

# Survey reveals job candidates lying during interviews – here are the five questions you need to ask them

Friday, 17 September 2010 11:35  
Patrick Stafford

Recruitment experts say businesses need to ask specific and detailed questions when interviewing potential employees, saying businesses could be in trouble if they hire candidates who have lied about their work histories.

A new survey from finance recruitment group Robert Half reveals 61% of professionals in finance, accounting and HR found candidates exaggerated their job histories during interviews, and were delivered a shock when workers had little practical experience.

Robert Half director Andrew Brushfield said in a statement hiring someone without the relevant experience can be disastrous.

"While confidence is a good thing, boasting deceives the interviewer and leads to candidates being placed in positions they aren't qualified for," he said. "This then increases staff turnover, both as employees begin to feel overwhelmed and employers realise that they don't have the right people in the job."

Skye Recruitment co-founder Sophie MacDonald says businesses need to thoroughly scrutinise all candidates or face harsh consequences including fines.

"We know of one experience during which one person said he was a health officer, brought in documentation but didn't bring a health and safety qualification. The company thought he did, failed to check it, and later turned out he wasn't certified at all."

"The cost to a company that doesn't have that checked could be running into the millions. This type of check is extremely important."

Here are the five key questions you should be asking during interviews to learn the truth about your candidates.

## **"Tell me about your work history"**

Macdonald says she has encountered examples where candidates have omitted work histories to make themselves look better. She recommends businesses delve deep into where a candidate has gained their experience, as it can often expose they have none at all.

"Candidates lying or omitting the truth about their work experience can happen, especially if they haven't had a very successful experience with a specific company. They'll often leave it off their CV and it can cause problems later on down the line."

"Employers should be extremely vigilant about work history on CVs, and should identify any gaps or so on in those work histories. Reference checking is also important here."

## **"Why did you leave your last job?"**

Discussing the reason for leaving a previous employer can often be a touchy subject, especially if a candidate is still employed while being interviewed. But Macdonald says it's absolutely crucial.

"Sometimes it's often hard to get to the reason a candidate is leaving to go to a new employer. Often they just say "I want a change", but that doesn't tell you anything. You need to get into the detail. More often than not there is more detail than just "I want a change"."

### **"Tell me about a time when you..."**

HR Anywhere managing director Martin Nally says many unskilled employers won't ask for specific examples of work. He argues this is necessary to gather a detailed representation of just how skilled a candidate is, or isn't.

"The idea behind this is that you want a response which gives specifics, the actions taken and the result, etc. So I would ask the candidate, "tell me about a time when you have done x, y, z". And then you really need to probe them."

"I've seen it many times where an interviewer hasn't done this, and it's crucial. You need to find out the action, the result and the response."

Macdonald agrees, saying the use of behavioural-based interviewing is essential to finding skilled candidates.

### **"What were you paid at your last job?"**

Macdonald says the issue of salary is often a difficult one to pin down, but points out interviewees will often lie about how much they are being paid at the previous, or current, place of employment. The Robert Half survey also reveals more than 52% of respondents said candidates were asking for "unrealistic" pay packages.

"They will often lie about what salary they are on. It's important companies to see what they should be paid, because there are often huge discrepancies. It's an area you need to get right."

### **"What have you left off your resume?"**

Nally points out the resume is only a guide, and employers should dig deep to find experience or qualifications that may not have been put on the CV in the first place.

"You really need to ask open-ended questions about the resume, because it's only a prompt. You need to ask open questions and then see if you can find some areas to fill in blanks that might appear on a CV. Use the interview as an opportunity to expand on the resume, not just question them on what they've written. It can often surprise you."

Patrick Stafford (2010) Survey reveals job candidates lying during interviews – here are the five questions you need to ask them

Available:

<http://www.smartcompany.com.au/hiring/20100917-survey-reveals-job-candidates-lying-during-interviews-here-are-the-five-questions-you-need-to-ask-them.html>

Last accessed: Thursday September 23, 2010