



Questions You Need to NAIL!

You appear to be over qualified for this position, why does it interest you?

In the last year and a half I've had so many clients who have said to me that they will do anything but *"don't put me on that highway again!"* They've had the high pressure jobs that require long hours and also spend lots of time commuting. Being an hour north of Toronto and having done the commute myself, I know it can be intense, draining on your physical & emotional well being as well as family and personal time.

When I hear this, I immediately challenge my clients to have them qualify their intentions. What always comes out of it is that they still want meaningful, challenging work but are happy to take a back seat to the "pressure cooker" environment they have been in. Whether it's moving down from a leadership role and becoming an individual contributor again or just moving into an area that interests them the most...losing their job has given them the time to reflect and redirect.

When we know this from the beginning, we position their resume, cover letter, conversations and thought process properly as many employers are skeptical when they see this downward movement. Also, because of the recession, employers are receiving hundreds of resumes from people who appear to be overqualified and often they don't give them a second look because they don't think the person is serious and will leave as soon as something better comes along.

If this is your situation, you need to genuinely convince the employer you are the best candidate and building on earlier Q&A's, we take our lead from there. The first thing you need to do is assess your strengths, determine what you love to do and examine why you are willing to take a step down. Once you have your reasons that are truly personal to you, your answer becomes clear. Some examples of your choice of words either written in your cover letter or verbalized in an interview could include one or a combination of the following statements:

- ◆ Although I have done x, y and z, my strength and passion is in area y and having the opportunity to focus in that area, I know I can contribute right away with very little guidance or direction.
- ◆ As an individual contributor and having had a successful career in X, I was promoted to a leadership role. I truly enjoyed it and learned a lot but it took me away from what I enjoy the most. However, having leadership skills in my background, I will be a great resource if needed.
- ◆ Having been in a leadership role, I have had the opportunity to lead, coach and mentor formally but I would be just as satisfied in supporting that in an informal manner.
- ◆ I'm not tied to a formal leadership role. I am at the stage in my life where I have had significant responsibility so I'm quite satisfied with stepping back and focusing solely at what I'm best at which is x.



- ◆ I believe there are strong benefits for both of us. Being unemployed, I want to work very much and what you are offering is exactly what I love to do and am best at. Doing great work makes me happiest, a lot more than money or a title, so this is perfect for me.
- ◆ I want to contribute in a meaningful way and this role allows me to have the most impact.
- ◆ I'm looking to make a long term commitment in my career. I've looked very closely at what I want from my career and where I want to work. Your organization and the challenge you are offering matches very closely to both.

You can also respond to this question by asking what their concerns are specifically. You may hear concerns around salary or the very subtle misappropriate age related concerns. Your job is to calm their fears and change their train of thought by talking about your desire to contribute with salary not being as important (*remember this does not mean "not" important...it means that with less responsibility, you typically get less money. It is not an open window to under pay for your skills*). Also, in regards to age, turn the question around and make it a strength by subtly indicating the benefits of "age", for example – little guidance or direction will be needed, strong initiative, short training times, leadership and mentoring ability, strong problem solving skills, ability to stick with a situation and see it through to conclusion, strong work ethic and desire to commit to a company.

Spend time really thinking about this question if this is your situation. Your challenge could be more difficult than trying to obtain a job at the same skill level, so think about your career as a lattice rather than ladder. A ladder is like with Jack and the Beanstalk...up, up, up. However, many people are stopping to reflect, only to find that "up" doesn't interest them more and that they would rather move like a vine on a lattice which moves up, then diagonally and sometimes downward but...very intentionally...convince your next potential employer of that.

Thanks for submitting questions to allow these articles to keep going. My goal is to give you value and solid support when you are looking for work...so keep the questions coming and I'll keep answering them.

Next week, we'll cover "What are your 5 year goals?"

Take care,

Lotte