

**Q&A Column**  
**Author: Mark Swartz**

**Email Subject Line: Explaining Why You Lost Your Job**

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**Headline : Explaining Why You Lost Your Job**

**Summary:**

Question: I am in the last month of a probation period at a very large company. My boss told me I did excellent work but did not have sufficient communication skills to meet the requirements of this job. He implied that I would be dismissed. My question is how I tell the future employer about my 6 months experience at this company. Should I hide it?

Christine Q., Ottawa, Ontario

**Landing Page copy**

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**Dear Mark,**

Question: I am in the last month of a probation period at a very large company. My boss told me I did excellent work but did not have sufficient communication skills to meet the requirements of this job. He implied that I would be dismissed. My question is how I tell the future employer about my 6 months experience at this company. Should I hide it?

Christine Q., Ottawa, Ontario

**Dear Christine,**

There are several ways to go about handling this situation. When dealing with potential employers down the road, you can either tell the truth about what happened – with an explanation, or you can try to fudge things. Each approach has its pro's and con's.

Let's take telling the truth. In this route, you would want to come across as sincere and willing to learn from your errors. Therefore before you leave your current job, I'd suggest that you try to find out as much as you can about what your boss meant when he said your communication skills weren't up to snuff. (Note: I did have to edit your original e-mail to me for some spelling errors, so maybe this is part of what he was talking about). Also ask your peers for their input. This way you can know better what you're actually dealing with. Then when a future employer asks, you can describe what the problem actually was, and how you are going about fixing it. One more tip: try to get a good reference from someone at your existing company before you leave. This reference should be able to focus on all the things you did well while there. It'll help in the immediate future.

In terms of trying to fudge things, well, it's a bit dicey. Six months is not exactly a blink of an eye. So if you're going to leave this work stint off your resume, you are going to have to explain why the gap exists when a future interviewer asks "When exactly did you leave your last position?" Since the interviewer could easily verify the date you give them by simply calling the most recent employer you've listed on your resume – that is, the one before this six month job - you are going to need a legitimate rationale. Keep in mind your gap will now also include the time it took to find

work after leaving your position at the company preceding this one, so the total time span of the gap will be *more* than six months. See my previous article on [Explaining Why It's Taking So Long To Find Work](http://www.workopolis.com/servlet/Content/resource/20060926/cqa20060926?gateway=work) (<http://www.workopolis.com/servlet/Content/resource/20060926/cqa20060926?gateway=work>) for some hints.

Some job seekers gamble that their new employer won't bother to call for references before hiring them, and thus make up stories like "the six months at this last job was only a contract (or temporary) thing anyway." Or "I spent the last six months in school upgrading my skills." Lying like this is a dangerous game because if caught, even after you've been hired, you can potentially be terminated for misrepresenting yourself.

My suggestion, Christine, is try the honest way first and make sure you emphasize what you're doing to improve your communication skills. Maybe enroll in a course or two to upgrade yourself in the meantime. And best of luck with your next steps.

P.S. For related info, please check out my article on [What to Say When Asked Why You Left Your Job](http://www.workopolis.com/servlet/Content/resource/20051123/cqa20051123?gateway=work)

<http://www.workopolis.com/servlet/Content/resource/20051123/cqa20051123?gateway=work>, and [Overcoming Negative Perceptions of Your Last Job](http://www.workopolis.com/servlet/Content/resource/20060725/cqa20060725?gateway=work)

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