# The fine line between self-promotion and embellishment in CVs



Recent scrutiny of political figures has shed light on the topic of embellishment in professional résumés. Notably, UK politicians Rachel Reeves and Jonathan Reynolds have faced criticism regarding inaccuracies on their CVs.

Rachel Reeves, the chancellor, attracted attention after it was revealed that her LinkedIn profile had overstated her tenure at the Bank of England by nine months. This happened shortly after she was previously called out for claiming she had worked as an economist at HBOS, when her role was actually in retail banking. Following these revelations, Reeves updated her profile, with a spokesperson attributing the discrepancies to "administrative errors made by her team".

Similarly, Jonathan Reynolds, the business secretary, came under fire when it was discovered that a biography on his former constituency website referred to him as a solicitor, despite his lack of qualification in that field. Labour sources stated that this too was a result of “human error from his office”.

The independent news outlet has noted that these political figures' situations highlight a broader trend, as many individuals opt for creative interpretations of their qualifications to remain competitive in an arduous job market. Lindsay Kohler, an expert on the future of work, indicated that these actions often stem from a “risk versus reward calculation,” where candidates weigh the potential benefits of an embellished résumé against the risks of being exposed.

As Jennifer Dootson, an organisational psychologist, observed, the pervasive belief that “everyone is at it” drives jobseekers to inflate their experiences. Over her 18 years in HR, Dootson has seen numerous instances of candidates exaggerating their capabilities, including outlandish claims regarding technical skills and even celebrity encounters, often blurring the lines between possibility and fabrication.

Recruiters face significant challenges in distinguishing between fact and fiction on CVs. According to Duncan Smorfitt, a market director at Robert Half recruitment agency, they have developed an awareness of various red flags associated with inflated claims. Candidates who describe an extensive array of competencies or assert fluency in multiple languages may inadvertently signal their dishonesty during the interview process when challenged about specific skills.

Melissa Hewitt, head of HR outsource and screening at Morson, pointed out that vague language around achievements can also lead to suspicion. Recruiters often drill down into vague assertions to assess the truth of a candidate's claims and may use their professional network for verification.

Despite the absence of a specific legal offence tied directly to embellishing a CV, Garvey Hanchard from Bloomsbury Square Employment Law warned that providing knowingly false information to secure a job could be classified as fraud, with serious repercussions. Cases exist where job offers have been rescinded due to misrepresented qualifications, leading to potential dismissals when discrepancies are discovered after employment begins.

Career coach Jenny Holliday advised candidates to navigate the integrity of their CVs by maintaining honesty, suggesting that individuals should reflect on any claims that make them uncomfortable, as these could indicate areas of potential overstatement. She also emphasised the need for candidates to differentiate themselves without stretching the truth.

In summary, the recent controversies surrounding the résumés of Rachel Reeves and Jonathan Reynolds underscore an ongoing dilemma faced by many in today’s competitive job landscape regarding the balance between self-promotion and the ethical implications of exaggeration.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/article/1907108/rachel-reevess-online-cv-controversy-hr-learn-detecting-resume-fraud> - This article discusses the controversy surrounding Rachel Reeves' LinkedIn profile inaccuracies and highlights broader issues with CV misrepresentation, including the challenges faced by HR professionals in detecting fraudulent applications.
* <https://www.gbnews.com/politics/rachel-reeves-cv-lies-latest> - GB News reports on Rachel Reeves' CV controversies, including discrepancies in her employment history and academic credentials, which have been scrutinized in recent weeks.
* <https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/article/1907108/rachel-reevess-online-cv-controversy-hr-learn-detecting-resume-fraud> - The article also mentions Jonathan Reynolds' CV inaccuracies, where he was incorrectly described as a solicitor, and discusses the broader trend of CV embellishment in the job market.
* <https://www.cifas.org.uk/insight/press-releases/one-five-people-uk-have-lied-or-know-someone-who-has-lied-their-cv> - Cifas research indicates that a significant portion of the UK population has either lied on their CVs or knows someone who has, highlighting the prevalence of CV misrepresentation.
* <https://www.peninsulagrouplimited.com/insights/lying-on-your-cv-the-risks-and-consequences> - Peninsula Group discusses the risks and consequences of lying on a CV, including potential dismissal if discrepancies are discovered after employment begins.