

## THE PERILS OF MISREPRESENTATION

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There used to be a popular television show, "Truth or Consequences", in which game show contestants suffered the consequences of inappropriate choices. While there were prizes to be won and embarrassments to be endured, the stakes were relatively benign. Unfortunately, the same can't be said about students who misrepresent their achievements in applications for employment or graduate school.

The story which follows is true and tells, "in his own words", the tale of an undergraduate who grossly distorted his resume in attempting to impress a prospective employer. Although his case was never adjudicated, his confession leaves no doubt that self-inflicted wounds can and do cause great pain, for the victim as well as others who are directly affected by his misguided action.

*How do you get an I-Banking Job at a top notch firm when you have a 3.33 GPA and no work experience? I decided to lie and to misrepresent myself on my resume. It all started one wintry day when I pondered what to do with my life after graduation. The night before, after watching Wall Street and Boiler Room, I decided that I wanted to make money. I wanted to be rich, richer than you, richer than the devil.*

*For as long as I could remember, I had always wanted to become a trader. Since the age of 13, I watched the markets late into the night. I had a passion for the microcosm of finance. Having determined that I-Banking was the hottest industry for undergrads seeking stimulating and well-compensated careers, I went to Career Services to check out the list of the most prestigious financial institutions. Bank of America, stood out for me as the firm to work for. But how could I get in? There was no way I could get in. Yet, I wanted an internship so badly that I would have given anything to get it. Just like getting into your favorite college, getting the intern position mattered tremendously to me. However, my friends were telling me: "Although you have a lot of good qualities, you won't be able to get an interview since you don't have previous business experience." People kept telling me recruiters want you to have prior I-Banking experience (they were wrong).*

*So I decided to lie on my resume. It was the easy way and I was pretty sure I would never get caught. After all, you can say anything you want on your resume. Everyone can make up stuff, past experiences, hobbies, and the like. As with interviews, you can pretend you are someone else, play the masquerade. With hundreds of resumes coming in, I was thinking recruiters don't have time to check everything they read.*

*Trying to improve my chances of getting a first round interview, I sat in Feldberg Library, devising an inflated resume that looked like the resume of a 27 year old Financial Analyst at a big M&A boutique. I then left a copy of my fictitious application at Career Services' front desk. Three weeks later, I received a communication from the recruiter telling me that she investigated the credentials provided on my resume and discovered I misrepresented myself. Soon enough, all the administration from the Dean's Office to the Office of Career Services was aware of my reprehensible deed. Soon followed one of the worst days of my life.*

*Before I knew it, I started to feel extremely bad. I couldn't stand on my legs. I felt so weak. My hands and whole body were shaking. I wanted to kill myself. I wanted to die. The next day, I didn't want to go to class. I skipped class. I stayed in bed all day. When I would go out to get some food or go to the gym, I could not even look at anyone in the eyes. I was scared they would somehow find out about it and blame me. For someone who for years had worked so industriously, someone who never lied, never cheated, never ever did anything illegitimate, I felt nausea invade my body - a corrosive feeling of disgust that made me want to throw up. The more and more I realized my mistake, I felt ashamed.*

*It's only after you do it that you realize many things. First, it's not worth it. Second, my mistake resulted in damaging the College's reputation, losing the trust of the College's support groups, and undermining the credibility of its students. The recruiters would now lose trust in all Dartmouth students just because one person lied on his resume. Perhaps they would recruit fewer Dartmouth students and favor other Ivies now because they would generalize and think all Dartmouth students are liars like me. And yet, it was my entire fault.*

*As I write this story, I have had time to take some distance from this tragic event. After countless sleepless and restless nights, I decided to write this editorial; its main objective consists of raising students' awareness about the dangers of misrepresentation and cheating. My professors and members of the administration have convinced me that I have the capacity to rebound from a negative experience. I learned this not from their comments but from their existence as educators.*

In many ways, the student who sought to make amends by sharing the story above with the Dartmouth community was fortunate. He was fortunate that no misrepresentation policy was in place at the time of his transgression that might have resulted in disciplinary action. He was fortunate that his action caused no lasting damage to the College's reputation as it was viewed by the employer as an isolated incident. Mostly he was fortunate to learn from his mistake and to recognize the value of teaching others the perils of misrepresentation.