

THE WORK PLACE

Advice on hiring seasoned pros and whether career coaches can get you back in the game



BY KATE BOEMEKE

OH, THOSE INFAMOUS WORDS: "SORRY, YOU'RE OVERQUALIFIED." How we hate to hear them. And do we really believe them?

"Heck no," said a job seeker I'll call Sue.

Sue has decades of experience in marketing, public relations, corporate communications and strategic planning. What she doesn't have, at present, is a job and she's tired of being told that XYZ Company can't hire her because she's overqualified and won't stick around.

"Where would I go," Sue asked, her frustration clear.

Sue offered this advice to employers who might be hesitant to hire seasoned professionals.

- Don't underestimate the value of experienced employees. The benefits that seasoned workers bring to companies are many. Consider maturity, industry experience and the stability that older workers bring to younger employees.
- This is an opportune time to reap the benefits of an amazing pool of talented candidates. Now, you can select someone with more experience than you could have ever hoped to bring on board in the past.
- Don't worry about overqualified workers moving on to greener pastures. If you give them the opportunity to contribute and be a productive member of the team, older workers repay with loyalty.
- Older workers lead by example, building a strong foundation for business growth. Older workers get the job done ... fabulously.
- An added bonus: older workers won't be leaving to raise a family.

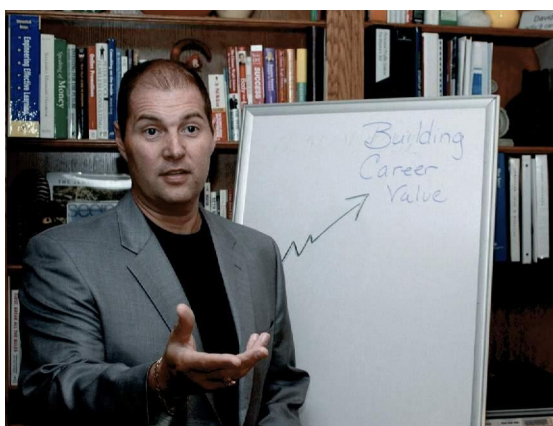
"Having a mix of younger and older employees gives depth to the company bench," Sue added.

Maybe it was the baseball reference, but suddenly I wanted to know what a career coach would say about being overqualified. For that perspective I turned to David Hults, president of activ:8 career coaching.

Advice from a career coach

"As a former HR professional, I think this expression is used too often. Sometimes it's true," he said. "And sometimes it's just a way to avoid the real conversation as to why the company didn't hire the candidate."

"Overqualified" candidates might ask themselves: "Was I asking for too much money?" "Did I interview well?" But the real question candidates should be asking is this:



Career Coach, David Hults

"Within the department, company or organization, was I perceived as the aspirin to their identified headache?"

"Companies hire people to fill a need – to relieve a headache. This is where networking can really help. Job seekers should be meeting with leaders in organizations that can be honest with them and let them know how they are perceived. Job seekers need to know what's realistic and what they need to work on," David said.

"Easier said than done," commented Sue. "I can't get past the phone system in order to talk to an HR professional much less a company leader."

That's a comment I've heard a lot lately and it's often followed by this one: "Would it help if I were working with a job coach or head hunter? And, what's the difference?" Since I already had David on the line, I pitched that one to him.

"Career coaches teach the client tools needed to drive a successful career campaign," David said. "They often help the client find deeper meaning in making career choices versus just getting a job. Coaches help empower individuals so that they can direct their career and find a career fit that goes beyond learned skill sets and even college degrees. Some coaches are skilled at helping individuals make career transitions from one field to another even without direct work experience in the target career."

"Head hunters search for positions that match the candidate's current skill sets and or degrees. They present employers with potential candidates who they think would fit the position. Most head hunters get paid

by the hiring organization after the employee is hired, so be careful," David cautioned. "Job seekers may find that a head hunter wants to close the deal even when it's not the right deal."

"If you are stuck, stalled or confused than you should look into finding professional help," David advised.

"Some fields that have greater demand, and, in some cases, demand changes from state to state or region to region. You may be able to realize your career focus if you're willing to move to another city or state, or into a different profession. That's when career coaching can really assist you."

Being a bit of a penny-pincher, I had to ask if job seekers can coach themselves.

"There aren't a lot of self-help tools out in the market," David said. "One resource is to take training classes at a local college. Consultants who can administer personality or skill profile tests can also help shed some light on what you should be focusing on to make a successful career transition." David offers an activ:8 careers Tool Kit series that does this very thing.

Bottom line: finding a job isn't easy. With or without a career coach or head hunter, seasoned professional or not, the best way to get in the starting line-up is to:

- Know your strengths. (What is it that you make happen time and time again? What headaches can you solve?)
- Shore up your weaknesses. (Take an honest inventory, (gasp!) maybe even ask the advice of your last boss, then take a class or classes if that's what it takes to make you competitive)
- Develop a utility game. (It's hard to say no to someone who can hit long balls and field them.)

David had one last piece of advice to offer: be patient. "Finding the right job depends on several things including their skill set, the job market, how willing they are to make a change, how well they network and so on. Every person is different. I've had clients who have made the transition in a month and others who have taken 10 months or longer."

Learn more about career coaching or contact David at www.activ8careers.com.

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