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Hiring managers: Résumé lies a widespread problem

BY JENNIFER LECLAIRE
SPECIAL TO THE JOURNAL

Hiring managers know job candidates are putting their best feet forward and typically don't include every career detail on résumés. But outward lies and deceptions on a résumé are more common than you might think.

Some 57 percent of hiring managers report that they have caught a lie on a candidate's application, according to a **CareerBuilder.com** survey.

Of those hiring managers who found misrepresentations on a résumé, 93 percent did not hire the candidate. But the candidate's coast isn't clear even if he makes it through the screening process.

Forty-three percent of hiring managers said they would automatically dismiss a candidate who fibbed on a résumé. Others said it depends on the candidate and situation.

In one sense, people are always lying by leaving out the less favorable sides of their stories, said business psychologist **Michael Madera**, principal of **Madera Partners Consulting**, an executive coaching and organizational development firm in Medford.

"Each company has the chance to make a statement about its ethical stance by developing and promoting a policy about falsification loud and up front in the hiring process," Madera said. "That sets the tone for the hiring process and stakes out the ethical territory where the company wants to live."

Stretching dates to cover up employment gaps is the most commonly-caught résumé lie, with nearly 20 percent of hiring managers reporting they have run into this untruth.

Other top résumé deceptions include past employers, academic degrees and institutions, technical skills and certifications and accomplishments.

Integrity is major issue facing today's organizations, said **Edith Onderick-Harvey**, president of **Change Dynamics Consulting**, a leadership development and performance firm in Andover. Enron showed Corporate America the extreme results of lying, but more benign lies can also cause harm.

"You need to be able to stand by your brand promise, your service guarantees, and your research results," Onderick-Harvey says. "Hiring an applicant who has lied puts you in a potentially



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troubling position from the start."

The way Onderick-Harvey sees it, if the candidate has lied to get the job, then it's likely they will lie on the job about anything from how likely a sale is to how satisfied a customer was to why

a project didn't come off as planned.

How do you tell if a candidate is lying in the first place? Asking detailed questions during the interview process is one way. It's difficult for candidates to make up detailed responses on the fly, said **Michael Neece**, chief strategy officer for Northborough-based **Pongo Software**, a Web-based software company that develops career management tools.

There are some legitimate reasons — or at least understandable reasons — a candidate might lie. One of them is to protect himself and his former employer. If a candidate told the truth about being fired and filing a lawsuit for sexual harassment, Neece said, she might not be considered for the job and would also implicate the former employer.

If you think a candidate is lying, be courageous, Neece suggested.

"Tell the candidate you are not accusing him of lying, but you are confused or concerned," he explained. "The candidate will either resolve the concern by giving you additional information or they are going to continue lie and you both will know it."