

tions and distortions. Applicants, meanwhile, will want to know how to get their résumés noticed. We consider each of these issues and how to address them below.

Résumé Fabrications and Distortions. Because résumés are prepared by applicants and follow no set-in-stone form, and because applicants want to present themselves in a favorable light, distortions are a significant problem. David J. Edmondson, CEO of RadioShack, was fired after a newspaper investigation revealed that he padded his résumé with two degrees he never earned, from a university he never attended. In addition, MIT dean Marilee Jones resigned after it was discovered that she never received the undergraduate or master's degrees she claimed on her résumé. Edmondson and Jones are not alone. In any given year, it seems the career of some CEO, athletic coach, or public official is derailed by a false statement the individual made on his or her résumé—often years ago. Resume-Doctor, an online company that assists applicants in preparing résumés, checked the accuracy of applicants' résumés posted on its website and found that nearly half (42.7%) had "significant inaccuracies." A background checking agency found that 56% of résumés contained a falsehood of some kind.⁹

Like the truth, résumés come in various degrees of accuracy, ranging from small, unintentional mistakes to outright fabrications. Some degree of what we might call "fudging" is commonplace. For example, Ellie Strauss's two more recent full-time jobs lasted less than six months. Ellie represented these as freelance jobs, under the heading "Senior Project Manager," to make them look like contract positions. Some might call this deception. Others might call it creative marketing or tailoring. Whatever you call it, résumé padding happens a lot. According to one survey, the three biggest areas of distortion or misinformation are the following:¹⁰

1. Inflated titles
2. Inaccurate dates to cover up job-hopping or employment gaps
3. Half-finished degrees, inflated education, or "purchased" degrees

The best way to combat résumé fraud or fudging is to conduct careful background checks. In addition, applying a "smell" test to any suspicious information is a wise policy. For example, in light of the false information submitted by coaches, colleges are scrutinizing résumés much more closely. On the University of Louisville's athletic department application forms, a warning has been inserted: "If a discrepancy is found after the background check, the employee is subject to dismissal." In short, the best protection against résumé fraud is for the hiring organization to do its homework.¹¹

Getting a Résumé Noticed. The conscientious job seeker may wonder how to best prepare a résumé. Although there are as many theories on the ingredients of a perfect résumé as there are résumé readers, a few general guidelines may be helpful. First, realize that typos and other minor mistakes can kill your chances. A