

## Struggling to Get an Interview? Maybe it's Your Job Title

Dear Stephen:

*I am having a hard time finding a job as a sales rep. I was convinced I would have an easy time in this hot economy where every manufacturer and dealer is looking to hire, but alas, I have found no luck. My title is "regional sales manager" at a small company that makes chairs and benching systems, but I am really looking to move up to a larger company.*

*Basically, I am the only outside sales rep for a southeast, three-state region. I call on end users, dealers and the A&D community, you know, the usual stuff. As I'm sure you understand, the title of my position is a bit of a misnomer. I do not really "manage" anyone. Rather, I "manage" sales in my region.*

*I am given this fancy title for several reasons: First, they feel the word "manager" in my title gives me more clout when I call*

*customers. Second, it helps my company's brand to have someone with a "manager" title in the field. I do not have even a regional manager to answer to, all the sales reps report directly to the vice president of sales. And finally, the more prestigious sounding title makes the job more marketable to potential recruits. We are a B or C player in the market, so my company likes to fall back on gimmicks like these when hiring. I am ashamed to admit the strategy even worked on me.*

*While the title is nice and all, I am finding that it is actually something of a burden. I am still young and have only been at my job for three years. Since there is no level above mine and below leadership, there's nowhere to go in my current company. Because my end goal is to be a true man-*



You can send your workplace questions to Stephen at: [StephenSays@bellow.press](mailto:StephenSays@bellow.press)

Questions selected to be answered, will appear in this column. Please use the Subject: Stephen Says for all emails. Stephen Viscusi is a bestselling author, television personality, and CEO of The Viscusi Group, global executive recruiters located in New York. Follow Stephen on Twitter @stephenviscusi, Like Stephen on Facebook; and follow him on LinkedIn.

*ager, I find myself needing to at least make a lateral move to a larger and more prominent company. When I go on interviews, however, the first question I get is always "How many people do you manage?" When I explain my situation, hiring managers often just make a little face and move on. I never get called back.*

*It took a couple of interviews, but now I realize my current title is screwing me. Ultimately, I am a sales rep and just want to find the same job at a different, larger, more prominent company, so I can learn more and grow in a larger organization. Help me out!*

**Over-Titled and Under-Qualified**

# Unless you are specifically a marketer, anything with the word "marketing" in the title is a kiss of death.

Dear Over-Titled:

This is very common. Many sales organizations both small and large tend to use fancier titles to describe fairly ordinary sales rep jobs, mostly for the reasons you astutely described. It makes the job more marketable to both potential clients and employees. A good example of this is how what used to be called a "secretary" is now called an "executive assistant" or a "sales assistant." Often, they are the same thing, but the connotative distinction makes a big difference. Nothing wrong with either title, by the way, we all have to start off somewhere.

Some more insidious companies are even able to use more convoluted and confusing titles to make it less likely their competitors find their employees through LinkedIn or other databases. This even happens when you apply into companies, too. Often at large companies, on online job sites like Indeed.com, and even when headhunters search for candidates, once your resume is submitted it is sent through a

computerized filtration program looking for keywords. If you are applying for a simple sales job, and your resume says "manager" in it, it is entirely possible your resume may never even be seen by an actual human. It will simply be disqualified upon arrival.

Here are some other common confusing names for sales reps that can hurt your chances of getting an interview: "district manager," "market manager," "account executive" and "account manager." You get the idea.

As a recruiter, we ALWAYS stress to candidates one's resume should be open and honest. Moreover, as a rule of thumb, one's title on their resume should exactly match their business card and LinkedIn profile. In this case, however, I am going to make an exception: If you are in sales, and have no other outside sales reps reporting to you (assistants do not count), and you know you need to make a lateral move, it is totally acceptable to call yourself an "outside sales representative," a "new business development

representative" or an "A&D sales representative." As long as the title is honest and accurately represents the work that you currently do, I think that tweaking it on your resume — especially to make it sound less impressive — is entirely fair.

A few more tips: Unless you are specifically a marketer, anything with the word "marketing" in the title is a kiss of death. Also, always spell out the word "representative" rather than just simply using "rep" on resumes. Make sure to describe the geography you cover, list specific sales volume numbers and offer to provide an account list. Keep your resume simple, and be sure it mirrors your LinkedIn profile. When you update one, you should always update the other.

Try this out, and I bet you will double the interviews you get. The process will be much smoother, faster and hopefully it will put you on the path toward landing you your dream job. Good luck!

**Stephen**