

Resume inaccuracies

By *Howard Hill*

Winston Churchill, a former British Prime Minister, reportedly said, "Men occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of them pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing had happened." Such might be the cavalier attitude some people have with regard to the content of their resumes in that they do not envision resume inaccuracies as a serious matter to be avoided. It is indeed a serious matter.

Resume inaccuracies occur often. While some inaccuracies may be inadvertent with little professional harm resulting, intentionally misleading resume inaccuracies have harmful consequences. The spotlight has revealed two recent cases where resume inaccuracies caused individuals not to be hired or they had to tender resignations (George O'Leary, former Georgia Tech football coach; Sandra Baldwin, U.S. Olympic Committee Chairwoman).

As companies carry out obligatory background checks on future (and some incumbent workers), persons who have stretched the truth to get hired - or promoted - find themselves and their jobs in jeopardy. According to a survey conducted by computing service firm Automatic Data Processing, more than 40 percent of applicants misrepresented their education or employment history. This is especially true where individuals do not change jobs often and do not realize the need to maintain an updated resume.

With a continuing economic downturn, workers are seeking employment alternatives. Therefore, personnel managers report seeing problems they cannot overlook. While some companies may overlook minor resume inaccuracies, they find it unacceptable for prospective employees to list credentials they do not possess or indicate they perform duties they do not.

Here are seven recommendations designed to minimize resume inaccuracies:

Compare professional backgrounds with the expectations of the job being advertised or sought. Align credentials with the expectations of the job.

Emphasize career achievements or accomplishments, not just duties or responsibilities. Present the achievements and accomplishments as very brief career stories.

Focus on special or unusual duties you have performed.

Group skills and abilities according to categories for easier comprehension by personnel specialists.

List work experiences and promotions chronologically with a range of dates for each position. This is very important in tracking your career path.

Give more than casual thought to references. Academic references should include a professor, teacher, administrator or someone with whom you acquired a certain skill. Reference checks include, in most cases, citizenship status, crime reports, credit histories, etc. Employment considerations are influenced by negative or strong references. To minimize surprises, reveal any negative information about yourself.

Include reliable forms of contact information in the resume (daytime and evening phone numbers, home fax machine numbers and e-mail address.) Although the formal application may require a Social Security number, do not provide it in the inquiry letter.

Resume inaccuracies, even minor ones, suggest carelessness. Take heed to this suggestion by Sylvia C. Ashton-Warner, New Zealand author and educator (1908-1984) in preparing a resume: "You must be true to yourself, and strong enough to be yourself. Brave enough to be strong enough to be true to you. Wise enough to be brave

enough, to be strong enough to shape yourself from what you actually are."

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