



70% of Employers Say They'll Hire Overqualified Candidates — But There's a Catch

New survey reveals why fears of quick exits and low engagement keep companies from fully embracing top talent.

OKLAHOMA CITY, Oct. 8, 2025 — A new survey from Express Employment Professionals and The Harris Poll reveals a growing tension in the hiring process: while most employers welcome overqualified candidates, concerns about retention and motivation often outweigh the benefits, leaving job seekers frustrated and anxious.

Employers See Value — But Worry About Retention

Seven in 10 U.S. hiring managers (70%) say their company typically considers overqualified candidates. The reasons are clear:

- 50% believe they have more confidence on the job
- 48% say they're more productive
- 47% cite better decision-making skills
- 46% value their ability to mentor junior employees
- 45% appreciate that they require little to no training



But hesitation runs deep. Three-quarters of employers believe overqualified hires struggle to stay motivated in lower-level roles (75%), and nearly as many fear they'll leave as soon as a better opportunity comes along (74%). More than a quarter strongly agree with these concerns (26% and 28%, respectively). In fact, nearly 3 in 5 (58%) would rather train someone new than risk disengagement from an overqualified employee.

Job Seekers Feel the Pressure

For job seekers, the presence of overqualified candidates feels like an uneven playing field.

- 55% say it's impossible to compete against them.
- 74% believe companies are more likely to hire an overqualified applicant than someone with only entry-level experience.
- 67% worry employers prefer these candidates because they "bring more to the table,"

even if the role doesn't match their level.

Despite these concerns, most job seekers aren't backing down. Eighty-seven percent believe it's appropriate to apply for jobs they're overqualified for, and nearly two-thirds (65%) have done so, often for reasons beyond pay, such as better work-life balance (56%) or passion for the industry (41%). The need for income remains the top motivator (59%).

Generational Differences Add Complexity

Younger job seekers feel the pressure most. Gen Z and millennials are significantly more likely than Gen X to believe it's impossible to compete against overqualified candidates (67% and 60% vs. 44%) and to think companies favor them (84% and 77% vs. 66%). They're also more likely to worry that employers prefer overqualified candidates because they bring more to the table (73% and 72% vs. 57%).

"Overqualified candidates represent a chance to secure top talent in today's market," said Bob Funk Jr., CEO, President and Chairman of Express Employment International. "The key is to focus on skills-based hiring, which widens the talent pool by looking beyond résumés and degrees and makes the best use of a candidate's abilities and ambition. Without that alignment, the risk of a quick exit is real."

Survey Methodology

The Job Insights survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals from June 2 to 28, 2025, among 1,000 U.S. hiring decision-makers.

The Job Seeker Report was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals from June 12 to 27, 2025, among 1,000 adults ages 18 and older.

For full survey methodologies, please contact Sheena.Hollander@ExpressPros.com, Director of Corporate Communications & PR.

If you would like to arrange for an interview to discuss this topic, please contact Sheena.Hollander@ExpressPros.com, Director of Corporate Communications & PR.

About Robert (Bob) Funk Jr.

Robert (Bob) Funk Jr. is the Chief Executive Officer, President and Chairman of Express Employment International, a global staffing franchisor founded and headquartered in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. He leads a portfolio of workforce solution brands, including the flagship Express Employment Professionals franchise, along with several affiliated brands serving specialized markets. The Express franchise brand is an industry-leading, international

staffing company with franchise locations across the U.S., Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.

About Express Employment Professionals

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