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## **TOP LIES TOLD BY CANDIDATES**

**By Mark Bregman**

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In today's Yahoo Business News, there is an article about a list of [Top Five Lies Told by Job Candidates](#), as reported by HireRight, a candidate screening organization. The article focuses on some obvious, but superficial issues: Exaggerating dates of employment, falsifying education, inflating salary or title, hiding a criminal record, and hiding a drug habit. Most of these can be easily caught by a decent background check. You can ask for a W-2 to verify compensation. Simple diligence can prevent a person lying about these issues from being hired.

Much more important are the really important lies told by candidates that are harder to detect, and that can cause you real harm, because you will hire the candidate despite the lies. Candidates will misrepresent their *capabilities* more often than the five items above. Some of the misrepresentation isn't even their fault! Employers ask leading questions, like, "You've set up a sales department before, right?" When the candidate readily agrees, without being asked for evidence, a check mark goes in the "plus" column. Behavioral based interviewing, where candidates are asked to illustrate a trait (like leadership, teamwork), with specific examples from their work history, can also cloud the issue. Most people can dredge up a good story to illustrate a trait, but did they actually accomplish anything with this trait?

If a candidate does not have strong capability to do the critical tasks of the job, the result can be very costly: lost opportunities, critical mistakes, lost morale, cost of replacing the hire, etc.

Employers have to ask the right questions to help the candidate tell the truth. When employers take the time to develop SMART performance objectives (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound), they can turn those objectives into interview questions that make it far more likely a candidate will have to tell the truth. An example: Let's say that a Sales Executive has to grow sales by setting up multi-state distribution and establishing a key strategic alliance. The employer can ask: One of our most important goals is to establish multi-state distribution as a key method of growing sales. What is there specifically in your background that would enable you to achieve this? You keep drilling until the details emerge: Who were the distributors? Did the program succeed? How much in sales? All of these details could be verified, so the candidate must tell the truth. A great way to evaluate candidates, but also a great recruitment tool: Mediocre candidates hate these questions, and excellent candidates love these, because they *have* the answers, and are delighted to talk about how they will respond to the employer's real, well-defined challenges.

You can easily check on the basic lies, but make sure you have a process to protect yourself from the biggest, most expensive lies – and get an accurate, truthful answer to the most important question: can the candidate really do the job?

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