



Bluffs, Lies, and Grey Areas



This lesson documents some of the negative fallouts a candidate can face when making incorrect or false statements when engaging with a potential new employer.

Unfortunately, not all of us possess strong morals and values. A minority of unscrupulous candidates will not hesitate to misstate their current compensation, title, role, etc., in order to influence an offer. Given this occurrence is not uncommon, we wanted to apprise the readers of the consequences one can face when indulging in falsification. For the record, we strongly discourage our readers from making any fabricated claims during the interview or negotiation process.

To counter such scenarios, most well-heeled employers such as Facebook, Google, Salesforce, and the like mandate a background check to verify the accuracy of credentials presented by a candidate, e.g., verifying degree, employment history, criminal records, etc. However, one can claim fictitious offers or inflated compensation when negotiating, and at times, such ruses do work.



One incident in particular, was of an acquaintance who bluffed his way into LinkedIn as a Staff Software Engineer, upgraded from his original offer of Senior Software Engineer. He outright lied about a non-existent competing offer. Similarly, another friend circumvented the one year cool-off period at Salesforce after an unsuccessful interview attempt by dropping his middle name in the resume and using a different email address to appear as a

never-before interviewed candidate. However, employers have ~~wisened-up~~  over the years and can call a candidate's bluff. Recruiters ~~may ask for screen-~~  shots of unvested stocks, offer letters, pay-slips etc., to verify claims. Often managers or recruiters will reach out to the candidate's existing company for references and verification. Moreover, recruiters know recruiters at other companies, and they can use back-channeling to verify the existence and specifics of an offer claimed by a candidate.

In general, we strongly advise to be honest in whatever you say. If you fear that disclosing certain information might affect the appeal of your candidacy, be brave enough to say no and refuse to disclose. You can say:

I am not at liberty to disclose this information, and I don't think it should be a factor in evaluating my candidacy.

I don't feel comfortable sharing this information, and I think you have all the data points needed to evaluate my profile for the job.

If pressed, stand your ground and say no. Another strategy is to give ballpark figures or intentionally diluted information. For instance, if you worked as a Software Test Engineer developing test harnesses and infrastructure, you may tell a recruiter that you worked as a Software Engineer. The information you are providing is not factually false but has details abstracted out. Of course, if you are asked a follow-up question about your daily tasks, you should be upfront about them. You can always rephrase your answers to align them with what the interviewer wants to hear, e.g., in this hypothetical scenario, when asked about your daily tasks, you may want to go into the details of the code you wrote for automation and infrastructure to

emphasize your coding abilities and skip narrating any manual testing tasks. The point is that negotiating an offer at some level is akin to a game of poker, and you do not want to show the other player all your cards.

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