#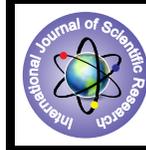 Methodical Approach to Discern Veritable Candidates from Fake Ones During Recruitment and Selection: Separate Wheat From Chaff

Management

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ABSTRACT

The success of an organization depends on the contributions given by its employees i.e. its manpower. The responsibility of searching and further recruiting of such manpower lies with the Human Resource allocators. Their judgment regarding the profile and suitability of an applicant forms a crucial input for the ultimate decision makers. Hence, it becomes all the more serious task for an HR recruiter to critically analyze and verify the candidates' CV, an important tool for applicants to furnish information, before making assumptions about anything. The paper discusses such methods and tools which can be helpful in identifying frauds on CV/Resume and save the organization from building up an incompetent, fake and unethical workforce.

Introduction – Human Resource Department as a necessary support

The 'Recruitment and Selection' process is perhaps considered as one of the most basic and fundamental operations of Human Resource (HR) department in any organization. Since in today's dynamic working environment there is a constant demand created for knowledgeable, dependent, confident and adaptable workforce; HR recruiters play a crucial role – as a filter – to sort and select the best candidates who are in tune with organizational mission and goal. The employees so selected can contribute to the organizational success by channelizing their strengths for the benefit of realizing strategic objectives of the top management.[1-3] Thus, integrating the 'right' kind of employees can be a significant factor in attaining the mission of the company. E.g. Ahmed et al (2002) demonstrated how a company focused on TQM practices was able to achieve its aim with a convenient mix of operational strategies plus employees of a particular behavioral traits especially identified and selected at Plant level.[4] Hence it becomes important for HR to have an eye for details to match with organization's policy and to be able to scrutinize the information in hand before finalizing the recruitment and selection of an individual..

Curriculum Vitae – comprehensive arrangement of necessary points

The Curriculum vitae or Resume is the most often tool used in recruitment process. It is the description of a person's own history in relation to job; thus can be used for determining all technical/non technical skills of the candidate. With usual descriptions of academic credentials to work experience, a host of information can be outlined. [5]

A typical CV includes:
a) Demographic details,
b) Educational qualifications,
c) Training/work history,
d) Core competencies/skills, and
e) References/testimonials/recommendations

In pertinence to job description and specifications, one may conveniently match the suitability of the applicant by going through the CV.

But what if the affirmations on the CV are exaggerated / falsely indicated?

With the falling economy and subsequent cut-throat competition, it's easy to presume a possibility where one furnishes false undertakings so as to embellish their perception in comparison to other applicants. However, HR recruiters can hardly afford to fall prey to such fallacious attempts. Rather, it's part of their skills to establish whether the person sitting in front of them is a genuine deal or not.

To spot fiction from fact

The mendacity on CVs can range from inflating grades to contriving former employers in order to create an impression of vast and varied experience in the mind of recruiters. Certain practices, as mentioned following, can prove to go a long way in sieving the gold from dust.

1. Educational credentials - As Joan E. Van Tol mentioned, misrepresented academic credentials are by far one of the most common types of deceptive descriptions in job applications.[6] Such Educational achievements are crucial in early phases of career, more so in jobs requiring sound basis of theoretical knowledge about a concept.

To check if the qualifications mentioned are true, all original academic transcripts can be solicited with their duplicates, to be stored in the records/personnel file. Further, some organizations may ask the educational institutes to verify the authenticity of certificates/degrees produced by applicant.

2. Verifying affirmations - Personal Interview is an excellent opportunity for the applicant to elaborate and corroborate the information mentioned on CV, face to face.[7] On the other hand, HR should look out for 'Red Flags', during the interview session, indicating the need to dig deeper. Such warning signs could range from overly rehearsed or details-lacking answers to voice trembling or uncomfortable body language, while talking through the earlier jobs/ trainings.

Two tools to narrow down the focus on critical issues can be [7]:

A) *Probe Questions* – They are used when candidates are too generalized about their previous stints or when there is a possibility of further relevant but undisclosed information.

E.g. 'What exactly was your contribution in the XYZ project?' or 'What precise role were you assigned in the last job?'

B) *Closed-ended Questions* - Their aim is to not only to probe but limit the answer to a succinctly stated statement or a YES/NO clarification.

E.g. 'Did you ever handle Quality Management at productions level?' or 'When did that happen?' or 'How many hours did you devote to studies while doing your last job?'

Nonetheless, it is important not to go into interrogation mode as inadvertently some genuine applicants too may get alienated.

3. Skill testing - Certain industries like IT, Engineering, Architecture, Accountancy or even medical professions like Surgery, Physiotherapy etc. require a great deal of technical skills which form an integral part of the job. Certifications in these competencies may give a confidence to the employer(s) regarding the job ability of the candidate.

Nevertheless, to test the skills, it would be advisable to put the candidates in the actual or simulated environment with emphasis on 'essentials' of the work and simple parameters to judge. For some positions, a technical quiz or/and online practice tests on numerical and analytical reasoning would do the purpose. Practical demonstrations of the skills akin to above, may force mendacious candidates to withdraw in the earlier stages only.[8]

4. Affiliations to professional groups- The reference(s) section is one of the important areas to be verified as well[8]. In order to be perceived as 'desirable & well connected', many people may just enumerate big names of the industry claiming affiliations to them either through previous jobs or personal recommendations.[9]

A simple verification through an E-mail or a phone call may cross-check the details about the position titles, employment duration and even real opinion of the previous employer(s).

5. Exclusive screening program - With job applicants becoming more and more subtle about their mendacity, a growing need for Pre – employment Screening Specialists is discernible, especially in large organizations where hiring is a serious and expensive risk. Through Pre-employment screening program, myriad but vital information about the candidate with respect to educational verification, professional accreditation, I.D verification, credit information, employment history, criminal-record check and even immigration status and international security check can be established.[10]

To achieve the objective, HR department can have external tie-ups with such specialists or may create a team among themselves who are apt with the process of finding such particulars and specifics.

Conclusion

It is significant for the Human Resource department to clearly examine and investigate the declarations of job applicants on their CVs. Each and every aspect of the resume should be vetted to clear out the weeds.

All the same, before starting the recruitment and selection process, it would be helpful to be clear-headed in certain respects, as to 'what exactly is expected out of the candidates', what all can be condoned in the context of exaggerations', and 'what criteria will define the list of cast-offs'? Such questions will go a long way in giving the benefit of doubts to deserving situations.

E.g. can we excuse an applicant, who is meeting all the current job specifications, for a cocky or magnificent self-description on his/her CV? Admittedly, the answer can only be decided keeping in mind the consequential issues of such decisions; but it does point out the need for HR recruiters to be adroit in picking out the potentials from the non potential ones.

Callousness in recruitment and selection practices can often result in high costs for the organization.[11] If due attention is not paid while analyzing resumes and conducting interviews, a person with a weak work ethic and falsely embellished CV may be chosen over a legitimate, valid and authentic candidate. Such inept workers may in turn hamper the overall progress of the company by not only dropping the productivity level but creating a need for management to spend exorbitant fund on them to get trained in their work skills which by the way they claimed to be deft at in the first place!

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