

Technical Affairs

How Common is Resume Fraud?

By Mike Aamodt, Associate Editor

In the past year, there have been several highly publicized examples of resume fraud involving CEOs and university coaches. For example,

- In October of 2002, Kenneth Lonchar was forced to resign after serving as the CFO of Veritas for five years when the company discovered he lied about having an MBA from Stanford.
- In June of 2002, Charles Harris resigned on his first day as the new athletic director at Dartmouth University when a call from a previous employer indicated that Harris did not earn the master's degree in journalism he had listed on his resume.
- In May of 2002, Sandra Baldwin was forced to resign as Chair of the U.S. Olympic committee when it was discovered she lied on her resume about having a Ph.D.
- In December of 2001, George O'Leary resigned after only a few days as the head football coach at Notre Dame University after it was discovered that he lied about lettering in high school football and about receiving a master's degree from New York University.

An excellent example of resume fraud is the bizarre 1994 assault against figure skater Nancy Kerrigan arranged by

Shawn Eckardt, the bodyguard of Kerrigan's skating rival Tonya Harding. Harding hired Eckardt as her bodyguard because his resume indicated he was an expert in counterintelligence and international terrorism, graduated from an elite executive protection school, and had spent four years "tracking terrorist cells" and "conducting a successful hostage retrieval operation." After the attack against Kerrigan, however, a private investigator discovered that Eckardt never graduated from a security school and would have been 16 during the time he claimed he was in Europe saving the world from terrorists. The president of a school he did attend stated that he "wouldn't hire Eckardt as a bodyguard in a lifetime"—an opinion that would have been discovered had Harding checked Eckardt's references.

These examples, as well as such other high profile examples shown in Table 1, create the appearance that resume fraud is rampant. Unfortunately, media accounts of these high profile cases have included a wide range of estimates of the percentage of resumes that contain inaccurate information. For example, one media account cited a survey by the ChoicePoint Asset Company that 67% of resumes contain inaccurate information while another account cited a survey by Preemploy.com that only 16% of resumes contain inaccurate information.

Table 1: High Profile Examples of Resume Fraud

Person	Position	Resume Fraud
Al Dunlap	Former CEO, Sunbeam	Left out two jobs from which he was fired
Sandra Baldwin	Former Chair, U.S. Olympic Committee	Falsely claimed to have a Ph.D.
Ronnie Few	D.C. Fire Chief	Allegedly made false claims about college degree and winning a "fire chief of the year" award
Pat Robertson	Evangelist	Falsely claimed combat experience in Korea
Joseph Biden	Democratic Senator from Delaware	Lied about class standing in law school
Joseph Ellis	Writer	Falsely claimed combat experience in Viet Nam
George O'Leary	Former Notre Dame coach	Falsely claimed a master's degree
Charles Harris	Former athletic director, Dartmouth	Falsely claimed a master's degree in journalism
Ken Lonchar	Former CFO, Veritas Software	Falsely claimed an MBA from Stanford
Ronald Zarella	CEO, Bausch & Lomb	Falsely claimed an MBA from NYU
Bryan Mitchell	CEO, MCG Capital	Falsely claimed a degree from Syracuse
Ram Kumar	Director of Research, ISS	Falsely claimed a law degree from USC
Quincy Troupe	Former Poet laureate of California	Falsely claimed a degree from Grambling
Jeff Papows	President of Lotus	Lied about education, war record, and tae kwon do standing
Andrea Ballengee	Former Miss Virginia (1995)	Falsely claimed to be a member of Phi Beta Kappa

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To get a clearer picture of the extent of resume fraud, I searched a variety of academic and Internet search engines to find organizations that have conducted internal research on resume fraud. The results of this search are shown in Table 2. On the basis of the 15 studies, the best estimate (both the median and the mode) of the percentage of resumes containing false information appears to be 25%.

Is there a price to be paid for such fraud? Following

media coverage of resume fraud by the corporate CEO, stock prices for Veritas dropped 19% and stock prices for MCG Capital Corp. dropped 37%. What happened to the people committing the fraud?

Mitchell and Zarrella kept their jobs but lost their annual bonus; Dunlap, Baldwin, Harris, O'Leary, Lonchar, Kumar, Troupe, Ballengee, and Papows were fired or asked to resign.

Table 2: Summary of Studies on Frequency of Resume Fraud

Company	Year	Resumes Examined	Sample	% with inaccurate information
ChoicePoint Asset Company	2001			67
Risk Advisory Group	2002			54
ADP Screening & Selection	2001	2,600,000		44
Infocheck	2000	1,000		33
Edward Andler	1998			33
Monster.com		555	27	
Kroll Inc	2002			25
Kessler International	1998	1,000	IT Professionals	25
Accenture Canada	2002	350	IT Professionals	25
AAIM Management Association	2002	65,000		25
Jude Werra & Associates	2001			24
Avert, Inc.	2001	1,800,000	24	
Christian & Timbers	2001	7,000	Executives	23
Preemploy.com	2002	2,000		16
Jude Werra & Associates	2002		Executives	11

HR Humor

The following great lines from cover letters were found at <http://rinkworks.com/said/resume.shtml>.

Interest in the Company

- I saw your ad on the information highway, and I came to a screeching halt.
- My fortune cookie said, "Your next interview will result in a job" and I like your company in particular.

Salary Requirements

- My compensation should be at least equal to my age.
- I'll starve without a job but don't feel you have to give me one.
- I just need enough money to have pizza every night.
- I'll need \$30K to start, full medical, three weeks vacation, stock options, and ideally a European sedan.
- My salary requirement is \$34 per year.

Qualifications

- I realize that my total lack of appropriate experience may concern those considering me for employment.

- Although I am seeking an accounting job, the fact that I have no actual experience in accounting may seem discouraging. However, ...
- Please disregard the attached resume – it is terribly out of date.
- I am relatively intelligent, obedient, and as loyal as a puppy.
- I vow to fulfill the goals of the company as long as I live.

Confidence

- If this resume doesn't blow your hat off, then please return it in the enclosed envelope.
- I am superior to anyone else you could hire.
- Note: Keep this resume on top of the stack. Use all the others to heat your house.
- Here are my qualifications for you to overlook.
- I usually don't blow my own horn, but in this case, I will go right ahead and do so.
- I am the king of account's payable reconciliation.
- I am a pit bull when it comes to analysis.