

Title:

A Brief Education on Education Verification

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Summary:

Education Verification can be a very important background check in any pre-employment screening program

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Article Body:

It is generally believed by those in our trade that while employment candidates may embellish their employment tasks and positions, they will downright lie about their education.

Yes, that person interviewing with your Human Resource Manger and other relevant executives, the one looking presentable and acting so bright and articulate may well be inventing his education. In most cases your candidate's claim to a higher education is not necessarily a total invention. He may have in fact actually enrolled in the university listed on the resume. He just didn't graduate from that school. Or any other school, for that matter. But then there are those, a notable amount of employment candidates who have engaged in what we term a ghost attendance. That is to say they not only failed to graduate from the school, but they never enrolled at all. Why they chose that particular school as their fictional place of graduation is anyone's guess. But enough candidates lie about graduating from schools they may have never seen, save for photos on the Internet. The HR person should always consider the ghost attendance a very real possibility.

As to which schools the job candidates may claim to have graduated, the selection is varied and sometimes darkly amusing. Some may choose the smaller and more out of the way schools as their fictional alma maters. They may select something arty and prestigious, one of those schools you may hear about but not know much about.. Or your candidate can take obscurity in another direction by listing on their resume some grievously remote or sub-par institute of higher learning that few ever even heard of..

There is certain logic to making such claims. By listing say, an obscure Mid-Western school or esoteric New England college, as his place of graduation,

your candidate may believe he helps substantiate his credibility. Even the more astute HR person may well determine no one would actually lie about graduating from a Reed College, in Oregon, Amherst, in Massachusetts, or Lake Forest, in Illinois? Or for that matter as a defense against low self-esteem, who would dare boast of graduating from one of the legions of North Western Eastern Slippery Eel Teacher's College in the far corner of the middle of nowhere? So, the thinking goes, you may accept their claim at face value and never bother to check it out.

Other candidates will take the alternate route. Most in fact, will choose the larger schools, believing their names and alleged graduation dates may well get lost in the bureaucratic shuffle. Of course, if they did attend for awhile, they hope their registered enrollment may mistakenly be interpreted as proof of graduation. What they lack in education, they make up for in audacity. Well, sort of.

Finally, there are the no degree degrees. These are the phony degrees awarded for "life experience" and are not representative of attendance or graduation from any legitimate or accredited college. They are totally bogus. But they are popular. The more enterprising among the duplicitous can purchase these degrees online for anywhere from fifty bucks to several hundred dollars. The graduate degrees are a little pricier than the mere Bachelors' but they are available from any number of phony universities. Some of them even look impressive; provided you don't look try to find the school's physical address on the Internet.

Before you become too upset or overly suspicious, bear in mind that those who lie about their degrees comprise a minority of employment candidates. More often than not your candidate actually is who he says he is and did attend and graduate from the college listed in his resume. But bear in mind the operative phrase here is "more often than not." With that in mind, think of the ways you may cause embarrassment and even litigation if you mistakenly hire someone who has obtained only a fictional degree.

It may be true that lacking a Bachelor's degree in certain disciplines may be irrelevant. There is a saying, for example, that a good sales person is born and not made, or something to that affect. And while that may be true in certain disciplines, in more than a few someone better have the qualifications afforded through the proper education. It may well be your new hire with his fictional degree may genuinely lack the skill sets required for the job. This reality can cause all sorts of problems and even lead to catastrophe in its myriad forms.

You have allocated time and money to his hire. You have distracted your work force, at least those who have conducted the various interviews. In hiring this person, you may have rejected a candidate who was truly qualified but is no longer available. You must now allocate additional resources to hire someone else. Such mistakes can detract from employee morale as well as your

bottom line.

Additionally, by hiring someone not qualified by virtue of lacking his degree, you are jeopardizing your relationship with clients. You may have assigned this person to a client, and now your employee has screw things up through is lack of qualifications. This can make your client extremely unhappy. The client may demand compensation. They may even threaten a lawsuit. This is not only costly, but embarrassing as well.

If you think this doesn't happen, you had better think again. These are not the stories executives like to brag about over lunch. These are the stories that are whispered, and the whispering is far more ominous and damaging to your business. Let's face it, if your failure to perform due diligence causes proves detrimental to your client, then you will be held accountable. You will look foolish and cheap. You may also be looking for another client to replace the one who left you.

The moral to this story is that your Human Resources Management must check out everyone, no matter how trustworthy they sound. It is essential to have a pre-employment screening program in place and to include education verification as part of that program. The few bucks you spend up front to verify your candidate's graduation can save you plenty in money and time as well as and potential litigation and embarrassment. Those who win contracts with major corporations, especially technology or defense and security related industries will find these companies mandate background checks for everyone who will be working on the project. This includes education verification. Often they will insist on verification of all degrees and not just the highest. When conducting education verifications here are some things to keep in mind—

- Colleges and Universities typically provide verification either in-house or through the National Student Clearing House or another third party service. If the University is registered with a third party service, the degree can often be verified that day. Third party services will charge a fixed rate for access verification. Some background checking agencies will add on to this rate while others will pass it on at cost.
- Typically, degrees are verified by background checking services within a couple, few days. The process may take longer if your candidate has either graduated some years back or is not listed in the database.
- Verification may also take longer over the holidays, semester break or the summer. Be prepared to allow for more time for verification.
- Verification from foreign universities inevitably will take longer than domestic verification. Typically, the rates for foreign verifications are significantly higher than charges for a domestic university. Be prepared to pay more and wait longer for the foreign verification.
- Some schools will ask for your candidate's disclosure and release form before issuing the verification.

- When providing your candidate's information to the University or third party service, it is best to include the years attended, the year graduated, the actual degree and major, and for large schools the campus where your candidate attended.
 - If your candidate is a female, be sure the information you submit reflects the actual name with which your candidate graduated. Sometimes your candidate applies for the position under her married name and fails to provide her maiden name, the name she used while attending school.
 - This may also apply for foreign students. Sometimes foreign candidates will change their names after graduation, to make them more accessible in the American workplace. But they may have attended school, using their formal name. Your candidate is known to you as "Ben," but in school he was still "Bao." This can complicate the verification process.
 - If the school or the third party service is having a difficult time verifying your candidate's degree, they may request a facsimile of his diploma or final transcripts.
 - Be sure to keep your verification process uniform. You may decide to verify all degrees or only the highest degree obtained. Whatever you do for one candidate, you should do for all the rest.
 - Make sure your background checking service stays in front of any complications that may arise in the verification process. Establish and maintain fluid communication channels so that the service can keep you informed and request additional information when needed.
- Remember if for some reason and after all due diligence you are unable to verify your candidate's degree, it probably means he never obtained one. They may try to talk their way out of it, but hold firm and insist they provide any information that has been requested. There is nothing exceptional about this information for anyone who has truly graduated from an accredited college or university. If they can't provide that information, you may want to look for another candidate. Remember the axiom that if they lie about their degree then they'll lie when on the job didn't become accepted wisdom for no reason. Check them out before you hire.