

Snatching defeat from the jaws of victory

It's easy to self-destruct right at the end of the job hunting process and to not only fail to clear the final hurdle but actually damage your future prospects.

The cardinal sins during an interview are fibbing, omitting important details and misleading the interviewer.

Now, most job seekers are reluctant to lie outright -you'll get caught, and it's never worth it. Unlike Leonardo Di Caprio in *Catch Me if You Can*, it won't get you a plum job.

There appears to be a theory amongst candidates that it's best to save up the bad news -the things the employer doesn't want to hear -until the very last minute when they are committed.

For example, I once had four roles for .NET programmers and had about 60 applications. One guy was a clear winner. He wanted about 5 per cent more salary than anyone else, but he was seriously talented and quite experienced, so my client agreed to increase the salary. He made it through the agency interview and then the client interview, and was sitting in the number one spot when he popped in to see me unexpectedly.

I'd just been authorised to offer him the role and was in the throes of doing so when he told me that his visa was such that he could not change employers easily. He gave me a list of steps and processes that my client would have to undertake to secure his services.

Now, this guy had been asked his status at the very first meeting and had claimed to be a permanent resident -which was not true -and his opportunity to clarify the issue was there and then, not at the eleventh hour.

In fact, my client would probably have undergone the visa process -it really was not as onerous as the candidate imagined -but the whole atmosphere changed. The client no longer fully trusted the candidate, he dropped down to "emergency reserve" status and didn't get hired.

Even more galling to a recruitment consultant and their client are the candidates who up the ante at the last minute. The candidate categorically states they want \$70k during the first two interviews, and then at contract negotiation time, suddenly want \$80k. I've even known them to say, "I quoted low to get you interested and to allow me to demonstrate I was the best candidate, now you have to pay more to have me."

Rarely does anyone to get the job at the higher rate. The employer views the candidate as manipulative and tricky, not usually qualities that they want in their team.

It also makes it look as though the recruiter hasn't provided the client with the real information, and not many recruiters enjoy this sort of candidate naughtiness.

An additional factor that makes this behaviour really stupid is that it will generate notes that will probably live on in the recruitment firm's records for years, and if it's a big firm who handle lots of work in the candidate's field, it can have a career-limiting effect. Every time you apply for a job and someone reads the notes, it's a little black mark against you.

I generally suggest that this principle applies -if you have to bend the truth to get the job, the job isn't right for you.