

WHAT YOU SEE IS OFTEN NOT WHAT YOU GET: WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT RESUME FRAUD

As the economy remains in a downturn, prospective employees seek to gain employment at all costs even if it means lying on their resumes.

In an increasingly competitive employment market, job-seekers are quick to take whatever steps they can to present themselves as qualified and attractive candidates to employers. This means that prospective employees will even use websites like Fake Resume.com that instruct applicants how to cheat on their resumes in order to get ahead of the competition. Some candidates go so far to use this website, as well as other similar sites, in order to be creative and perpetuate affirmative falsehoods in order to increase their employability. Various studies have concluded that at least forty percent of prospective applicants lie in one form or another on their resumes. Is this the kind of candidate your company wants as an employee?

By recognizing a few of the most commonly used deception techniques, employers can better position themselves to identify deceitful applicants, particularly when it comes to fraudulent representations relating to an applicant's educational background. One of the more common areas where applicants attempt to improve their standing is by making unsupportable claims about their educational history. With the proliferation of "diploma mills" such as Instantdegrees.com evidences how simple it has become to obtain a phony, but official looking diploma. Today, there are an estimated 400 plus diploma mills in operation along with another 300 websites offering counterfeit diplomas.

Here are some ways that applicants attempt to falsify information on their resumes:

1. **Sequence of degrees**- The normal sequence is high school, college and then graduate school. If a resume skips this normal progression or the progression is out of sequence this should send up a red flag that something is amiss.
2. **Time lapse between degrees**-Usually, it takes 4 years to complete an undergraduate degree and two years for a master's degree. If the timeline between degrees seems too compressed, this should also be a warning.
3. **Inconsistent information**-More often than not, the job applicant will make mistakes that provide clues that the resume contains false information. For example, the resume's work history section may claim that the applicant held a part-time position in North Carolina while the section on educational background may indicate that the applicant was a full-time student in Illinois. This may seem obvious, but many companies routinely miss this glaring inconsistency.

What you as an employer can do to verify and screen out such potentially harmful applicants:

1. **Pre-employment screening services**- The range of services offered by pre-employment screening companies are the most comprehensive and are sometimes referred to as background screening services. Typical services offered by these companies are public record searches that include identity valuation, criminal records, credit history, driving records, worker's compensation claims and reference validations.
2. **Human resource screenings**-While a company's human resource department may not have the ability to conduct comprehensive searches to determine if a job candidate has committed fraud on their resume, there are some steps these departments can take to help spot a potential landmine, including:
 - a. **Verifying credentials**-this involves contacting prior employers and academic institutions appearing on the resume. This can be done by asking the applicant for proof of degree(s) as well as providing true and accurate transcripts, contacting the school to confirm dates of attendance, graduation, grades and degrees earned and checking the accreditation of a school through the United States Department of Education website.
 - b. **Questioning candidates**-questioning the applicant about claims appearing on a resume is an effective way to identify potential problem areas.
 - c. **Additional References**-ask the applicant to supply references not listed in the resume itself.
 - d. **Resume Review**-Evaluate the resume as if there are inconsistencies, particularly regarding time lines. A quick review of Fake Resume.com would be a wise use of time in order to uncover some of the tricks that prospective employees are now learning via the internet.

Resume fraud happens all of the time. Between sites that offer how to fake a resume to sites that offer phony degrees, companies have their work cut out for them. The bottom line is that some candidates who are desperate to find a job will work very hard to create an illusion that they are the perfect fit for your company. By outworking such applicants with thorough reference and background checks and with probing questions during the interview process, you can avoid putting on your payroll someone whose only real skill is deception.