

# Overqualified candidates underrated says study

December 10 2010

---

Companies may want to give job candidates who are overqualified for positions a second look, according to a recent study by a Darla Moore School of Business researcher.

Dr. Anthony Nyberg's study, published in the [Journal of Applied Psychology](#) this fall, dispels the myth that overqualified job applicants are easily bored or prone to quit. Intelligent workers, the research indicates, benefit companies.

The study was co-authored with Dr. Mark Maltarich, St. Ambrose University, and Dr. Greg Reilly, University of Connecticut.

“A manager trying to fill a job that demands less-than-top-level smarts should never reject a candidate out of hand just because the applicant's score on the company's intelligence tests labels him or her as smarter than the job requires,” said Nyberg, an assistant professor of management and an expert in strategic human resources. “If anything, our research suggests that such a candidate could be expected to stay longer and perform better than an applicant whose scores make him supposedly a better fit.”

That may provide hope to millions out of work. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, unemployment reached 9.8 percent in November, meaning 15 million Americans are seeking employment.

The faulty and pervasive assumption among managers has been

reinforced in the courts, Nyberg says.

“To make matters worse, courts have upheld the legality of discriminating against applicants who are ‘too smart,’” he said. “This kind of thinking has no doubt tossed more than a few layoff victims into the ranks of the long-term unemployed, a group that now constitutes nearly half of all U.S. jobless.”

Nyberg’s findings are based on the analysis of more than 5,000 adults’ labor-force behavior over a 25-year period in a nationwide U.S. sample. The data were taken from the Bureau of Labor Statistics National Longitudinal Survey of Youth.

He found that in positions with low cognitive demands, as defined by the federal government, which would include garbage collectors or car washers, employees with higher cognitive ability were less likely than others to voluntarily leave. Moreover, Nyberg said, in predicting job departure, the most mentally demanding jobs produced job dissatisfaction at three times the rate of the simplest [jobs](#).

Nyberg said high-intelligence job candidates have many reasons for seeking a simple job. It could be for a lifestyle or health choice, an affinity for a company’s values or the simple need of earning a paycheck. He said rather than automatically rejecting an applicant who is overqualified, a hiring manager should probe to understand the applicant’s rationale.

Provided by University of South Carolina

Citation: Overqualified candidates underrated says study (2010, December 10) retrieved 3 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-12-overqualified-candidates-underrated.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.