

STAY OR LEAVE? OVERQUALIFIED EMPLOYEES SEEK WAYS TO REVIVE THEIR CAREERS

Experts at MRINetwork® Offer Tips for Moving Up or Out

(Philadelphia) – The worst of the financial crisis happened nearly three years ago, but for some people who took jobs far below their pay or experience grade, it isn't over yet. Some took jobs for the sake of resume continuity. Others found work just to pay the bills. Still others moved to lower-paying positions with lesser titles at their existing companies to help the company reduce costs while avoiding layoffs. But now, they feel stuck. According to recruitment experts at **MRINetwork®** (www.mrinetwork.com), there are steps that these employees can take to get their careers back on track.

“Overqualified employees need to take a step back and evaluate their situation,” advises Stacy Ethun, president of Park Avenue Group, an **MRINetwork** affiliate specializing in the banking, securities and financial services industries. “First, look at the company you're currently with: Is it growing? Are there perhaps future opportunities based on that growth? The outlook may be promising for those who are seen as contributors who ‘sacrificed for the good of the cause’ during the bad times.”

“If you're leaning toward staying in a job for which you're overqualified, find ways to make the most of it and maintain a positive attitude,” says Ethun. “Look for opportunities to do more, learn something new or share your knowledge. Extend yourself – you might be surprised at how you attract the notice of those making advancement decisions.”

If, on the other hand, you decide to look for a position that better suits your experience and capabilities, says Dave Dart, Managing Partner of **MRINetwork** affiliate Morisey-Dart Group, you don't have to feel guilty about leaving the employer who gave you a job when you needed it.

“Your employer hired you knowing there was a risk of flight as the market improved,” he says. “But at this point both parties have won. The employee was able to continue working, and the employer was able to leverage the skills and experience of the overqualified individual for a solid return on investment.”

Rob Romaine, president of **MRINetwork**, suggests several tactics that can help the overqualified employee land a better position:

- **Extract relevant skills and experience from your “stepping stone” role.** Figure out what transferrable experience might exist in your current job that can enhance the skill set you'll need in your ideal job. “Project management skills, for example, are relevant to M&A processes and other areas,” he says. “And if you've had to maintain a database, parlay that into sales skills, since marketers often need to keep track of huge client lists in a way that maximizes their success.”
- **Emphasize that you worked through the downturn.** Employers often want to make sure candidates can deal with difficult situations and do things that might otherwise be considered beneath them. “Demonstrate your work ethic and show that you don't have hang-ups about rolling up your sleeves,” says Romaine.
- **Stay in the mix.** Meet people and network assiduously. Make it clear that you've been doing your current job temporarily and have more solid permanent aspirations. Remind people of your background and prior experience and engage as much as possible with other people outside your direct team.
- **Keep up to speed with friends who still work in your chosen area.** These contacts can help you keep your finger on the pulse of the industry you used to work in and will tell you if there are any hiring catalysts on the horizon. “Access to the news flow within your sector is best accomplished through professionals who are already working there,” advises Romaine.

Actually, leaving the job should not be difficult, providing that the employee has stepped up and delivered to their employer what they promised. “Hopefully the candidate is leaving their employer in a better situation than when they joined,” says Romaine. “With a reasonable notice period, they should be able to leave in good standing and know that their impact on the company will remain long after they leave. Good people are always missed, and great companies have only good thoughts about those who leave a positive impact on their business.”

If you really want to leave on good terms, leave behind something positive, says Romaine, such as a referral, a trained employee to replace you or other forms of reciprocity. “The decision to stay or leave is very personal,” he observes. “Delivering value to the company that hired you right up until your last hour of employment is a responsibility and a reasonable contract to live up to. Who could ask for anything more?”