

Ask the Career Coach: Dumbing Down Resumes

You don't want to seem overqualified for a position, but dumbing down a resume can backfire.

By [Lisa Chenofsky Singer](#)

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Dear Career Coach Lisa,

What do you think about leaving off or adjusting credentials—such as PhD's, managerial experience—work years from one's resume during this economic downturn in order not to appear overqualified for a job?

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In today's market, with all of the online search capabilities, it can be challenging to present yourself as someone you are not when social media can give you away. How you profile yourself on LinkedIn.com is more typically how you will appear. Think about "Googling" your name to find out what data comes up for you. Although you may choose to have multiple resumes, your social media profile is your tell all.

Typically, when you hear you are overqualified, this can reflect a number of concerns. Some potential employer's concerns may include that they believe you will be bored in the position, you will not remain in the job long, you may try to expand the job and reach for work that is someone else's responsibility or they may not be prepared to pay what they believe your experience deserves.

One technique for shortening your resume is to limit your experience to your most recent and relevant positions and then consolidating your earlier experiences showing only highlights of achievements.

I do not recommend changing your job title because when a prospective employer checks your references, typically the company will provide the latest title held just prior to your departure. Other inconsistencies may turn up in your social media data. Think about how you may have been quoted in an article, blog or book. How were you referenced?

Your confidence and body language during an interview can also tell a lot about you. When you interview, your presence and how you handle yourself reveals your confidence, experience and abilities.

Keep in mind that today's market is challenging and compensation is approximately 10-20 percent lower than where we were before this economic downturn. Some interviewers can be intimidated by a person with a wealth of experience. Others will be thrilled to have your experience on their team. It is up to you as the interviewee to present yourself in the most appropriate manner to the interviewer.

Be careful when dumbing down your resume. It can backfire on you. A person I know presented a dumbed down resume to the company of his dreams even though his experience was greater than the position he applied to. As he was in the midst of interviewing for the director role, a VP level position opened up. Now, he had to explain his passion for the company and how he was willing to come in at junior role so he could join their operations. Thankfully, the hiring manager was so taken with his abilities and impressed with his commitment to the company that he hired him. This situation could have been interpreted differently. If he saw the candidate as disingenuous, the situation could have gone the other way.

Although I do not recommend dumbing down resumes, you may choose to selectively highlight certain experiences and scale back on some other experiences for your resume. The challenge is adjusting your on line presence to reflect a consistent message. When you interview, you may choose to adjust

your answers to reflect the level of experience required. You may wish to address that you have additional experience but that you understand what is required for this position and stay focused on making your answers consistent with the job at hand.

Remember what Sir Walter Scott said: "Oh what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive."

"Ask the Career Coach" is a column dedicated to those who may be in transition or wrestling with a career dilemma by providing a forum for advice. We welcome your questions. Please send them to CareerCoachLisa@gmail.com.

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