

Certified Resume- The Hiring Tool of the New Millennium

How Employers Can Streamline Their Hiring Process Through the Use of Certified Resumes

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Resumes are the currency of the Human Resources function in the United States. Yet, ADP Payroll and Benefits Managing Company, states that in performing 2.6 million background checks in 2001, 44 percent of applicants lied about their work histories, 41 percent lied about their education, and 23 percent falsified credentials or licenses. Further studies show nearly one-third of job applicants listed dates of employment that were inaccurate by more than 3 months¹. With the advent of the Internet, human resource departments could in essence be receiving counterfeit currency. Internet submission channels for job seekers to upload resumes found on most corporate website career pages and via large job websites such as www.Monster.com and www.Careerbuilder.com, have increased the distribution frequency of this “resume currency” by many multiples over the past ten years. Therefore, human resource departments are now exposed to an increase in the number of falsified resumes.

Resume Channels

Posting a position on an Internet website or job board allows for the human resource function to communicate job availability to more and more potential applicants. The job-seeker utilizing the Internet is now privy to more positions than ever before.

In earlier eras, communicating the desire to work for a preferred employer required a particular degree of effort to locate the proper channel or individual to direct a physical mailing, or it required significant research to learn the name of a key hiring decision maker at the firm to direct telephone or fax inquiries. Most resumes that landed on the desk of a decision maker for a skilled high-paying position arrived there through some degree of effort on the part of the candidate offering a first level screening. Few would put forth such efforts if they were unqualified or mildly interested.

Today, it is easier than ever for even the most casual job-seeker to direct their resumes, cover letters, and video presentations etc. through the proper channels of a given firm seeking employees via a few clicks of a mouse.

If you are an employer of choice or seeking qualified skilled employees for high paying positions, posting the position on the Internet will yield more resumes and inquiries from a wider array of people all over the world than having posted an advertisement in a physical publication a few years ago for the same position.

You receive many more qualified candidate resumes which are good, but you also receive such a large quantity of resumes that the cream is often masked by the mass of applicants. What is more problematic is that the ease of applying has made it easier and more worthwhile for many opportunists to invent phony backgrounds and report fraudulent claims of educational degrees earned that make them appear uniquely suited for high paying positions in various sectors on paper.

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Resume Inflation: Two Wrongs May Mean No Rights, by Barbara Kat Repa, Nolo.com, 8/8/01, The Complete Reference Checking Book, by Edward C. Adler

As these opportunists see landing a top position in one of the top firms in the United States as a numbers game, they often can effectively apply to thousands of positions over the course of a few weeks. Such an endeavor would have taken years in the pre-Internet job-seeking era. These individuals seek to “get lucky” by landing an interview, overstating their background and education, and being offered a position they are unqualified or untrained to perform, and hanging on as long as they can. Others are not opportunist, but merely desperate job-seekers who are uneducated or unqualified to be offered a position that offers the level of compensation they desire.

For firms that receive millions of resumes a year for highly sought positions (Google.com and Yahoo!), the exponential nature of fraudulent applicants increases with the intense perceived value of working for your firm.

Fraudulent applicants feel they are in a no lose situation. If they collect a paycheck until they are discovered in the background checking phase that often ensues after the offer is extended or never discovered, then it was a successful enterprise.

Prolific Resume Fraud Cases

The public cases of these fake claims not being uncovered until after the fact have embarrassed such notable institutions as Notre Dame University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, FEMA, and Radio Shack. All of these entities were eventually found to have hired and often employed in high-profile positions, individuals that had completely falsified important parts of their background that influenced the decision to hire them in the first place.

While any firm can be the victim of fraudulent employee behavior, it calls into question the credibility of the organization to the wider society when these cases are brought to light. Certainly, a donor to MIT might wonder about the rigor and legitimacy of the admissions process, when it is revealed the head of admissions for the past decades did not graduate from college yet maintained a lie about having received three degrees qualifying her for the position. Investors in Radio Shack stock in the mid-1990s would not be wrong if they felt the firm had misled them when the long term CEO who led the company during a period of lagging sales was revealed to have had no formal training in his portended areas of expertise as cited on his curriculum vitae used to land the position.

Certified Resumes attempt to fill a void that has been created by the hiring process of the new millennium. Endorsing the receipt and honoring the validity of third party certified resumes allows a firm to curtail the flow of applicants to a pool of individuals that have self-selected by paying a nominal fee to have their resumes certified an independent firm in pertinent areas of educational background, certifications, and past work experience.

For the job candidate who often wonders why he or she is never called back for positions that appear to be strong matches, this tool gives him or her a platform to differentiate his or her application from others and allows the human resources function know that he or she is a serious

candidate who actually has the credentials that are being claimed. In an environment of credential inflation on resumes that varies from merely pushing the envelope on responsibility levels to completely fabricating the entire document from “whole-cloth”, certified resumes seek to normalize the pool of candidates in an effort to facilitate matching qualified candidates with those who seek to employ them through a process of verification.

Certified Resumes Comparable Credit Checks and Tenant Screening

In many ways, it is envisioned that certified resumes will eventually function in much the same way that a credit reporting agency like Experian or Equifax does. When credit was offered in very localized markets to people the bankers knew as individuals in town, the concept of a credit score was not part of the lexicon. As most credit decisions are now made in loan origination offices many miles from the locale of the end-user, this metric and a credit file have become a necessary tool to readily compare credit candidates. The apartment rental industry mitigated towards a similar model known as the tenant screening model. Prior to renting an apartment many management companies and apartment complexes require the prospective renter to fill out an application and submit an application fee. The majority of the fee subsidizes the cost of a background check on the prospective renter.

Pre-screening Best Practices

According to a recent survey conducted by the Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM), 96% of personnel officers said their companies are conducting some type of background or reference check when hiring prospective candidates. Given the increase in issues such as workplace violence, negligent hiring and child abuse, employers are mitigating to more stringent pre-screening methods and techniques. Certified resumes appear to be a simple cost effective risk mitigation tool that not only assists in the pre-screening process, but also could improve the quality of the resumes a company receives.

About the Author: J. Brian Carberry is a Sr. Marketing Analyst at Harrah’s Entertainment in Louisiana. J. Brian has over seven years of experience in marketing, human resources and business management. He has studied the resume industry over the past five years and understands the economic costs associated with the hiring process. J. Brian has a BA in Economics from Emory University and an MBA from Tulane University.