Debate #3

Applicant Faking in Selection

By: Jon Franko, Devin Heinlein, Matthew Leong, and Robert Wingerter



Two Sides to the Debate

- Applicant faking is not an issue and faking should be ignored.
- Applicant faking represents a main issue and fakers should be punished.

Stance: Faking on Applications is an Issue and Offenders Should be Punished

- How many of us have embellished on our resume to make ourselves look marketable?
  - “Faking is a behavior that individuals will engage in when they believe it is necessary to obtain something of personal value and when they believe they are capable of doing so successfully” (Ellingson 2007)
- 30% (+/- 10%) of applicants fake (Griffith and Converse 2011)
  - Of fakers, 20% are extreme fakers, 80% are slight fakers (Ziegler 2011)
- Faking in order to be more marketable puts honest applicants at a disadvantage in the competitive job market.
- Punishing offenders offers a more level playing field, where employment is earned by qualifications and merit.

Types of Faking

- “Faking is a deliberate set of behaviors motivated by a desire to present a deceptive impression to the world” (MacCann, Ziegler, and Roberts 2011).
- **Impression Management (IM)**
  - **Slight Image Creation** - “distorting or embellishing prior experiences or qualifications”
  - **Extensive Image Creation** - “intentional fabrication or inventing experiences or qualifications”
  - **Image Protection** - “intentionally omitting or masking undesirable experiences or qualifications”
  - **Deceptive Ingratiation** - “insincere praise of the interviewer or organization” (Levanshina et. al 258)

Consequences of Applicant Faking:

David Tovar:

- Vice President of Communications for Walmart
- Lied about receiving an art degree from the University of Delaware
- Worked with the company for 8 years
- His omission of detail was discovered when a more in depth background was being conducted for his promotion to a senior vice president position



Consequences of Applicant Faking:

George O'Leary

- Head Football Coach for Notre Dame
- Lied about receiving a Master's Degree in Education from NYU (Had earned 39 credits, but had not graduated)
- Claimed to have earned 3 letters, but never played in a game.
- Was only the coach for 5 days before he resigned.
- "In seeking employment I prepared a resume that contained inaccuracies regarding my completion of coursework for a master's degree and also my level of participation in football at my alma mater. These misstatement were never stricken from my resume or biographical sketch in later years." (ESPN)



Consequences of Applicant Faking:

- Large costs to the employer for re-hiring and training.
  - According to the National Student Clearinghouse, this can cost anywhere from $3,500 to $40,000 depending on salary level and degrees required for a position
  - If certain certifications are faked, company may be susceptible to litigation
    - Military
    - Operating heavy equipment
- Employee must fear possibility of termination at any point if lies are discovered
- Increases competition for positions, making it harder for applicants who are actually qualified to gain jobs

Laws Regarding Falsifying Information

- Currently no laws on falsifying information on a resume.
- However, providing misinformation can lead to the termination by the employer at their discretion. This is considered justified grounds for termination and the employee will not be able to file suit against the employer.
- “After-Acquired Evidence” Defense

“After-Acquired Evidence”

- “Under this doctrine, courts routinely grant employers summary judgment on the basis of employee wrongdoing that the employer discovered after its employment decision” (Zemelman 176)
- Reasons can include:
  - Failure to disclose reasons for termination from previous employer
  - Not disclosing felony conviction
  - False information about professional licenses, education, degrees, certifications

“After-Acquired Evidence” Example

- In *Gilty v. Village of Oak Park*, a black police officer brought a Title VII charge against his employer for discriminatory failure to promote. The police chief then checked the academic credentials of nineteen employees, including the plaintiff. When this investigation revealed that the plaintiff lacked the bachelor's degree he claimed, the employer charged him with falsifying his academic credentials. The plaintiff then amended his Title VII complaint to add a retaliation charge. Upon the defendant's motion for summary judgment, the district court applied the McDonnell Douglas analysis and held that the plaintiff had failed to establish a prima facie case on any of his claims because he "was not 'qualified' for the position of police officer." That is, the court not only granted the employer summary judgment on the retaliation claim, where the defendant already knew of the misrepresentation and thus had a legitimate reason for terminating the plaintiff, but it also immunized the employer from liability on the disparate treatment and impact claims, where the employer clearly discovered the misrepresentation after its failure to promote.” (Zemelman 179)

The Necessity to Punish Applicant Faking

- The practice is commonplace.
- There are little ramifications to the offenders other than a forced resignation.
- The costs to the company can set them back, which can put the brakes on innovation, expansions, or employee programs.
    - Down time with no one in the role, loss of productivity
    - HR and Management salary time used in recruitment and selection process, takes time away from other tasks and value added processes.
    - Financial costs of training new employee. Less production while the new hire gets over the learning curve.
    - Desperation could lead to rushed selections where they may overlook another applicant faking.
- Without repercussions, there is no reason for potential employees to always be honest.

The Necessity to Punish Applicant Faking

- Punishment will be a deterrent for applicants to fake.
- Burrhus Frederic Skinner Theory of Operant Conditioning
  - Positive Reinforcement - introducing a positive stimulus to encourage behavior
  - Negative Reinforcement - removal of negative stimulus to encourage behavior
  - Positive Punishment - introducing an adverse stimulus to discourage a behavior
  - Negative Punishment - removal of a positive stimulus to discourage a behavior
- Faking applications and getting a job because of it can encourage behavior.
- Being punished for faking applications will discourage behavior.

