



[DR. SHIRLEY'S CAREER CORNER]

By: DR. SHIRLEY A. WHITE
President
Success Images

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Résumé writing: Honesty — the best policy

Can you believe? In February of this year, Radio Shack CEO David Edmondson resigned after a Fort Worth, Texas, newspaper reported he had lied on his résumé. And, guess what? Edmondson is not alone. In January, the mayor of Rancho Mirage, Calif., admitted he did not hold degrees that he'd claimed. In past years, a former football coach at Notre Dame and a former spokesman for NASA were both caught padding their résumés. And the list goes on. In fact, in 2004, the federal Government Accountability Office released a report that found that at least 28 senior-level federal workers had claimed degrees from diploma mills and other unaccredited schools.

In the state of Washington, not only would it become illegal for people to lie on their résumés about their academic credentials, but also according to a bill lawmakers passed in March, the move could land those people in jail. State senators unanimously amended and approved a bill that would make giving or using a fake or otherwise unaccredited degree a class C felony, a crime of fraud that could warrant five years in prison and a \$10,000 fine. The legislation also would make it illegal to lie orally, as well as in writing, when trying to get a job or other kind of benefit. At least four other states have made either selling or using false degrees illegal. Oregon enacted a law three years ago that made lying about an academic credential subject to a civil penalty, but only after the per-

petrator had been warned by education authorities.

Experts continue to point out that it's important to be honest on your résumé, because the risk of being caught in a lie is so great it isn't worth it. Richard C. Bayer, CEO of the Five O'Clock Club career coaching and outplacement firm in New York, points out, "You really don't want to lie about anything, because people do check, and you can get found out. If that happens, you won't get hired, or worse, you'll get fired."

A survey by the Society for Human Resource Management found that 96 percent of human resource professionals always conduct reference checks on job candidates, and more than half say they sometimes find inconsistencies. Additionally, "lying or misleading information" ranked as one of the top recruiter pet peeves in a survey conducted by resumedoctor.com. According to the survey, the most common misleading information put on résumés include:

- Inflated titles.
- Inaccurate dates to cover up job-hopping or gaps in employment.
- Half-finished degrees, inflated education or "purchased" degrees that do not mean anything.
- Inflated salaries.
- Inflated accomplishments.
- Out-and-out lies regarding specific roles and duties.

Certainly, "fibbing" on a résumé can be tempting, especially when

you've been searching for a job for months. One may believe that, perhaps a bit of embellishment here and there won't hurt. But, as you may have observed or experienced, lying, no matter the situation, can get messy. So, why take the chance?

The key is to prepare a résumé that is targeted, well written and makes the most of what you have to offer. Your résumé should point out your specific skill set, present your

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competitive strengths and highlight your accomplishments. In addition, illustrate how you have benefited the company; provide any numbers, dollar amounts or percentages that back up your claims; and, of course, present your key responsibilities.

The bottom line is to consider your résumé as a targeted marketing tool that promotes your true talents and expresses your overall background in a manner that entices the hiring organization to call you in for an interview.

To inquire about Dr. White's programs and publications, please contact her at (225) 769-2307 or visit her Web site at www.successimages.com. □