

# WHAT IF AN EMPLOYER TELLS YOU THAT YOU'RE OVERQUALIFIED FOR A JOB?

## Presenter:

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## Reference Article:

- [What if an Employer Tells You That You're Overqualified for a Job?](#)
- Posted on [Get Hired by LinkedIn News](#)

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## MAIN POINTS

- ▶ “Overqualified” can be a puzzling reason for rejection
  - ▶ What Does “Overqualified” Mean?
  - ▶ Overqualified? Some Reasons Why
  - ▶ Best Responses to “You’re Overqualified for This Job”
  - ▶ Your Response Matters
  - ▶ Top Takeaways
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- A decorative graphic consisting of several parallel white lines of varying lengths, slanted upwards from left to right, located in the bottom right corner of the slide.

- ▶ By Mariah Flores - News Reporter @ LinkedIn
- ▶ **One of the worst things you can hear** as a job seeker is, **“You’re overqualified for this role.”**
- ▶ This phrase **can be gut-wrenching, especially if you have been searching for a long time.** It can feel like there is **no hope.** You feel **dejected, rejected** and just plain **inadequate.** *Yes, as contradictory as that sounds, it isn’t always seen as a compliment.*
- ▶ **“To job seekers, being told they're overqualified can feel like being told by a date that they're too funny or good-looking — and leaves them wondering why it's a deal-breaker,”** per U.S. News.
- ▶ **And then your mind starts running wild, spewing all sorts of doubtful thoughts.**
  - ▶ “Is something wrong with my resume?”
  - ▶ “Why did they interview me, only to reject me?”
  - ▶ “Don’t I at least deserve a chance?”
  - ▶ “Are there any jobs I’m ‘qualified’ for, if not this one?”
  - ▶ And finally, “What does 'being overqualified' even mean?”

“OVERQUALIFIED” CAN BE  
A PUZZLING REASON FOR REJECTION

- ▶ If you are **constantly being dismissed as “overqualified” or “highly skilled as a candidate,”** it can be **tough to know how to potentially advocate for yourself** and the position at stake. And with **11.4 million job openings**, it’s almost unfathomable to understand **why employers are so picky** at times.
- ▶ First and foremost, a **definition is needed before we dive into how to respond to being called “overqualified.”**
- ▶ **What Does “Overqualified” Mean?** From Jasmine Escalera, Ph.D., career and confidence coach for women of color and LinkedIn Top Voice 2022.
  - ▶ **“Being overqualified for a job means that you exceed the experience level that is required to perform the actual job”.**
  - ▶ In **job descriptions**, there are **requirements and experience that are requested for opportunities**. And **being overqualified truly means** that when you read that job description, **you can really do and master everything that that position is requesting** — and then **probably some more.**”
  - ▶ In short, **your skills and experience exceed what’s needed for the position** according to the **job description**.

WHAT DOES “OVERQUALIFIED” MEAN?

- ▶ **Theresa White**, a career clarity coach & job search strategist, sheds light on **what the hiring manager (or recruiter)** might actually think when they encounter an “overqualified” candidate.
  - ▶ Your salary expectations may be too high
  - ▶ You won't stay long because you'll be bored
  - ▶ **Ageism**, but this can be expanded to all forms of **discrimination**
  - ▶ They are **insecure** because you are actually more qualified than them *(been there)*
- ▶ **According to Forbes:**
  - ▶ Some **recruiters or hiring managers** also view an **overqualified candidate** as someone who **may not be a good cultural fit, could get bored easily and become an attrition risk**, or possibly **doesn't quite understand the role they're applying for**.
  - ▶ The **reasons are numerous and vary** from company to company.

OVERQUALIFIED? HERE ARE SOME REASONS WHY ...

- ▶ As noted in the Fast Company piece by Emily McCrary-Ruiz-Esparza, it **should be on the prospective candidates to decide if they're overqualified for a role and not companies.**
  - ▶ The Great Resignation has shown it's **still a candidate's market**, with **many people rejecting the traditional upward mobility** in their careers.
  - ▶ Maybe they want to **make a lateral move within a company or sector or try something entirely new.**
- ▶ **“What about professionals who want to move down a peg — or two, or three?”** asked McCrary-Ruiz-Esparza.
  - ▶ **People have various reasons for applying for roles that may seem out of their league and that's no one else's business** — not their colleagues' or future employers'.
  - ▶ Instead, **recruiters, hiring managers and employers should focus on the individual and what they add to the company and its culture, beyond their many qualifications.** Time to stop gatekeeping.

