

## Bogus Resume Websites Can Mislead Unsuspecting Prospective Employers

By Holly Culhane, Contributing Columnist



References sang the woman's praise. Competent, hard-working, strong management skills were given as the job applicant's attributes. So on the strength of these recommendations and the work experience information the woman provided, a Bakersfield company offered her one of its top positions.

The woman was paid an advance on her expected six-figure salary and given other assistance to relocate from out of state to Bakersfield.

But in the months following her hiring, "red flags" began to appear. Small errors surfaced at first. As the number of errors mounted, colleagues became confused and suspicious. Why was someone who was hired with experience for this type of position making such basic

mistakes?

Finally a company official confronted the woman, pressing her for an explanation that she tearfully gave.

Her references and resume were fake. Unemployed and unable to find a job, the woman became desperate. She paid her references to lie. She fabricated portions of her work experience.

As the nation's economy continues to stumble, an increasing number of people are out of work. Companies are seeking ways to cut costs. Desperation is growing...and poor decisions are being made.

It's wrong for applicants to lie to get hired. Although chances are good they will eventually be caught, it's not a given. And, depending on the lie, the type of job and the circumstances, the consequences can be serious. At the very least, when the lie is discovered, the fibber is often fired. It's equally wrong for companies to skimp on checking an applicant's background. The dollars saved are small compared to the risk of future financial loss.

Gone are the days when a simple phone call is all that's required to verify the employment and competency of applicants. In fact, those days are "long gone," the result of a new crop of companies that have sprouted in this desperate work environment to transform lying into a high-tech industry.

We're not talking about "padding" a resume by putting a good spin on skimpy work experience or limited skills. ***We're talking about outright lying!***

A Google search on the Internet will turn up hundreds of thousands of hits for "fake resumes." The big buzz lately is over careerexcuse.com, a Web site launched in February that offers a "sophisticated" range of services...if "sophisticated" is what you can call lying for an applicant.

The Web site boasts of having dozens of bankrupt companies that “make a great previous employer. ... Simply provide us with your desired career field and we will act as your past employer.... You can create your own virtual company answered by a live receptionist, or direct any inquiries into voice mail limbo...”

Companies like careerexcuse.com use the Internet and a wide array of communications technologies to provide fake work experience and references for applicants willing to lie to get a job.

While lying can pose risks for both the jobseeker and the operators of such Web sites, the founder of careerexcuse.com has insisted in press reports that he’s doing nothing illegal and that his Web site contains sufficient disclaimers to eliminate his liabilities. Others, however, believe these Web sites and those who use them are taking big risks, particularly if an unqualified applicant does harm to a company, co-workers or customers after he or she is hired.

These fake resume Web sites and the desperate jobseekers who use them are a grave threat to companies that fail to practice “due diligence” in hiring. Some tips:

- While it’s routine practice for large companies, small businesses should hire outside specialists to perform background checks that verify the work experience, education and references of applicants.
- Do an Internet check of businesses listed on an applicant’s resume. Do these businesses exist?
- Require applicants to provide tax records, such as W-2 forms, to back up employment claims. Treat all applicants equally. Requiring them all to provide the same documentation.

*Don’t cut corners...or costs...in applicant background screening.* The dollars you save today will be minimal compared to the dollars you could lose tomorrow.

***This article written by Holly Culhane first appeared in The Bakersfield Californian on January 19, 2010. Holly Culhane is president of P.A.S. Associates, a Bakersfield human resources consulting firm. She can be contacted through her webpage at [www.PASassociates.com](http://www.PASassociates.com) or by phone at 631-2165.***

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