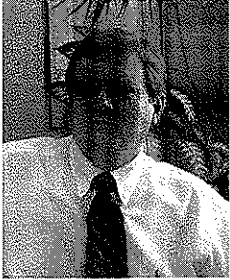


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Above All Remember This: Be Truthful in Interviews



By Russ Jones

Job hunters at all levels face the same set of problems: too many people advising and too much advice about finding a new position. Most of the time, it's easy to distinguish between the good, the bad and the ridiculous. Sometimes, however, poor advice comes from well-known or trusted sources.

Recently, a new supervisor terminated an employee after he had served 15 years with his employer. Until the new supervisor arrived, the employee had always had favorable performance reviews. He wrote to a career columnist for advice regarding what to say about his termination when interviewing for new positions. The writer advised him not to mention the firing but to simply say that he chose to leave the company to seek a new challenge.

This advice is terribly wrong. What would happen if the candidate lies in the interview, gets hired and the new employer finds out about the lie later on? Obviously, he risks being fired again. What he should do is tell the prospective employer that he left his last job because after 15 years of outstanding performance, a new boss arrived and the two didn't see eye to eye. In today's world, most people understand that poor chemistry with a new boss doesn't translate into poor performance, especially after a 15-year track record of success.

Another possibility for this scenario is that the interviewer may sense a lie when told of the voluntary departure. In Malcolm Gladwell's new book, *Blink*, he describes a rapid thinking process called "thin-slicing." "Thin-slicing" refers to the ability of our subconscious

to find patterns in situations and behaviors based on narrow slices of experience. In this instance, the interviewer may immediately question why a 15-year employee would suddenly leave his job for a new challenge with no new position to go to. It doesn't make sense, and interviewers will continue to probe by asking more questions about why the departure occurred. Thin-slicing would push the interviewer to question all that is said, creating a greater examination of all responses, as well as of the resume.

Heed what executive recruiter Peter Crist told *The Wall Street Journal's* Career Journal.com regarding what he wants candidates to say to him: "The important thing is to volunteer anything that would, at a later point, be a surprise. I am very deep and thorough when I do my referencing, so I'll find out if there is anything you didn't tell me. The best thing is to offer it up early in the conversation. It will cause me to respect you. If you don't tell me, I'll return later and ask why you didn't disclose it. This doesn't have to be a deep, dark secret. It may be that someone will say, 'Ten years ago I was fired. On my resume it looks as if I moved to another company, but my boss and I didn't see eye to eye, and he fired me.'"

The truth never goes out of style. Don't find this out the hard way.

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