

Another Worker Pays the Price for Fabricating Resume

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The book "Freakonomics" estimates that 50 percent of people lie on their resumes. Marilee Jones is one of them, and it cost her a high-profile job at MIT.

Admitting that she had fabricated her own academic credentials, Marilee Jones, the dean of admissions at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, resigned from her post on April 26 after nearly three decades with the college.

The news came as a shock to the MIT student body and community, as Jones was famous for urging stressed-out and highly-competitive students to relax, and stop trying to be so perfect.

In fact, she'd recently promoted a book she'd co-written on the subject - "Less Stress, More Success: A New Approach to Guiding Your Teen Through College Admissions and Beyond," making her a guru of the movement to tame the college admissions frenzy.

Yet, to the vast majority of people who never knew her personally, the news that she fudged nearly all of her academic credentials might seem less shocking. In fact, the book "Freakonomics" estimates that 50 percent of people lie on their resumes, with author Stephen D. Levitt referring to a W.C. Fields quote in his explanation: "Anything worth winning is worth cheating for."

But you'd be hard pressed to find a person who has been caught cheating

and thought it was worth it in the end.

Just ask David Edmondson, the former CEO of Radio Shack who resigned in February 2006 after it was found that he had "clearly misstated" his academic record, claiming that he had received a bachelor's degree when he had not. Or George O'Leary, who stepped down five days after being made Notre Dame football coach in 2001, admitting he'd lied about his academic and athletic background. He never received a master's degree or even played college football.

Employers of individuals in less visible positions are also taking an increasingly black-and-white view of employees who fiddle with their credentials.

"This MIT case underscores the danger of embellishing what's in a resume. It's more and more common for employers to do background checks, and there are more and more resources available for employers who wish to do so. Even if an employee has been found to have embellished a smaller detail, they may terminate the employee on principal alone," Patrick Manzo, vice president of compliance and fraud prevention at Monster.com, told eWEEK.

Other factors have made it even more risky for people to stretch the truth on their resumes. Newer technologies have made it easier for companies to ferret out cheaters both before and after hiring them. Also, the digitizing of resumes has made it possible for even the smallest lie to follow an individual throughout his or her career.

"Young workers need to be especially careful - a lie on your resume early on can have long-lasting consequences," said Manzo.

Monster found that a surprising number of job seekers hold the misguided perception that employers expect a little resume padding here

and there even though companies have repeatedly said that this is simply not the case.

"Make sure your resume is correct in each and every respect," said Manzo.

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