

Job Hunting for the Overqualified



I recently had a distressing conversation with a friend who lost her job a year-and-a-half ago. My friend is in her 40s and has two decades of experience in her industry. But when she applies for a job—any job—she keeps hearing that she’s “overqualified” and gets turned down. Meanwhile, my friend and her husband (who also had been out of work and recently started a new job) have had to withdraw substantial sums from their retirement accounts to get by, and they’re temporarily living with her parents. How is she supposed to bounce back?

Dr. Paul Powers, one of the country’s preeminent management psychologists and the author of *Winning Job Interviews* (www.DrPaulPowers.com) shared these pointers for job seekers who just can’t get a break...

Reframe your résumé. If the first thing a potential employer reads about your job history is the phrase “Vice President,” he may assume your salary requirements are too high. Instead, highlight the experience you have with the relevant, and even rudimentary, skills necessary to do the job. “Don’t dumb down your résumé,” advises Powers. “Just reduce the emphasis on high-level awards and achievements.”

Use humor. Most people in job in-

terviews feel awkward about and have no effective response to the objection that they’re overqualified. Dr. Powers suggests first breaking the tension with a little humor, for example, by saying, “Actually, I don’t really have that much experience. I’m still in my 20s. I just take terrible care of myself.” Then proceed to explain how your “overqualifications” actually are a positive quality—and that your experience, work ethic and maturity will be invaluable to the company, bringing a new dimension to the job and to the people on your work team.

Avoid lying. Potential employers worry that you will get bored or leave for a better job as soon as the economy improves. Even if that’s in the back of your mind, you still can be honest without derailing your chances. Your response: “Frankly, I can’t predict the future. I read in the business news that our economy is looking at slower growth and that there will be fewer job opportunities in the future. So I’m here. I can make an immediate impact on this company from day one. And I’m ready to get started.”

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