

## **MATURE AGE JOB SEEKERS: *Resume Strategies to Avoid Being Labeled “Overqualified”***

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Just as limited knowledge and skills may obstruct a candidate's job search, being overqualified can also be just as unfavorable - particularly if you have recently stepped down from a senior position due to circumstances beyond your control, and are now forced to target lower level positions due to non-availability of higher level roles, or because you no longer want to assume as much responsibility.

While having diverse experience, exceptional education and impressive accomplishments at senior level should be an asset for prospective employers, the sad reality is that you can be perceived as being overqualified, thus sounding alarm bells for a recruiter/potential employer. This perception arises due to a number of reasons including that you will soon:

- become uninterested with the position and leave;
- have salary demands in excess of what is being offered;
- jump ship as soon as a better offer/position presents itself;
- set your sights on their management role.

So how can you script your resume in such a way that prevents you from being eliminated due to any of the reasons mentioned above? To begin with, avoid lying on your resume as you are destined to be caught out either during the interview process or when the interviewer commences the reference checking process.

Establishing a relationship that is founded on mistruths is certain to eventually turn sour so below are various strategies on how to repackage and sell your skills (without resorting to lying) to prevent you from being screened out.

- Focus on the skills that are pertinent to the role rather than showcasing your management level responsibilities. Formatting your resume in a combination style (also referred to as the hybrid resume) will permit you to position relevant skills at the forefront of the document without stating job titles or status within the organization. This format will also allow you to condense many years of experience without having to list dates and companies for which you worked, which is another initiative for veteran workers.

To recap, a combination resume format combines the best elements from both the Functional and Reverse Chronological layouts, hence the aptly named title – Combination. This format contains a powerfully written qualifications/professional profile, and other relevant sections including selected and relevant skills and/or accomplishments, followed by an employment history that is detailed in reverse chronological order.

- Ensure you de-emphasize senior management capabilities, and portray enthusiasm and competency in the tasks pertinent to the role in your qualifications/professional profile.
- Incorporate a section beneath your qualifications profile to emphasize achievements and contributions that show sought-after skills and experience important to the role.
- Within your employment history section downplay a 30+ year career by listing only the last 10-15 years of employment.
- In your job scope, highlight the skills and aptitudes that you used within your role, rather than portraying your senior level leadership.

Strategies for your cover letter:

- Address the reason why you are seeking this new position, remembering to portray your enthusiasm for this new challenge, as well as your commitment to their organization. Reasons

for seeking a less senior role could include: you want a more fulfilling and 'hands-on' role or you don't want as much high pressure or responsibility any more.

- Show how your background and experience can save their organization training time and costs and that you would assimilate far more quickly and produce results much faster than someone who is less skilled or experienced.

Strategies for your interview:

When attending the interview it is best that you address this issue directly rather than letting the interviewer bring it up to minimize any uncertainties he or she may have. Ensure you give good reasons why you are changing industry or seeking a less senior role. Re-state your eagerness and dedication to their organization and the fact that they will not be required to put a lot of time and cost into training you due to your impressive credentials and experience.

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