Bulletin Board: Don't even think of fudging on your resume

by Amy Winter

College graduates looking to find a job should think twice before putting untrue statements on their resumes.

Marilee Jones, the dean of admissions at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, learned that lying on resumes can come back to haunt you. She fabricated her education credentials almost 30 years ago on her resume.

Jones admitted that she never completed her undergraduate degree; however, recently it was discovered that she received an undergraduate degree at a university not mentioned on her resume.

Because of her lack of integrity, she resigned from her position after serving at MIT for 10 years.

"Most misrepresentations will go undiscovered since a majority of resumes are never checked thoroughly," said John A. Challenger, chief executive officer of Challenger, Gray & Christmas, a global outplacement organization.

Some experts estimate that 10 percent to 30 percent of all job candidates fabricate or stretch the truth on their resumes, according to Challenger.

Results from the Challenger ranking reveal that education is the No. 1 area that exhibits resume fraud.

"There are some who will go as far as saying they graduated from a particular institution, when, in fact, they never attended class there," said Challenger. "What is most commonly found is the applicant who actually attended the school and may have been very close to graduating but, for whatever reason, did not finish with enough credits for the degree. The person, figuring that missing a handful of class credits isn't a big deal, lists the degree on his or her resume.

"Ironically, the absence of a few credits probably wouldn't make a difference to many companies, but lying on the resume certainly will. In fact, if the reason for leaving school early was compelling - such as 'a parent passed away and I had to go to work to help support the family' - it could be a significant selling point in an interview," Challenger said.

Boosting one's job title comes in at No. 2 for resume fraud.

"Job seekers try to increase their earning power by inflating their current or former position and salary, speculating that a prospective employer will not offer less money," said Challenger.

Resume fraud not only happens with college grads as the recent case involving Jones illustrates.

"Do not assume that resume fraud is only perpetrated by young, inexperienced job seekers trying to gain an edge over more seasoned candidates," said Challenger. "Some of the most notable examples in the last few years have been top-level executives, including chief executive officers and chief financial officers."

For more information, visit www.challengergray.com.

BENEFITS TO INTERNSHIPS

Internships not only help college students learn more about their area of study, they also play a part in helping them find jobs when it is time to enter the real world.

A poll developed by Accountemps, a staffing service for temporary accounting, finance and bookkeeping professionals, illustrates the benefits of having an internship while in college. More than 1,400 randomly selected chief financial officers participated in this study.

When looking at entry-level accounting and finance applicants, 50 percent of the CFOs said that internships influenced their decision the most - even more than a candidate's referrals, college alma mater or grade point average.

The results of the CFO's answers were:

- Internships: 50 percent.

- Referral from contact: 24 percent.

- College attended: 8 percent.

- Grade point average: 5 percent.

- Extracurricular activities: 2 percent.

- Work experience: 1 percent.

- Character or personality: 1 percent.

- Other: 9 percent.

"One of the biggest challenges new graduates face is a lack of professional experience. Students who complete one or more internships appeal to prospective employers because they often require less training and can begin contributing immediately in their roles," said Max Messmer, chairman of Accountemps and author of "Human Resource Kit for Dummies."

Bradley Richardson, from MonsterTRAK.com, offers these tips to help students make the most of their internship experience:

- Don't be afraid to talk with people.

- Ask for things to do.

- Learn what you can about the industry.

- Don't complain about the grunt work.

- Ask to go to meetings and events.

Internships serve as a powerful recruitment tool. College internships are a way to find a diverse range of students who show promise, and they allow students to learn by doing meaningful and demanding work relating to their majors.

"In addition to the experience and knowledge gained by exposure to real-world business scenarios, internships showcase a student's level of initiative and engagement in his or her chosen career," said Messmer.

For more information, visit www.accountemps.com, www.MonsterTRAK.com, and www.collegerecruiter.com.

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