



Small Biz Strategies
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A young man has entered your skating rink and requested an employment application. He informs you that he would like to stay and fill it out and then have an interview if possible. You check your schedule and you do have a window of time available. The young man's first impression is good, so why not. While reviewing the application you are a bit perplexed and taken aback. You cannot believe what your eyes are seeing. Is this for real?

SKATE PARADISE EMPLOYMENT APPLICATION

NAME: Bobby, but my friends call me Cool-Dog5

DESIRED POSITION: Whatever's available. If I was in a position to be picky, I wouldn't be applying here in the first place.

DESIRED SALARY: Make an offer and we can haggle.

EDUCATION: Yes.

LAST POSITION HELD: Target for middle management hostility.

MOST NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENT: My incredible collection of stolen pens and assorted office supplies.

REASON FOR LEAVING: Was not allowed to "Tweet" while on the clock.

PREFERRED HOURS: The ones that pay the most.

DO YOU HAVE ANY SPECIAL SKILLS? I play a mean game of marbles.

MAY WE CONTACT YOUR CURRENT EMPLOYER? If I had one, would I be here?

DO YOU HAVE ANY PHYSICAL CONDITIONS THAT WOULD PROHIBIT YOU FROM LIFTING UP TO 50 LBS? Of what?

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE DOING IN FIVE YEARS? Not sure. Have no idea what I will be doing this time next week.

SIGN HERE: Aries.

I know that the above example is a bit over the top, but it gets my

When you thought you'd seen it all: Spotting red flags on applications

point across: Become aware of red flags on employment applications so you can make a good business decision about which candidates should be seriously considered for hire and which you should potentially pass on.

The employment application is the best resource an employer has to acquire and authenticate information about a job candidate. If sections of the application are filled out incorrectly, or filled with omissions, it could be an indication that the candidate is attempting to conceal something, or it could be the result of simple carelessness. If it is a lack of care, this could indicate that the applicant is not taking the process seriously or does not pay attention to detail. A point to remember is that the best indicator of future performance is past performance.

Following are red flag areas to keep an eye out for on every employment application that is handed in for your review. A little due diligence will go a long way. As the old saying goes, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

Red Flags

Omissions

Are there areas on the application that are left blank? The question is, "Why?" Not having all the information requested could have a simple explanation.

Valid driver's license

Is the applicant's license from the state in which your business is located? Are they a permanent resident or temporary? Why haven't they been able to get a new license (states have time limits as to changing licenses from one state to another). Could it be they have a criminal record or are they using the name of a relative/associate from another state?

Address and contact numbers

P.O. Box addresses given instead of street addresses (residence) could indicate the covering up of information or hiding from someone. It could also signify someone who has fallen on hard times and is in between permanent home locations. Giving someone else's phone number may have a valid explanation, but it is unusual. Both home and cell numbers should be requested; for some, home and cell phone numbers are one in the same.

U.S. citizenship

Can citizenship be proven? You never want to discriminate against anyone, but applicants who are not a U.S. citizen will cause you problems with immigration officials if it is later determined that the person is an illegal alien without the right to work. (Do you understand the current I-9 Immigration

Laws?)

Social Security numbers

Verify that Social Security numbers are legitimate. Fake SS cards and driver's licenses and other forms of ID are not that hard to obtain illegally. Invalid Social Security numbers are easy to identify:

Leading number of 8 or 9.

Three or more leading zeroes.

Ending in four zeros.

First two positions are 73 through 79.

The number is 123456789.

The number is 987654321.

All single digits are the same (77777777).

Incomplete employer information

Missing information can include the lack of an employment ending date, a partial address and contact number, and no name of a previous manager. This can indicate the applicant does not want you to contact the employer, perhaps due to bad behavior or involuntary release.

Spaces in employment record

Unexplained spaces between employments could be the result of an involuntary termination or even that the applicant may have been confined. There can be justifiable reasons for spaces also such as taking time to earn a degree or trade, to raise children or to care for a sick loved one. Fill in all spaces in employment up to seven years.

NOTE: When inquiring for an answer to fill in the blanks (Why did you leave your last position/job?) be mindful of stock answers such as "personal," "better opportunity," "needed a change of pace," "wanted a chance to grow," and "not my cup of tea." These need to be explained in greater detail. Such answers as, "fired," "didn't like the boss," "couldn't stand my co-workers," "the work was too hard," and "felt like it," also need a deeper explanation.

Job hopping

Applicants who are constantly on the move from company to company, job to job, may not be someone you can expect to remain with your company for long either. Long term career commitments are a thing of the past; however, this is not necessarily bad. Study what the applicant accomplished with each of their moves (added responsibility, new job title, increase in benefits and pay), and note if there was personal and professional growth. Possibly they can make a positive contribution in the company for whatever time they are retained. All employers should be prepared to ask, and applicants to answer, the reason for all job/career changes.

Criminal history

If this segment is left blank or is

not filled out completely, it may send up a red flag that the applicant has a criminal record he/she does not want you to know about. It is a smart decision to run a background check on all potential hires. However, even such checks are not fail-safe. It is important to note that criminal arrests alone cannot legally be used as a reason for rejecting applicants. Seek advice from your company's legal advisor on all such issues.

Position applied for

Does the applicant indicate that they have sufficient experience for the position they are applying for? People will embellish the truth.

Why this business?

Does the applicant indicate why he or she has applied to your business, or is the applicant simply going from location to location putting in applications? Are you part of an applicant's shotgun approach just to get a job?

Work schedule availability

Does the applicant indicate that they are not available to work weekends or overtime? That they can only work certain hours during the week due to other obligations? Are they a minor? NOTE: There are state and federal regulations that all businesses have to abide by when scheduling minors.

References

Does the application list both personal and professional references? If not, why not? Anyone with a good work history will list one or more work references as these types of references can speak directly about the applicant's capability, level of skill, quality of work, behavior, thoroughness and character.

Signature

This is a huge flag. At the end of almost all applications there is a declaration that the applicant has filled out the application with accurate and truthful information. The signature also allows you to run a legal background check and verify employment history if it is so stated on the application. If a person fails to sign the application they are in effect refusing to verify to the authenticity of the information they have provided to you. Failure to sign the application may be a simple oversight, or it may be deliberate.

An oversight suggests a lack of attention to detail. Deliberate failure to sign may indicate the applicant is not who the applicant says he or she is, or may indicate the person does not want to be bound by the policies and standards set forth by the company.

The effort you put into making sure that you hire the right person, for the right position, at the right time will pay off in a smoother operating workplace in the long run.