JOBFITTS CONSULTANTS

Can you tell if your candidates are lying?

9 ways for hiring managers to separate the truth from slippery experience and education lies while hiring.

A shock I know, but consider this…

> *"Bringing someone on board because you like the way they answer questions is a dangerous way to hire someone."*
> – David Shulman

According to studies and anecdotal experience, CV/resume fraud is epidemic and the phenomenon has ruined the careers of executives and embarrassed otherwise prestigious organisations by damaging reputations and shareholder value.

Resume-liars managed to climb the corporate ladders at Yahoo, Bausch & Lomb, MGM Mirage, the U.S. Olympic committee and many more.

We've created a system of landing a job that promotes exaggerations and awards CVs that are more braggadocious than true.

Analysis concludes that the top ten CV/resume lies are as follows:

- Stretching Dates of Employment
- Inflating Past Accomplishments & Skills
- Enhancing Titles & Responsibilities
- Exaggerating Education and Fabricating Degrees
- Unexplained Gaps & Periods of "Self Employment"
- Omitting Past Employment
- Faking Credentials
- Falsifying Reasons for Leaving Prior Employment
- Providing Fraudulent References
- Misrepresenting Military Records

One in four firms have withdrawn a job offer after discovering that the prospective employee lied during the application process.

Similarly, 23% of bosses said that they had fired a staff member after finding out they had lied to get the job.

But, these number may only be the tip of the iceberg, as many firms said that they don't carry out even basic checks.

Think about it -

- **What are the implications for you and your career if you recruit someone who is not quite what they claim to be?**
- **What impact would that have on your promotion prospects?**
- **What are the long term implications for your firm if you got it so wrong?**

The problem of course, is that detecting a lie can be difficult as there are some good liars out there. But, if you want to know whether someone is telling the truth, there are some clues that you may find useful.

However, remember that there is no sure fire way of telling if someone is lying. You have to use a wide range of observations to get an idea about someone's truthfulness.

So take verbal and physical observations into consideration, before you MAKE THAT OFFER.

How to discover the TRUTH and nothing but the TRUTH..........

Research has found that around a third of applications include some kind of *discrepancy on dates of employment*. It seems that candidates often stretch the truth to hide gaps in their work history.

Another common lie is *the falsification of a key qualification* or credential such as a degree.

Inflation of a salary or title is another very common form of falsification by candidates.

How can you catch an otherwise charming, charismatic, and (seemingly) qualified candidate in a lie? Here are a few tactics:

Be A Social Media Sleuth

Looking up a job applicant's social media accounts before even making first contact isn't stalking; it's important research.

A quick Google search doesn't always cut it: Cross-checking each profile helps spot inconsistencies, and gives a multi-faceted view of the candidate's personality. You will be surprised to find an applicant's Faebook profile could tell you something very different to the applicant's Linkedin profile!

Interview in the morning

Ethics researchers Maryam Kouchaki of Harvard University and Isaac Smith of the University of Utah found that people were more morally aware in the morning, and more likely to engage in unethical behaviors in the afternoon. Conducting interviews earlier in the day also allows you to bring your sharpest ear to the table, and make better hiring decisions–without carrying the stress of the day to the interview.

Get Them in Person, ASAP

If they're taking hours or days to reply to your emails, screening your calls, and pushing you toward text-based communication, that's a red flag. Hiding behind a screen makes it easier for people to lie, The sooner they're sitting across from you, the sooner you'll be able to read their body language.

Spot the lies in an interview

Establishing whether or not someone is telling the truth at interview is more of an art than science.

Below are several indicators, which suggest that a candidate may not be telling the truth.

- **Avoids saying "I".**
According to Greg McCrary, a retired FBI field operative in Virginia. People tend to use 'I' and 'me', less often than people who are being truthful.

They may speak about themselves in the third person or truncate their speech. Anything which provides them with psychological distance from their lie. If a candidate is talking about an achievement but uses 'we' and 'us', ensure to press them with questions such as "What did *you* do?" and "What was *your* contribution?"

- **Push for detail**
A former CIA officer suggests that the stories liars, tell often lack detail. If a candidate's response is sufficient, but perhaps a little superficial, ensure you probe deeply and push the candidate for details. The more impromptu detail you are able to illicit, as opposed to pre-rehearsed detail, the more credible the response.

- **Failure to make eye contact**
Candidates, who are in the process of deceiving you, fail to make eye contact. So ensure you observe your interview subject's eyes throughout the interview, to see if they can maintain eye contact.

- **Dilated pupils and higher voice pitch**
Dilated pupils and speaking in a higher vocal pitch are stress indicators of lying. According to a University of Virginia study, if these signs are displayed in your interviewee, it could be a sign they are not telling the truth.

- **Fewer hand movements**
The same study also found that people who are not telling the truth 'make fewer hand movements to illustrate their actions'. So, watch your interviewee carefully to see how animated they are when talking.

- **Repetition**
Liars are more likely to repeat words and phrases, so watch closely for this kind of repetition in your interviewees. If you see it, it may be a sign that they are not telling the truth.

"What does that mean", I hear you ask? It means that people who are not telling the truth will use words like 'except', 'but' or 'nor' much less often. These words help the person using them to distinguish what they did from what they did not do. A failure to use exclusionary words at all can indicate that there is some fudging together of activity going on, e.g. possibly taking credit for the work of others.

As I have said, lie detection is more an art then a science and research suggests that only a small minority of us have the skills to accurately distinguish deceptiveness from truthfulness. So, while I don't think we could rely on these indicators alone to establish truth or deception, it can, along with the content of the candidates' speech, contribute to an overall picture of credibility. If you are concerned about a candidate's credibility in a certain area, then you can think about introducing some kind of in-tray exercise, practical and/or theoretical test, or perhaps a role play scenario that could help to verify their claims to competency.

Getting paranoid about whether a candidate's skills are legitimate or just a little puffed up adds time and energy to your hiring search. Its common practice for job hunters to craft resumes carefully to highlight their strengths, and downplay weaknesses.

Have you considered hiring someone with scant experience over a seasoned pro? They can be a shot of inspiration into your company's culture–you just don't want a liar on board.

Need help hiring and getting it right? Contact us: 02 9792 5085.