

When Credentials Fail

Seven Cases Where Qualifications Were False or Questioned

Each of the seven cases below involves a qualification that an employer relied on. In some, the qualification was fake and the person was convicted. In others, a company biography was wrong, or the facts are still disputed. Several of the people did their jobs well, and some reached the top of large listed companies before the problem came to light.

The first six are public cases. The seventh is from Veris's own screening work, with names and details withheld. The facts differ, but each case gives employers a reason to check important qualifications before relying on them.

CASE 01

Jon Andrewes

United
Kingdom
St Margaret's
Hospice
2015

CONVICTED

Andrewes became chief executive of St Margaret's Hospice using false qualifications and false claims about his past jobs. He later claimed a PhD and was appointed to senior NHS roles. The hospice did well while he led it, and the UK Supreme Court noted that his annual reviews often rated him "strong or outstanding". The truth came out in 2015 and his roles ended. In 2017 he pleaded guilty to deception and fraud offences and was sent to prison for two years.¹

LESSON Good performance does not make a false qualification real, and it does not excuse the dishonesty of claiming it.

CASE 02

Patrick Imbardelli

Singapore and
Asia Pacific
InterContinental
Hotels Group
2007

RESIGNED

Imbardelli ran IHG's Asia Pacific business and was about to join its main board. An internal review found that he did not hold three degrees listed for him: one from Victoria University and two from Cornell. He had studied at both universities but had not been awarded those degrees. IHG announced his resignation, with immediate effect, in June 2007, and he did not join the board.²

LESSON Senior people should not receive less checking. A move to the board, or to any role with more trust, is a good time to check important qualifications again.

CASE 03

David Edmondson

United States
RadioShack
2006

RESIGNED

Edmondson's company biography said he held degrees in theology and psychology. The college's records showed that he had studied there for only two semesters, and the college had never offered a psychology degree. He admitted errors in his academic record and resigned in February 2006. Chairman Leonard Roberts said the company needed to restore "integrity and trust". Roberts also said that RadioShack had not checked academic records when Edmondson joined in 1994.³

LESSON A claim that is not checked when someone joins can stay with them all the way to the top job. When it is found, the damage falls on the company as well as the person.

CASE 04

Scott Thompson

United States
Yahoo
2012

LEFT ROLE

Yahoo's company biography and its filings with the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) said that Thompson held a degree in accounting and computer science. His degree was in accounting only. Third Point, an activist shareholder, made this public. Yahoo first said it was an inadvertent error, and Thompson said he was not the one who added the computer science degree. He left Yahoo in May 2012, about four months after becoming CEO.⁴

LESSON Check executive biographies before they go into company filings and reports. A wrong claim can damage trust even when it is not clear who made it.

CASE 05

Yeoh Keng Swee

Singapore
CFO and
finance
director roles
2022

CONVICTED

Yeoh used forged degree and accounting certificates to obtain finance jobs, including a CFO role in 2019 and a finance director role in 2020. He did not perform well in either role. Later, another company he applied to checked with Nanyang Technological University (NTU), which confirmed that the degree certificate he had given was forged. A police report was made in January 2021. Yeoh pleaded guilty to forgery offences and was jailed for 15 months in November 2022.⁵

LESSON A certificate given by the candidate is a claim, not proof. Asking the university directly can find what collecting documents misses.

CASE 06

Mikhy Farrera-Brochez

Singapore
Two Singapore
polytechnics
2019

CHECKS
CHANGED

Brochez used forged qualifications to obtain teaching work at Temasek Polytechnic and Ngee Ann Polytechnic. In Parliament on 26 February 2019, Low Yen Ling said that copies of his certificates had been checked against the originals he showed. He had also shown a “good grasp” of the subject at interview. Dr Intan Azura Mokhtar pointed out the weakness in this method: a forged original will match a forged copy. The polytechnics had since started checking with the institutions that issue the qualifications.⁶

LESSON Matching a copy to an original does not show that a qualification was ever awarded. A strong interview shows knowledge of the subject, but it does not confirm a qualification.

CASE 07 ·
VERIS CASE

Senior
legal
counsel
candidate

Singapore
Listed
company ·
Veris case
2019

NEGOTIATIONS
ENDED

A company listed in Singapore was close to appointing a senior legal counsel. The candidate's CV listed a master's degree in international law from a well-known US university. With the candidate's consent, Veris contacted the university's registrar directly. The university confirmed that the candidate had attended a short executive course there, but had not been awarded the master's degree. Veris reported the discrepancy to the client, and the candidate was given a chance to explain it. The explanation did not resolve the discrepancy, and the client stopped negotiations with the candidate.

LESSON Attending a course at a university is not the same as holding its degree, and only the university can confirm what it awarded.

What Employers Should Take From These Cases

Skills and qualifications need separate checks. Interviews and performance reviews show whether a person can do the work. Independent checks show whether the employer can rely on the background the person has claimed, and so on the claims it used to give that person authority and trust.

For a qualification that matters to the role:

- 01 Confirm the award at the source.** Ask the university, professional body or an official verification service to confirm that the qualification was awarded to that person. Attendance, enrolment or a certificate supplied by the candidate is not enough.
- 02 Get consent at the start.** Ask the candidate for signed consent and explain which checks will be done. Universities and former employers are more likely to respond, and the candidate knows what to expect.
- 03 Ask why if consent is refused.** Some reasons are fair, such as privacy, or a request not to contact a current employer yet. A refusal with no reason, for a check that matters to the role, is a concern. Discuss it before deciding whether the remaining doubt is acceptable.
- 04 Let the candidate explain a discrepancy.** A wrong date, a wrong company biography and a forged degree are not the same thing. The decision should reflect the evidence, the explanation and the level of trust that the role carries.

— HOW VERIS CAN HELP

Screening matched to the role

Veris screens candidates and employees for clients in Singapore, Indonesia and across Asia. Education, employment history, professional qualifications and licences are verified directly with the issuing institution, employer or authority where feasible. Checks are carried out with the candidate's documented consent and are matched to the role, from entry-level jobs to senior and control-function appointments.

enquiries@veris-consulting.com

Singapore

Veris Pte Ltd
73 Upper Paya Lebar Road
Centro Bianco #07-02A
Singapore 534818
+65 6751 1123

Jakarta

PT Veris
The Bellezza Shopping Arcade, 2nd Floor,
Unit 9-10
Jl. Letjen. Soepeno No.34
Jakarta Selatan 12210, Indonesia
+62 21 3002 7151

enquiries@veris-consulting.com · [veris-consulting.com](https://www.veris-consulting.com)

Sources

Numbers refer to the cases above. The lessons are Veris's view of the reported facts. The seventh case is from Veris's own work and is anonymised, so it has no public source.

1. UK Supreme Court, R v Andrewes [2022] UKSC 24, 18 August 2022, in particular paragraphs 3 to 14.
2. Travel Weekly, IHG executive resignation, 15 June 2007. See also IHG's resignation announcement, 14 June 2007.
3. Associated Press, RadioShack CEO resignation, published by The Spokesman-Review, 21 February 2006.
4. Third Point letter filed with the SEC, 3 May 2012; CNN on the departure, 13 May 2012; The Washington Post on Thompson's explanation, 11 May 2012.
5. CNA, Yeoh Keng Swee forgery conviction, 24 November 2022.
6. CNA, parliamentary discussion of the Brochez checks, 26 February 2019.