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Aug 22, 2012

# How to Catch Lying Job Seekers

Half--yes, half--of all job applicants lie on their resumé. How do you figure out who's telling the truth?



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The chances are about 50-50 that your newest hire wasn't completely honest on his or her resumé.

In this extremely competitive job market, job candidates at all levels feel enormous pressure to get noticed by employers. Background-check firm HireRight reports that 53 percent of all job seekers' resúmes contain inaccurate information, and 34 percent contain outright lies about experience, education, and the ability to perform essential job functions. Pants on fire everywhere.

Earlier this year, former Yahoo CEO Scott Thompson falsely claimed he earned a Ph.D. in computer science. Rattled out by a Yahoo shareholder, he spent four months on the job. Sadly, he is only one of many job seekers who lie about their qualifications. He's notable mostly because he's a former CEO.

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- Inflating salary history
- Exaggerating job titles or qualifications

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How does this affect you? With lean head counts, small businesses are especially vulnerable to fraudulent claims that translate into lowered productivity, increased turnover, deteriorating employee morale, bad publicity, lost clients, and expensive litigation. No company can afford these types of issues, which can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars.

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How can you protect your company from dishonest job seekers? Here are five things you can do to check resumé accuracy, for little or no cost:

**1. Pay for a professional background check.** Clients count on my firm to work with only the very best marketing experts, so we partner with a background-check company that verifies education and employment for a minimal à la carte cost. For example, we pay \$90 to verify three prior employers and three educational institutions and another \$60 to include a DMV, federal, and county criminal check. It's a small price to pay for peace of mind and confidence in the integrity of our team.

**2. Contact former employers.** Look up the company's main number and ask for the prior manager or human resources department. Mismatched employment dates or prolonged gaps may signal a termination or even a stint in jail. Former employers may be able to confirm salaries or circumstances of employment changes, even if their company policy prohibits them from giving out that information.

**3. Check additional references.** Use LinkedIn to locate and contact former colleagues, supervisors, or direct reports in addition to those provided by the candidate. You may even have a connection in common, which makes it easier to find this information.

**4. Verify professional licenses and memberships.** The licensing process ensures that only qualified professionals are authorized to practice in a state or province. Most professional organizations and licensing bodies have websites and phone numbers to help you quickly verify an individual's standing within their groups.

**5. Scan LinkedIn profiles.** Ninety-one percent of recruiters and hiring managers perform social-media background checks on candidates. Through LinkedIn and other social-media profiles, you can compare employment dates and titles for discrepancies. You can also get a feel for a candidate's communication skills and level of professionalism. You might also discover that a candidate has an ongoing health condition, and this is where the huge risk of social media checks kicks in: You cannot discriminate against a candidate because of disability, sexual orientation, age, family or military history, or employment status.

As small-business owners, we know how much time and energy it requires to add an employee to the team. With half of all candidates embellishing or outright lying about their qualifications, inexpensive background checks and preemployment screenings can save you from unforeseen risk and headaches later.

**Read more:**

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