

IN THIS DAY AND AGE, WHEN information is yours at the click of a button, it's hard to imagine that people would blatantly misrepresent themselves by padding their resumes and risk getting found out. Harder still, is to sometimes detect these fudged truths.

Earlier this year, the issue of resume fraud made local headlines when Swiss bank Credit Suisse filed a lawsuit against a Singaporean fund manager who falsely claimed to hold an MBA and law degree. While this is an outright lie that can be verified rather easily, there are other ways employees 'pad' their resumes that are not quite as easy to detect. These include embellishing job responsibilities, lying about last drawn salaries and positions previously held, falsifying employment histories and inaccurate dates of employment.

What's especially alarming is the mindset of the younger generation who have yet to enter the workforce. According to a recent survey of undergraduates at a local university published in Today newspaper earlier this year, 53.3% of the 170 respondents aged between 20 and 27 felt it was okay to embellish their resumes because everyone else was doing it.

Resumes are not legal documents so there's not much an employer can do if someone lies, except decline to hire them.

While fudging the truth may be more common than you may imagine, it's certainly not right from an ethical and legal standpoint. In fact, serious misrepresentation could cost a person his or her job. Resumes are not legal documents so there's not much an employer can do if someone lies, except decline to hire them. However, if a candidate lies on their resume, they'll have to ensure that the information on their job application tallies or risk being exposed. This is where it gets tricky as job applications are legal documents so if they're found out later on, it's grounds for dismissal even if they've performed well.

Ultimately, the reality is that employers do expect candidates to jazz up their resume a little and tailor it for the job at hand but



Detecting lies and damn lies

What should HR professionals look out for to prevent resume fraud?

there's a big difference between 'jazzing' and lying. As an HR professional, here are some tips to detect resumes laced with falsified information and prevent resume

fraud in your workplace.

Dig deeper

Standard background and reference checks are mandatory but you should also get third party references of the people the candidate has previously worked with as it enables you to gain deeper and more neutral insight into the person's character. When performing reference checks, a common and effective technique that can be used is 'negative verification' in which the comment put to the third party is framed in a negative light and the person is then invited to correct the statement. Having to disagree with you will take more out of the person and so you are likely to get a more honest and objective viewpoint.

Check for competency

Go beyond a simple interview over the phone to sending the candidate for a written competency test at a neutral institution. For senior level positions, send the candidate for a run through at an assessment centre to test his/her leadership skills. You can then match these results with what the candidate has stated in the CV.

During the interview, pose situational scenarios to the candidate and ask him/her to illustrate the steps he/she would take to execute a task or how he/she would overcome a particular work-related obstacle. This will not only test his/her competency but also verify the experience level he/she has committed to on paper. At the end of the day, there's no scientific method for validating the truth but the way the candidate answers those questions may indicate whether the person is trying to pull a fast one over you.

Look out for other red flags

In addition to the standard checks and interviews, here is a list of questions you might like to ask yourself during the hiring process:

- Does the candidate appear too good to be true? For instance, is the resume believable or does the applicant appear to be embellishing his or her accomplishments?
- Are there inconsistencies in the information provided on his/her resume such as omitted dates, job descriptions, references, etc and does the applicant have unexplained gaps in his/her job history?
- Does the applicant appear to take too much credit? Watch out for those who assume full credit for a project that was probably undertaken by a team.
- Is the candidate specific and forthcoming with references and past supervisors, including contact details?

Uncovering even the most minor truth-stretching may be a tall order in some cases but it's well worth the effort because ultimately, most leaders will agree that an individual's character trumps competency.

Joshua Yim, CEO and founder
Achieve Group of Companies

www.achievecareer.com