

**Q&A Column**  
**Author: Mark Swartz**

**Email Subject Line: Is Being Overqualified A Negative?**

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**Headline: Positioning Yourself When Overqualified**

**Summary:**

How do I deal with employers who consider me to be 'overqualified?' If I want the position, and am happy with the salary, why would they not jump at the chance to hire me?

Ron E., Burlington, Ontario

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**Headline: Positioning Yourself When Overqualified**

**Dear Mark,**

How do I deal with employers who consider me to be 'overqualified?' If I want the position, and am happy with the salary, why would they not jump at the chance to hire me?

Ron E., Burlington, Ontario

**Dear Ron,**

This is one of those situations where it helps to look at things from the viewpoint of the employer. Sometimes they are thrilled to find an applicant who can easily do the job – plus much more - and who will do so readily for the salary being offered. Then again...

Suppose you were making the hiring decision and it came down to two finalists: one was overqualified but seemingly pleased to accept the position, while the other was suitable though they appeared to be “hungrier” (that is, less experienced and more anxious to be employed). Who would you rather invest the time and effort in hiring, training and integrating into your tightly-knit team? The following are some pro’s and con’s you’d probably consider.

Regarding the over-qualified candidate:

<b>Pro’s</b>	<b>Con’s</b>
- Could do the work well with their eyes closed	- Might get bored quickly
- Has extensive, proven experience	- May be more set in their ways
- Is more employable at this level	- Could leave at first opportunity to make more money
- Knows how to get things done their way	- It’s possible they’ll be at odds with their supervisor’s way of doing things

For the adequately-qualified candidate:

<b>Pro’s</b>	<b>Con’s</b>
- Can do the work well enough	- Might be inclined to stay in the job longer without getting bored or restless

- Has some proven experience	- May be willing to learn and adapt in order to boost their experience
- Might be more appreciative of gaining employment at this level	- Their loyalty to your firm could be higher

Two other aspects to consider as well. Working against the over-qualified candidate, there may be the lingering, though unspoken question: "Why are you settling for something that appears to be less than what you're capable of?" And in favour of the adequately-qualified applicant, is the possibility that they'll work harder, put in longer hours if necessary, and put up with whatever it takes to keep their job.

Having said all of this, there are employers out there who will welcome your abundant skills and experience. The key is to position yourself in a way that appeals to those who are doing the hiring. Focus on how quickly you could be up and running productively. Emphasize that you are looking for a long-term fit and are happy to do the job at hand for however long it best suits the employer. Also refer to your history of loyalty and strong performance at your previous jobs without necessarily always bucking for a quick promotion. In this way you'll put a premium on stability and reduce some of the question marks that may otherwise arise.



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