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EXAMINER

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**CREDENTIAL
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CORPORATE
HEADQUARTERS

TOLL-FREE:
(888) 689-2000

TOLL-FREE FAX:
(877) 689-1500

WEB:
www.credentialcheck.com

E-MAIL:
info@credentialcheck.com

Contact Us

Welcome

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5 key interview skills most managers lack

It happens at every company: Managers think they've interviewed a great employee, but the person turns out to be a dud on the job. Those hiring mistakes are expensive — but many can be avoided if managers learn some essential interviewing skills. Here are five of the most common skills hiring managers need to work on:

1. Time management – Nothing leads to a bad decision like an interview that is rushed through because the manager is too busy. Interviews don't have a scheduled end time — they take as long as necessary for an informed decision to be made. Managers should be able to manage their schedules so they can give interviews their full attention.
2. Skepticism – Some estimates say as many as half of all resumes contain severe exaggerations or outright lies. That is why it is key for managers to get the whole story about applicants' backgrounds. For example, if an applicant says he supervised 20 employees in his last job, the manager should probe deeply about what exactly his supervisory duties entailed. And when people list big accomplishments, managers should ask exactly what role they played, what help they had in the process, etc.
3. Restraint – Interviewers shouldn't talk too much. It sounds like a common sense rule, but it is often violated — especially when candidates give answers that are too quick and uncomfortable silence fills the room. Instead of jumping in with the next question, a well-placed pause should get the candidate to continue talking in more detail.
4. Manners – Some managers view interview etiquette as a one-way street — it's up to the candidate to be prepared and make a good impression. But in a recent poll, more than half of employees said they had been treated rudely by an interviewer. And odds are, they didn't accept the job if it was offered to them.
5. Patience – A common mistake is hiring the first decent candidate

who comes in after a round of duds. But managers need to evaluate applicants on their own and not be swayed by comparisons to particularly bad candidates. That said, once managers find someone who really is a great fit, waiting too long could hurt your chances of hiring the person.

Source: HR Recruiting Alert

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Little white lies on your resume can lead to big trouble

There's marketing yourself on your resume, and then there's flat-out lying. Many job seekers are crossing the line.

Although just 5 percent of workers actually admit to fibbing on their resumes, 57 percent of hiring managers say they have caught a lie on a candidate's application, according to a CareerBuilder.com survey. Of the hiring managers who caught a lie, 93 percent didn't hire the candidate.

When resume inconsistencies do surface during background checks, they raise concerns about the candidates' overall ethics. Forty-three percent of hiring managers say they would automatically dismiss a candidate who fibbed on their resume. The rest say it depends on the candidate and situation.

Stretched dates to cover up employment gaps is the most commonly caught resume lie, with nearly one in five hiring managers saying they have noticed this on a candidate's application. Other top resume lies include:

- Past employers -18 percent
- Education - 16 percent
- Skills and certifications - 15 percent
- Accomplishments - 8 percent

Reasons for lying range from the innocuous (not being sure of the exact employment dates) to the more sinister (intentionally being deceitful to get the job). To ensure your resume is accurate but still portrays you in the best light, heed these tips:

If you don't have much formal experience, highlight any activities or coursework that could be relevant to the position. Volunteer activities, part time jobs and class projects can all provide transferable skills and training.

If you didn't quite finish your degree, do not indicate on your resume that you graduated. Instead, name the university and list the years in which you attended.

If you were out of work, don't stretch the employment dates to cover the gap. Instead, keep the dates accurate and address the gap in your cover letter. Be sure to mention any classes you took or volunteer work you performed during this time.

If your company uses unfamiliar titles, it's acceptable to change your title to something more recognizable. If your title was "Primary Contact" and you performed the duties of an administrative assistant, you can clarify your title by writing "Primary Contact / Administrative Assistant."

Source: Detroit Free Press 10/26/08

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Some employees must be paid for attendance at training

There is no question that an employer may require a certain level of relevant education or training for a new hire to qualify for a job. However, it is more complicated to determine whether a non-exempt employee must be paid for attending training programs, lectures and meetings *throughout* the term of employment. Generally, a non-exempt employee is one who is covered by the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) because he or she is not an executive, administrator, professional or outside salesperson.

Training activity would normally be paid for a non-exempt employee unless all of the following are met: 1) Attendance occurs outside the employee's work hours; 2) Attendance is voluntary; 3) The employee does no productive work while attending the training; and 4) The program, lecture or meeting is not directly related to the employee's job.

Attendance is not "voluntary" if the employee believes that not attending would

adversely affect working conditions or continued employment. If the training is undertaken to prepare for advancement, it is not compensable.

Training is "directly related" to an employee's job and generally compensable if it helps the employee to perform the present job better. Even if the training is "directly related" to the employee's job, the employee need not be paid for training time if the employee on his or her own initiative attends an independent school, college or trade school after hours.

The FLSA contains specific requirements for the payment of compensation relating to training, traveling, waiting time, driving to job sites, preparing for work, etc. Salaried employees are not automatically exempt from overtime pay. In many instances, salaried employees must be paid overtime under the FLSA. The FLSA is enforced by the U.S. Department of Labor. Violation of the Act can result in back-pay, interest and penalties.

Source: Commentator — Spring 2008 (Vol. 20, Issue 1) by Thomas L. Boyer

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Feds lower mileage reimbursement rate for '09

With the recent drop in gas prices, the federal government has lowered the standard mileage reimbursement rate for 2009. The standard rate will be 55 cents per mile for all business miles driven, down from the rate of 58.5 cents a mile that was in effect in the second half of 2008. The IRS had made a special adjustment for the second half of 2008 in order to provide a little relief from the price jump that saw gasoline prices rise to over \$4 per gallon. During the first six months of 2008, the rate was 50.5 cents per mile. As of January 1, 2009, the standard rates for the use of cars, vans, pickups, or panel trucks are: 55 cents per mile for each business mile driven, 24 cents per mile for use related to medical or moving purposes, and 4 cents per mile driven in service of charitable organizations.

Source: HR Benefits Alert

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FCC to vote on free broadband Internet across USA

Free broadband for America has inched closer to reality: The plan, after two years of debate, is finally on the calendar for a full vote by the Federal Communications Commission. Assuming the plan is approved at the FCC's Dec. 18 meeting, one of the agency's last before President-elect Barack Obama takes office, free broadband could become reality within a year. First proposed in 2006, the plan calls for a chunk of airwaves called AWS-3 (now idle) to be used for wireless broadband across the USA. Under terms contemplated by the FCC, the winner of the AWS-3 auction would have to reserve at least 25% of network capacity for free broadband. The winner would be allowed to charge for other services, including premium broadband that would offer faster speeds. Assuming there are no last-minute snags, the AWS-3 auction will take place next year.

Source: USA Today

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Contact Information

If you are interested in obtaining additional information about these articles or the services offered by Credential Check Corporation, please contact one of the following individuals:

Michael A. Pachuta President	248-526-5206 michael.pachuta@credentialcheck.com
Timothy D. Whiting Vice President	248-526-5207 timothy.whiting@credentialcheck.com
Sara L. Voight Controller	248-526-5210 sara.voight@credentialcheck.com

Thank you! We'll see you next month!

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