

Can You Spot a Fake Reference?

By Stephanie Zillman, HCA, 4th February, 2013

While there have always been applicants who name their best mates as a referee on their resumes, the fakers have now turned pro.

Sites offering fake reference services continue to spring up, raising questions over whether the process is flawed from the outset, and whether it's time to up the ante and background-check referees.

According to background screening expert Jeff Wizceb, the process of signing up for a fake reference is easy. *"You basically sign up and create your own company that you want to have worked at or create a position at a legitimate company,"* said Wizceb. *"You plug in references, position, salary, all that information, and if an employer were to call the number you provided, these sites will pose as a reference and it would be basically this fake company that would 'verify' the information."*

And these sites are doing big business. Careerexcuse.com, self-described itself as "the official site for outsourcing your job references", is no longer taking new clients because of an overabundance of workload. *"I think HR departments may realise these are out there, but they don't realise how prevalent it is,"* Wizceb said. *"With these sites turning away business, I think it shows people are using these services a lot more than we might think."*

Another company based in the US called the Reference Store provides fake references for professionals with questionable work histories. Founder of the business Everett Davis said his site fabricates professional resumes and provides credible telephone references for as little as \$50. Comfortable being called a 'professional liar', Davis said his business is justified because he's providing a service that helps put people back to work and earn money to pay mortgages, university loans and other bills that might otherwise go unpaid. Davis likened the job market to a game, and said the retired intelligence professionals he's hired to provide references are adept at deception. *"It's almost child's play,"* Davis said of his company's efforts to deceive hiring managers.

However even the liars say it's not open slather. David said his company won't provide fake references for those seeking jobs in public safety, health care or schools.

Effective probing

Five top tips for effective reference checking:

- At interview stage confirm with the candidate who is the appropriate person to call. Do not rely on who is written on the resume. Ask specifically who the role reported into, who is currently in that position and how long they reported to that person.
- If the referee to call is not the person noted on the resume, ask the candidate why and ask for written permission to contact the referee.
- Ensure you identify the person you are talking to; never conduct reference checks on mobile telephone numbers. Phone the reception of an organisation to confirm the name and title of the person.
- Often during the interview process you are trying to dig up information that you can ask further questions on during the reference check. Dates of employment might be one question, but be sure not to offer these yourself – get the referee to offer them.

Ensure the questions are relevant and open-ended rather than those requiring 'yes/no' responses. You may need to do more than one reference check at a single organisation to rule out any personal issues, ill-feeling between people, or importantly, a bona fide fake.

To view the article online: <http://www.hcamag.com/article/can-you-spot-a-fake-reference-148420.aspx>

It is critical during the recruitment process, that hiring decisions are based on reliable, objective data. Peoplogica offers a range of screening and selection tests, assessments and services to assist organisations in selecting the right candidate for the job.

For more information please contact us:

T: + 61 2 9936 9000
F: + 61 2 9936 9036
E: info@peoplogica.com
W: www.Peoplogica.com

Level 2, 52 Atchison Street,
St Leonards, NSW, 2065