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Eve Tahmincioglu, author, journalist and columnist for MSNBC's *Your Career*.



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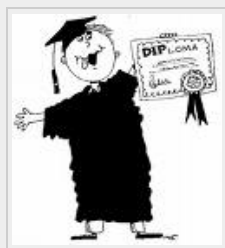
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## Want a job? Show me your actual diploma!

07 Oct 2009 08:06 am

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There is little trust in our nation's workplaces today, and a recent job-hunting trend is proof of that.



I spoke with a job seeker in New York yesterday who has been out of work since late last year, and he told me a shocking story.

He had two interviews with a major employer and on the second one he was asked to bring his college diploma. Not a copy, not a college transcript but the actual sheepskin.

Panic set in a bit for this man who wondered if he could find the diploma after all these years. He had graduated nearly two decades earlier and while he didn't recall throwing the thing out he wasn't sure he could readily find it.

Luckily he did, although it was a bit dusty.

This job seeker heading for his interview with dusty diploma in hand, and couldn't help but ask the people interviewing him why they made the odd request. "They told me in the past they had people fib about their education and experience, sometimes even saying they had a masters degree when they actually never received a degree," he explained.

What if he couldn't find his diploma? "They said they would have called the university themselves," he noted.

So, I thought, it may be a matter of ultimate laziness then. But these hiring managers aren't really that busy lately since most companies are keeping hiring to a minimum.

What gives?

Basically, people aren't always honest about their education, said [Revi Goldwasser](#), a job hunting expert.

"They may just lie about having it, writing on their resume Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Admin from UCLA May 2002 graduation, when in fact they never went, or, they may mislead you by writing on their resume: Bachelor of Science in Business Admin UCLA and not write a date," she said.

"I have learned the hard way that sometimes job seekers do not write the date because they never graduated," she added. "That is their way 'out' if asked during background check: 'Revi, I never wrote the date so that should have shown you I never obtained my

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degree.' That has actually happened to me several times."

But even Goldwasser is surprised that job seekers are being asked to bring in the actual diploma.

"Perhaps during interview mode, this is acceptable, but once an offer has been made, firms should request official transcripts be forwarded directly from the school to the hiring company, without ever touching the hands of the job seeker," she advised.

The reason, she continued, is because "there are online companies that issue fake diplomas and fake transcripts for all the universities out there and these companies make the diplomas and transcripts look identical to the real thing."

And you are not going to believe this, but here's a link to a fake diploma site she sent me called [Diploma Makers](#):

Here's a snippet of their promo:

For unmatched high quality fake diplomas, fake degrees and fake transcripts, DiplomaMakers.com has exactly what you're looking for. With an eye for detail and that sense of authenticity, each fake diplomas and transcripts is designed as close too genuine as you can find. Now you can bring that sense of accomplishment and ambition to your home or office with a realistic novelty diploma or fake transcript from DiplomaMakers.com

If you're thinking this might be a good route for you, beware.

One Illinois women got arrested earlier this year for using a fake degree to land a gig. [This from a local TV station](#):

38 year-old Ladea Allen was sentenced to 24 months probation after pleading guilty to unlawful use of an academic degree.

Officials say Allen lied about her level of education to land a job at a Vienna counseling facility.

According to investigators, the Family Counseling Center hired Ladea Allen as a Youth Outpatient Counselor. It's a position that involves working with kids, and requires at least a Bachelor's Degree.

Officials say Allen lied about having that degree- and when pressed for proof of it- she produced a phony college transcript.

Despite this clear deception, the whole "show-me-the-diploma" phenomenon makes me a bit uneasy. I couldn't find any data on how often job hunters lie about stuff like this, but I'm assuming Allen is a rare bird. Indeed, Goldwasser said, "99% of the job seekers are highly professional."

It's a shame that the occasional fibber causes hiring managers and HR folks to freak out and over react.



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## Archived Entry

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Given all the paranoia out there, I'm glad my husband framed my diploma from Hofstra University years ago. When I'm out there pounding the pavement for a new job, it will be nice to know the degree is hanging right behind me in my home office. I'm thinking I'll bring it in, frame and all, if some hiring manager asks me to prove I graduated.

