IT Hiring Red Flags

Hiring the right talent means spotting warning signs early. Early warning signs can be found in resumes, online profiles, and in interviews. These red flags can come by way of a gut feeling or as spelled out by the candidate in the public facing information (resume, LinkedIn, application, etc.) As long as you are following company guidelines and local laws, there is no harm in verifying candidate information.

Resume Red Flags

- **Careless errors:** Typos, grammar, or sloppy formatting
- **Inconsistencies:** Overlapping dates or unexplained gaps
- **Generic or uncustomized content:** Their resume looks like 10 others you received and gives a generic description of duties
- **Missing information:** Contact details, school names for listed degrees, dates, company names, etc.

Interview Red Flags

In the interview, scan for attitude and consistency. Are they generally positive and upbeat? Or negative and full of blame? Do they seem interested? What is their overall professionalism?

- **Negative attitude:** Bad-mouthing past employers or colleagues
- **Lack of enthusiasm:** Disinterested answers or not asking any questions
- **Poor body language or defensiveness:** Frequent blame-shifting, lack of self-awareness
- **Unprofessional behavior:** Showing up late without notice, dressing wildly off-brand (unless you're a hoodie-and-jeans startup), or treating staff rudely
- **Unable to speak to resume:** Always double-check skills claims by briefly quizzing candidates – e.g. ask them to summarize a project they listed or explain a key technology on the spot.

Online Red Flags

A candidate's digital footprint can reveal risk factors and presentation inconsistencies. Online profiles can be used to verify history, professionalism, and cultural fit.

- **Resume/LinkedIn inconsistencies:** Jobs listed on resume but missing from LinkedIn or vise versa. Check dates, titles, and companies
- **Unprofessional or discriminatory content:** Check for offensive language, aggressive posts, general negativity, etc. These reflect poorly on judgment and could harm your culture

Red Flags Overview

🚩 **Resumes:** Multiple typos/grammar errors; overly messy or inconsistent formatting; unexplained date overlaps or gaps; generic content (no role-specific tailoring)

🚩 **Interviews:** Negative comments about past jobs; lack of interest or zero questions; defensiveness or blame-shifting; arrogance or dismissiveness; lateness/unprofessional attire

🚩 **Online:** LinkedIn/Resume mismatches (fake job entries); derogatory or discriminatory posts; unprofessional video interview behavior (e.g. inappropriate background/dress); aggressive email/chat tone when scheduling interviews.

Trust but Verify

If anything seems off, there is no reason not to ask about it during an interview. There could be a simple explanation for anything that seems off, so give the benefit of the doubt while doing your due diligence. Utilize whiteboarding, scenario questions, reference checks, and skills tests to verify any questions.

- Short exercises or scenario questions to expose skill gaps
- Technical whiteboard problems
- Simple scenario questions ("How would you handle X?")
- Reference checks
- Softly probe resume gaps allowing candidates to explain – life happens to all of us!

Tell me more!

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