... OVERQUALIFIED? HERE ARE SOME REASONS WHY

- ▶ Did you read over White's **list of reasons a hiring manager may call you "overqualified"** and think, **"That's exactly what I'm experiencing!"** You're in luck, because she graciously provided some ways to respond (*on this & the next page*):
  - ▶ **"You'll get bored"**: Be honest, enthusiastic and upfront about your reasons for applying.
  - ▶ **"We can't properly compensate you"**: Express how you are open to negotiating a salary that fits their budget.
  - ▶ **The hiring manager is insecure**: "Talk about your ability to take direction and collaborate with diverse groups of people." *Great TEAM member!*
- ▶ Be cautious, as that last point may be a major red flag. You need to think about if you really want to work for that manager.

BEST RESPONSES TO  
"YOU'RE OVERQUALIFIED FOR THIS JOB" ...

- ▶ When asked what to do if an employer says you're overqualified, senior digital marketing manager and resume writer **Maya James** provides another useful response that all job seekers can use, especially when responding over the phone or by email:
  - ▶ **"I appreciate you acknowledging that my skill set is advanced, and it makes me overqualified for the position.**
  - ▶ **However, I've researched your company and I applied for this role in particular, because I love what the company has built (*include a fact about the company that explains why you like the company*) AND I know the value that I can bring to this role. My career path can be utilized in this way (*explain why you're an asset for the job based on the job description & how you'll help the hiring manager very soon!*).**
  - ▶ **And, I know for sure that I can help the company exceed its Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and company goals based on my extensive work history."**
- ▶ With a response like the one above, you **explained your "Why" for applying & directly addressed their concerns of overqualification.**

... BEST RESPONSES TO  
"YOU'RE OVERQUALIFIED FOR THIS JOB"

- ▶ **Many employers don't expect a candidate to push back after being rejected for overqualification.**
  - ▶ **By doing so, you're actually showcasing grit and willingness to communicate. Make sure you approach the situation with grace and respect, or else it could backfire on you.**
- ▶ **I like to remind myself that career growth and job searching are all about building bridges, not burning them. This sentiment remains steadfast, especially when facing a position I may come off as too qualified for.**
- ▶ **So the next time you hear, "You're overqualified," look at it as an opportunity to stick up for yourself. It can look like politely explaining why you think you're, in fact, the perfect candidate OR its time to start seeking out other positions that can give you the pay and responsibilities you deserve. As the saying goes: one door closes and another opens.**
- ▶ **TIP: Struggling to build a professional brand, regardless of your experience and qualifications? This #GetHired Live with Diana YK Chan is a must-watch!**

YOUR RESPONSE MATTERS

- ▶ **“You’re overqualified for this job or role.” How do you respond?**
  - ▶ Overqualified candidates **exceed the experience requirements needed** to perform a certain role, **but they shouldn’t necessarily be disregarded.**
  - ▶ **Reasons for rejection** based on **overqualification** include **salary, insecurity, potential for resignation and sometimes discrimination**, such as ageism.
  - ▶ **If you do respond, do so with grace, enthusiasm and all the reasons beyond your qualifications for applying to the role.**
  - ▶ **Employers, sometimes job seekers *want* to travel “down the ladder”.**
- ▶ **TIP: Expand your LinkedIn Network by marketing yourself digitally IN PHASES!**
  - ▶ (1) **FOLLOW** (*do not Connect at first*) people/companies of interest (industry, work, jobs), (2) **CONSUMER** – read or watch their posts, (3) **ENGAGER** - like &/or comment on their posts, (4) **PROMOTER** – share your content/ideas, (5) respond to **COMMENTS** on your posts to **START** a conversation, (6) request to **CONNECT & include a note**, and (7) **MESSAGE** in real time.

TOP TAKEAWAYS

### **Articles with job search info, tools, templates, other job search links ...:**

- ▶ **“How to Use LinkedIn to Find Your Dream Job”** – [Resume Worded](#)
- ▶ **“3 new rules for virtual interviewing”** – [Fast Company](#)
- ▶ **“How to Use LinkedIn to Get a Job”** - [TopResume](#)
- ▶ **“10 Things Every Job Seeker Should Know Before Starting Their Search”** - [TopResume](#)
- ▶ **“10 Career Experts Share Their #1 Piece of Job Search Advice”** - [Glassdoor](#)
- ▶ **“Top Strategies for a Successful Job Search”** - [The Balance Careers](#)
- ▶ **“You Must Ignore: 7 Terrible Job Search Recommendations”** – [Aha! | Blog](#)
- ▶ **“6 Job Search Tips That Are So Basic People Forget Them”** – [themuse](#)
- ▶ **“14 Job Hunting Tips To Get the Job You Want”** – [Indeed](#)

**NOTE: Each article includes links to additional job search/career information.**

**QUESTIONS AND  
OTHER JOB SEARCH ARTICLES**

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