles, can present a problem for potential employers who worry about job engagement. Will a lower-level position provide enough of a challenge? Make it clear that you're aware of what's required and enthusiastic about this new role. Be prepared to cite specific examples of updated objectives or other goals that you'd still like to achieve. Your new company is looking for someone who's willing to raise the bar for themselves, not those who telegraph that they've seen it all before.