

CASE #6: RESUME & WORK HISTORY ACCURACY

“Restless Resume: How Far did it Wander?”

A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold.

~ Proverbs 22:1

Mel and his wife Pat and their three-year-old son lived in California where Mel worked as a section manager for a high-tech company, State Of The Art Electronics, Inc. Mel and Pat’s parents lived in Massachusetts where both were born. Pat missed being able to frequently see her parents.

Mel learned that Modern Systems Corporation, located just eighty miles from their home town, was experiencing rapid expansion. Modern was planning to add staff at all levels. Mel applied for a job, submitting a resume along with a good letter. Mel’s desire and pressure to move led him to exaggerate the scope of some of his previous responsibilities and some of the details of his experience and qualifications. He did not tell Pat about this adjustment.

Modern Systems brought Mel in for personal interviews with three executives including Ed, Personnel Director. Mel filled out a company application form that included a listing of education, job titles and references. As a result of the resume and the interviews Mel was offered a job with a small increase in salary. Modern agreed to pay half of Mel’s moving expenses. Pat was overjoyed.

Mel quickly settled into his new job and because he was bright, conscientious and hardworking, he quickly gained the approval and respect of his supervisors. Personnel Department was overloaded due to expansion that triggered the heavy human resources activity. Most reference checks were not even read by Personnel but were placed in each applicant’s or employee’s file.

At six months Mel received his first performance appraisal that in the main was WELL ABOVE AVERAGE or EXCELLENT. It is now ten months since Mel started at Modern and he is one of three junior executives being considered for promotion to a new position that has just opened up.

The Personnel Director pulls the files of the three employees to prepare for discussion with the department manager where the new job is assigned. Prior to the meeting with the Department Manager, the Personnel Director discovers the discrepancies between the claims in Mel’s resume and the responses to the reference checks. There are no discrepancies on the official application form because it only lists education and job titles chronologically. A note at the top of the job application form states “false statements on this application may subject the employee to immediate dismissal.”

Ed, the Personnel Director, asks Mel to come to his office for an important discussion. Mel enters the office expecting that he is going to be offered the new job.

Question: What ethical, business and personal issues are raised?

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### **THE CASE OF THE RESTLESS RESUME, PART TWO**

Mel enters the Personnel Director’s office and after a friendly greeting, sits in a chair facing Ed who begins to speak. “Mel, you’ve given me a tough problem,” Ed says, after which he explains about

the discrepancies between Mel's resume and the reference checks. He continues, "I'm not sure what to do about you. I know how anxious you were to return to Massachusetts and why you may have overstated some of your experience. We like you and your work and if you get this promotion, it could be the first step in many. On the other hand, there is this situation that raises questions about your integrity. Incidentally, all of your reference checks were very positive about your performance."

Before Mel can respond, Ed continues, "My function is to provide information and guidance to the supervisors to help make decisions. I don't make any final decisions. There are four or five alternatives I can follow."

"There are no apparent inaccuracies in your official application form and I suppose I could ignore the resume. In this way the resume would not be an issue in the decision by the new supervisor. He was not one of the persons who interviewed you and never saw the resume."

"Or I can put all the facts in front of the supervisor of the new position who doesn't know you very well and let him come to his own conclusion."

"Or I can give you back your resume but suggest that you haven't been with the company long enough to justify this increased responsibility at this time, so that your present employment status wouldn't be affected at all."

"Or I can put all the facts on the table and recommend that you be terminated for cause."

After a lengthy pause Ed queries, "Tell me, Mel, if you were in my position, what would you do? Maybe you would like to think about it overnight and we will talk again early tomorrow morning."

### **Questions:**

- 1) Are the options put forward by Ed the only options available?
- 2) If you were in Mel's position, what would you do?
- 3) Under the "utilitarian" approach the question arises: "what harm" or "what good" is done here or would result from any of the options Ed presents?
- 4) If you were the employer, what would you do? What would be the ethical basis for your position?

***There is no path to integrity; integrity is the path.***

- Michael Dowd

***Intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education.***

~ Martin Luther King, Jr.

***Character, in the long run, is the decisive factor in the life of an individual and of nations alike.***

~ Theodore Roosevelt