

## 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 a job offer; 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; how can someone with an abundance of talent or experience not get an offer? Aren't good recruiters and hiring managers paid to look for talent and experience? If being overqualified appears to be a convenient excuse, then maybe it is. In my opinion, there's 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, most 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 or experience allow you to go far beyond this. As a result, you might require greater compensation or have other expectations 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 "overqualified" which generally means one of five things in my experience:

1. **Monetary issues** occur when a candidate with increased education, skills or experience require a higher salary than the organization's payroll currently allows. They simply can't afford your additional qualifications.
2. **Adaptation risk** is when a candidate might not be able to adapt to a new work environment, team or processes due their previous experience. This can increase training costs, reduce innovation and impact the productivity of a work center. Someone with tremendous experience might not be able to adjust their ways.
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 or the organization as soon as they find a role which 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.

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

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.