What's your take? Have we fallen off the cynical cliff when it comes to not trusting people?



## 6 Responses

### 1. *HikingStick* Says:

October 7th, 2009 at 9:52 am

The topic of phony degrees came up the other day while my wife and I were discussing our education. There was yet another incident recently where a high-ranking public official was discovered to have falsified her educational accomplishments in order to land a good position. The problem, as we see it, is that these lies are often caught years after the liars land the jobs and raked in the elevated salary and bonuses commensurate to the position. Could employers, legally, make employees sign a statement attesting to the validity of the information on their applications and/or resumes such that, in the event that fraud is discovered, that they employee would be liable to repay all compensation and bonuses above the Federal Minimum Wage? Would such an agreement pass legal muster?

If fake documents are as easy to produce as suggested by the Diploma Makers link, why would any employer rely on a copy of the diploma at all? It would seem that the official transcript, mailed directly from the institution would be the method least likely to be faked (it still could be done by a company hiring agents to mail the phony documents from the purported cities of origin).

I'm not sure if we've "fallen off the cynical cliff" regarding our trust for others. Some have always been liars, but personal experience suggests that society has become more accepting of lies and half-truths. They no longer carry the same level of shame and social stigma that they carried in previous generations, at least not across the broadest swaths of our society. I often take issue with some persons and small businesses that offer resume help. I fully agree with doing everything to present your skills in a relevant fashion, including using industry buzzwords (yech!), but some (many?) people seem to have no problem crossing the line between making things come across as best as they can and stretching (or fabricating) the truth to make themselves look better. For example, listing project management experience if one only ever helped coordinate a small departmental project that really did not progress using the principles of the project management methodology, or counseling a long-time homemaker to list her title as "domestic engineer".

Since I continued my education after entering the workforce, I was always faced with the question of how to list an active program. The rule of thumb I decided upon was this: always list an active program in the cover letter, always list completed degrees in the resume, and list degrees that are at

least halfway completed on the resume with a clear "expected completion date" entry. That way, there may never be any confusion as to whether or not a degree has been earned vs. one still in progress.

[Sigh.] I just don't think that we, as a culture, value truth anymore. I believe many of us have accepted the idea that "truth is what's true to me." Unfortunately, that model just does not hold water, especially in cases where others must judge your qualifications.

2. *Wendy Says:*

October 7th, 2009 at 2:22 pm

If I'm asked to bring my diploma to a job interview, I will be bringing it framed and all. It took me forever to get that thing squarely lined up.

3. *Anthony Says:*

October 7th, 2009 at 2:47 pm

I do have to wonder how many people actually have their diplomas on hand. I know I and several friends don't have them. They're either in storage or with parents (who seems to value them more than the students). It can be hard enough to get a transcript from your university-getting the actual diploma seems like just one more unnecessary source of anxiety for a job seeker.

4. *telleve Says:*

October 7th, 2009 at 3:02 pm

It's sad HikingStick if we don't value truth anymore. But I wonder if it's just a bunch of bad apples that makes it seem like such deception is pervasive.

And I do wonder Anthony, how people who don't have their diplomas will be perceived when a hiring manager asks for it. Maybe they'll just end up actually doing their job – verifying degrees with the job candidate's school.

5. *Perle Champion Says:*

October 8th, 2009 at 12:57 pm

It's a shame people have to prove they have a diploma, but it is equally a shame that jobs that once required only a high school diploma, now ask for college.

The reason is simple. Too many high school diplomas today are not equal in value to the one I earned in 1969. Our schools continue to decline and pass children through the system that have no business being passed. They do all of us a disservice.

6. *Accounting Jobs Tulsa Says:*

October 17th, 2009 at 11:32 pm

I think it is really rare to have a hiring manager ask for a college diploma. I think you should certainly be prepared and make sure that you could actually provide one or transcripts if you have them. But I suppose in today's day and age of frauds, scandals and cheats anything is possible. So bottom line be prepared and most importantly be honest.

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