How to Handle the Objection “You're Overqualified”

“They are not hiring me because I'm overqualified. I have excellent experience and advanced degree, but I'm willing to take a lower-level position.”

Understand the Concerns of the Hiring Authority

Employers hesitate to hire a person who is overqualified because they believe the person could be bored or unhappy. As a result, they feel you will quit the minute a better paying opportunity with more responsibility presents itself.

Examine why you are willing to take a step back. The response, “I need a job!” will not endear you to an employer. You must effectively explain why a demotion is a good option for you.

Examine why you want the position. You must use your communication skills to convince the hiring authority why a demotion is a good option. You must create a reasonable explanation.

Some effective explanations could include:

• “My extensive travel has cost my family time for years. It’s important to me to accept a position that involves far less travel so I can spend more time with my family.”

• “When I review my job history, I was the happiest and most fulfilled when I was hands on in operations, not when I was managing others. This is the reason I’ve decided to focus on an operations vs. management position.”

You need to show why it makes sense for you to accept what seems to be a step back in your career.

Don’t Water Down Your Resume

If you are not honest about your abilities, you might end up accepting a new job that is not a good match for you. Most employers will take advantage of additional skills you bring to the table, once they feel comfortable with your level of interest. Often, you start in a job that is a step back but because of your abilities, you end up being promoted to a position with more responsibility and compensation.

Don’t Appear Desperate

If you appear desperate to take ANY job because bills are piling up, you will not get hired. If you say, “I’ll accept any job, just to get my foot in the door” you will often be eliminated from consideration. Hiring authorities want to hire the most competent person to perform the responsibilities of the specific job they have available.

You need to show a high level of interest and a high level of confidence in your ability to transfer skills from past jobs into the current opportunity. It is your job to show the skills you possess that are transferrable, not wait for the hiring authority to figure it out for themselves.

Customize Your Career Summary and Cover Letter

Your resume will be screened out if you have not customized it to fit the opportunity offered. This is different from dummying down your resume. You don’t want your cover letter to state you are seeking a management position, when the job you have applied for is NOT in management. This is one of the most common mistakes made by job seekers. If an automated system is initially screening resumes and the key words are not found in your career summary – you will be screened out before an actual person even reads your resume.

Often “Overqualified” Is Another Word For “Too Expensive”

When an employer sees twenty years of experience and they only require three, they are convinced that you are out of their price range. All employers have hiring budgets, and it is rare when they can go above the salary ranges set by management. If you are willing to take a cut in compensation, it is up to you to explain this to the employer, before you are screened out.