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## OVERQUALIFIED AND OUT OF WORK; IN A TOUGH JOB MARKET, TOO MUCH EXPERIENCE CAN SOMETIMES HURT MORE THAN HELP

By Jason Lee, Source: Tribune Media Services

**Y**ou've just been interviewed for a job, you're confident that you performed extremely well, and then you hear these shocking words: "I'm sorry, but we think you're overqualified for this position."

Nothing is more frustrating than knowing you're probably the best candidate to fill an open position, yet the company refuses to hire you because you have too much experience or too many skills.

When an interviewer says you're "overqualified," they are most likely concerned about one or more of these factors: You won't be satisfied with the salary they're offering; You'll be bored in this position; You'll leave as soon as you find a better opportunity; They'll have to once again go through the time-consuming and expensive process of hiring and training someone.

To help buck being branded overqualified, consider following these simple steps:

### Don't sell yourself short

If you get stamped with the "overqualified" label once, you may be wary of getting it again. If you're applying for jobs at a lower skill level than your background skills, education and experience would normally exhibit, you may be tempted to "dumbdown" your resume and omit things. However, lying about your background isn't the way to go.

Here's a better strategy: "Face the issue head-on," suggests Bonnie Lowe, author of "Job Interview Success System" (Lowe-Commotion, \$39.95).

"Be the first one to raise the 'overqualified' issue with a potential employer," Lowe says. "If you bring it up yourself, you can discuss it openly and convince the interviewer that it won't be a problem."

While it's important not to omit things from your resume, you can still tailor the resume to highlight skills and talents that will be essential to the position you're seeking, says John Hill, alumni career services director for the Michigan State University Alumni Association.

"Tailor it to the position you are applying for," suggests Hill. "If you were a CEO in your past job and are applying for a position as VP of marketing, showcase your core competencies that fit with a VP of marketing. Whether you learned those as CEO or not is irrelevant. It's the fact that you have those skills sets which is important."

### Focus on the future

Rather than tooting your own horn about your accomplishments in previous positions, focus the interview on how your talents will benefit the hiring company, says Scott Jeffrey, a strategic coach and author of "Creativity Revealed" (Creative Crayon, \$24.95).

"Instead of just presenting what you've done in the past – which very well could over-qualify you for the position – do some homework on the company," Jeffrey says. "Figure out how you can best serve this company using your current skill set, talents, creativity and experience. Put together a package – a spiral-bound presentation, perhaps – demonstrating what you've learned about their business and how you can serve them."

### Positive attitude pays

If you're not enthusiastic about the job, it'll come through in the interview. Even if you're competing for a job that you may be overqualified for, you should still have a positive attitude about the position and be able to explain your eagerness to be hired, says **Dora Vell**, founder and CEO of the Boston-based executive search firm **Vell Executive Search**.

"Explain why you are excited by this role, and have a very clear view as to what you find exciting about the job," Vell says. "Mean it and express it. Do not drone on how great you were in the bigger role or how much smarter you are than everyone else."

### Not your steppin' stone

If a hiring company fears you're overqualified, they might be concerned about how soon you'll leave the position if you find a better job. To offset this, demonstrate to the company how you hope to stay and grow your career with them, Hill says.

"Don't tell the HR representative or person hiring that this is just a stepping stone for you," he says. "They want to fill the position with someone who brings value to the company and wants to be there. Ultimately the employer wants to grow their business and make life a little easier for themselves. Demonstrate that you can help them in these endeavors."

*Dora Vell is the CEO of Vell Executive Search, a premier retained technology executive search firm in Boston. Ms. Vell is an internationally recognized expert in recruiting technology executives including: CEOs, COOs, CTOs, CMOs, CROs, board members and others. She works with VC-backed, PE-backed private companies and public companies. She can be reached at [dora@vell.com](mailto:dora@vell.com).*