

Lying is no way to fill gap on resume

by Michael_Kinsman

I agreed to have a cup of coffee with Larry because he said he was desperate and convinced I could help him.

Larry was frustrated in his job search and even though I told him I don't find people jobs, nor do I have special expertise in that field. Nevertheless, he sounded like he really needed help.

"I haven't been able to find a job in a year and a half," Larry started out the conversation. "I have come close, but three times they've figured out I was in jail."

There is a two-year gap in Larry's resume. He's 36 and once managed a restaurant. It's the kind of job he wants again, but he can't seem to find anyone willing to take a chance on him.

Larry went to jail over a drug conviction. He lost his job after he was arrested and spent most of the year in temporary jobs awaiting trial. He spent less than a year in jail, but his resume has a two-year gap on it and everyone seems to notice.

"Why can't I just put down that I was still managing the restaurant for those two years?" he asked.

"Not a good idea," I said. "You may fool somebody into hiring you, but if they ever find out you're going to get fired again. That would make matters worse for you."

I told him the story of a woman I knew. She had lied about her college degree. She had gone to college, where she claimed her degree but was several classes short of the degree. Still she claimed it on her job application.

She looked and acted like a college graduate. She was competent and energetic in her job and quickly got some promotions. Within a few years she had climbed into the No. 2 position in a company of 35 people.

Then, someone discovered the lie on her resume and she was fired.

Suddenly, her skills and work history meant nothing. She was out of work.

The point is that if you lie on a job application, nothing you do afterward can redeem your ethical standing.

Estimates of how many people have committed resume fraud in America range from 30 to 50 percent of all workers. Some are simple exaggerations of job achievements, others disguise the true reasons people left a former employer, while some claim phony educational credentials.

I told Larry that while people aren't jailed for resume fraud, it still is a type of fraud and he should forget about doing it.

I told him that instead of applying to large restaurants or chains, he should seek out smaller, independent restaurants. The hiring process in those restaurants is often less structured and that he could explain his drug conviction without necessarily being disqualified for the job.

"If things work out and you hold a job for a couple of years, this will become less of an issue," I told him. "But right now, you need to work through it."

I also told him he only needs one job and some employer will undoubtedly give him a chance. He just has to be honest and find that employer.

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