Applicant faking is not an issue

- Faking is most common on tests and interviews that require self reporting
- Most faking that occurs does not involve statements that are objectively untrue
- It is acceptable and expected that applicants will want to present themselves in the best light
- Some cases of “faking” are due to a lack of self-awareness
- Applicants that do fake aren’t very good at it



Why Applicants don’t fake

- They feel that faking is ethically wrong
- Research indicates that faking can be decreased by warning test-takers that the test was designed to detect or prevent faking
- Some applicants would prefer to not be hired than work in a position where they are not a good fit



Consequences of Applicant faking

James Peterson

- CEO of Microsemi Corporation
- Lied on resume about receiving his bachelor's and master's degree from Brigham Young University
- When his lie was discovered in 2008 Microsemi asked him to pay $100,000 and he was not allowed to collect that year's bonus
- He is still the CEO of Microsemi



Why Applicants Should Not Be Punished

- Can take a lot of time and resources
  - Extensive background checks
  - Cost of turning over employees
- There are more effective methods to avoid faking than punishing the applicant fakers. Rather than spend resources on punishing fakers, it is in a company's interest to develop a structured interview process that reduces or eliminates faking

Interview Structure: The Pros of Structured Interviews

- Campion suggested in his 1997 article that a more structured interview by utilizing 7 criteria for structuring the content of the interviews:
  - Basing Questions on Job Analysis
  - Asking the Same Question of Each Candidate
  - Limiting Prompting, Follow-up Questioning, and Elaboration on Questions
  - Use Better Types of Questions
  - Use Appropriate Interview Length and a Sufficient Number of Questions
  - Withhold or Control Ancillary Information
  - Do Not Allow Questions from the Candidate Until After the Interview

Basing Questions on Job Analysis

- Use of Critical Incidents
  - “Job related behavior that distinguish among outstanding, average and poor performance” (Campion 78)
  - Increases validity and keeps questions and answering more relevant
  - Less opportunity for interviewees to use Impression Management (IM) as the questions are more point of fact with less wiggle room for the interviewee to fake a structured interview.
- Responses can still be faked, but “[Van Iddekinge Raymark, and Roth (2015)] showed that the extent of faking in interviews is lower than faking on personality measures, suggesting that it is more difficult for applicants to fake structured interviews than personality tests.” (Levashina et. al 259)

Asking the Same Question of Each Candidate

- Reduces the possibility of irrelevant questions being asked
- Asking the same questions to each interviewee is the simplest way to turn a conversation into a measurable approach
- The structure of the interview can be enhanced by grouping questions with other similar questions
- Reduces equal employment opportunity biases in hiring procedures

Limiting Prompting, Follow-up Questioning, and Elaboration Questions

- Unpopular with hiring personal because it limits the amount of flexibility they have in interviewing someone.
- Follow-up questions could cause bias in the selection procedures by allowing interviewers to coach interviewees to the “correct” answer
- If follow-up questions are permitted, they should be standardized. (“Could you please elaborate or give an example?”)

Using Better Types of Questions

- Situational Questions (SQ) - reflect basic knowledge of the job (Levashina et. al 267)
  - Can be faked if interviewee researches the job description and anticipates the types of questions asked.
- Past Behavior Questions (PBQ) - reflect experience (Levashina et. al 267)
  - Can be faked, but not as easily, as stories about past experiences will have to remain consistent in order to be genuine
  - Difficult to find consistency in just one interview, follow-up interview required.
    - Can use follow up questions to probe deeper into the past behavior, see if it remains consistent.
    - Taking notes, easier for interviewer to recall what they said than if the interviewee is lying and has to recall the alleged event
  - “Krajewski et al. (2006)showed that PBQs significantly predicted job performance (r=.32) for complex jobs, whereas SQs did not (r=.09, *ns*). (Levashina 268)

Use Appropriate Interview Length and a Sufficient Number of Questions

- Interviews should be long and ask many questions within reason
- Interviews that are too long tend to collect too much data which decreases the ability of the interviewer to make good decisions (Marchese and Muchinsky)
- Interviews that are too long tend to be uncomfortable for both the interviewer and interviewee
- Ideally interviews should be between 30-60 minutes and 15-20 questions

Withhold of Control Ancillary Information

- Ancillary information can include application forms, work histories, personnel files, test scores, reference letters, transcripts, and results of previous interviews
- All of this information can and should be used in the hiring decisions, but it should be withheld from the interviewer, or standardized so that the interviewer receives the same information about each candidate
- The interviewer may not be happy about having an incomplete profile on applicants, and applicants may view the interviewer as unprepared

Do Not Allow Questions from the Candidate Until After the Interview

- Questions from the interviewee during the interview can help them get a read on what the interviewer is looking for and they could be more likely to use IM.
- Back to back questions from the interviewer will help yield consistent answers, as having to keep the story consistent over the course of many questions will make it more difficult for the interviewee to fake credentials and experience.

Conclusion

- Applicant faking does exist, the debate is over whether or not the extent to which applicant faking makes it an issue.
- Punishing fakers can disincentivize faking
  - Will not eliminate it
  - Can be costly
- A structured interview can provide an environment where faking is less viable
  - Each aspect has its benefits and drawbacks. Different aspects of the structured interview may not allow one type of IM, but may provide opportunity for others
    - Ex: PBQ's reduce deception based on previous experiences, but highlighting one specific experience may allow interviewee to omit a less desirable experience

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