





Around the Coffee Table with Dale Jodoin

BUY CANADIAN, BUT ARE WE BUYING REAL FOOD?

By Dale Jodoin
Columnist

Some familiar grocery products may not be quite what shoppers think they are. Buy Canadian. Support Canadian farmers. Support Canadian workers. Keep our money here at home. I agree. But Canadians should add one more question before putting something in the grocery cart. If we choose to buy Canadian products, do we really know what food we are buying? That question started bothering me after looking at Canadian grocery shelves. Not illegal food. Not poisoned food. Food that can be sold legally but sometimes looks or sounds different from what is actually inside the package.

Take pancake syrup.
Great Value Original Table Syrup sold by Walmart Canada lists glucose, sugar, water, flavours, preservatives, salt, cellulose gum and caramel colour. Maple syrup is not listed. That is legal because the product is called table syrup, not maple syrup. That small wording matters. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency says the common name on a package must accurately describe the food and must not mislead consumers. And that is where a closer look becomes important today. But how many shoppers study those words? Most people are trying to get groceries and get home. They see a bottle shaped like syrup, sitting where syrup belongs, and put it in the cart.

Cheese brings up another example.
Processed cheese is not simply fake cheese or a pile of chemicals. It can contain real cheese or milk ingredients, along with added water and other permitted ingredients. Canada has separate standards for cheese, processed cheese and processed cheese food. So a wrapped cheese slice and a block of cheddar are not necessarily the same food. Then there is whipped topping. Great Value Original Whipped Topping lists water first, followed by sugars, palm kernel oil, sodium caseinate, emulsifiers, flavouring and gums. It contains milk, but it is not simply a tub of whipped cream. Coffee whitener tells the same story. Great Value Coffee Whitener lists glucose, coconut oil, sodium caseinate, dipotassium phosphate, mono and diglycerides, silicon dioxide, flavour and colour. It is made to replace milk or cream in hot drinks. Walk to the freezer and the wording changes again. Canada has a legal standard for ice cream, including requirements for milk fat and solids. That is why some frozen products that look like ice cream carry different names. Fruit products deserve an even closer look. A package can show bright berries or tropical fruit while its ingredient list includes concentrates from other fruits, sweeteners, flavours and colours. A fruit flavoured snack may contain some fruit ingredients, but that does not make it the same as eating an apple, orange or handful of berries.

Then we have imitation crab.
It looks like crab meat, tastes somewhat like crab and is used in seafood dishes. Yet one imitation crab product sold through Walmart Canada is made mainly from Alaska pollock or Pacific whiting, along with starches, sugar, egg whites, flavouring and colouring. It is a real fish. It just is not crab. This is where the investigation becomes bigger than Walmart or any single company. Canada requires a common name on the main display panel of packaged foods. The CFIA says that name should describe the food in simple and direct terms so people can make an informed purchasing decision. The question is whether modern packaging has become better at attracting our eyes than the legal wording is at informing them.

Pictures are bigger. Brand names are bigger. Flavours jump off the package. The important words may be legally there, but they are not always the words that catch our eye. Canadians do not need to fear every ingredient they cannot pronounce. Nor should every processed food be called fake. But we deserve to know the difference between the traditional food we think we are buying and a product created to resemble or replace it.

Buy Canadian when we can. Support our farmers and workers. But we should also know exactly what we are buying and what we put on the family table. Because before we worry about where our food comes from, maybe we should know what our food actually is.



Trust Has Become the Ultimate Gatekeeper in Hiring

By Nick Kossovian

Increasingly, hiring managers and recruiters are dealing with a persistent headache. Applicants breeze through virtual screenings on the strength of a stellar resume, only to unravel during a face-to-face interview. While that at least spares the company a bad hire, remote recruitment offers no such safety net. When hiring remote employees, I have seen employers hire and onboard candidates they've never actually met in person, only to discover shortly afterward that they are unable to write basic code, draft a coherent strategic plan, handle elementary tasks, or navigate workplace dynamics. Simply put, many job seekers fail to live up to their claims. Candidates lying isn't new. Job seekers have been exaggerating and outright lying since the first job interview in human history. Long before AI, I caught many applicants exaggerating their skills—everyone claims to be an expert with Excel—and fabricating achievements. But generative tools have dramatically escalated the problem. It's shockingly easy for proxy candidates or deepfake video feeds scripted by off-screen LLMs to impersonate applicants in real time. This is no longer just a matter of a few isolated incidents of applicants "behaving unethically"; it's a systemic crisis forcing employers to overhaul their hiring process, especially in candidate vetting. Every hiring decision boils down to a single core element: trust. Without that foundation of trust, there's no "Yes, you're hired!" Hiring decision-makers need to feel confident that you're who you say you are and that you're capable of handling the job. Hiring is fundamentally an act of buying a candidate's labour; hence, the adage "buyer beware" has become inescapably pertinent, making "trust" no longer a soft metric but a primary risk filter. Consequently, the extra scrutiny has lengthened the timeline from application to hiring decision, prompting job seekers to complain about drawn-out processes, an indication of how little they understand about the risks associated with hiring. The numbers back up job seekers' widespread dishonesty. According to GCheck's 2026 Trust Hiring Report, 93% of 1,500 surveyed job seekers admitted to embellishing or lying during the hiring process, ranging from minor exaggerations of skills to outright fabrications of work history. 60% believed they wouldn't have been hired if they had been completely honest. The widespread practice of resume and interview cheating is the result of a perfect storm: a tightening job market with fewer open roles, a surging pool of increasingly desperate candidates, and unprecedented access to generative AI tools that instantly fabricate "too good to be true" resumes and cover letters perfectly tailored to any job posting. Maybe it's just me, but nowadays I rarely hear hiring managers brag, "I can spot an AI-generated resume or cover letter from a mile away." Desperate job seekers prompt AI to invent unearned skills, while proxy stand-ins conduct remote interviews on their behalf. To cheat in real time, job seekers are using covert earpieces or AI teleprompters to bluff their way through technical tests. However, the legal hammer is coming down. The Toronto employment law firm Piccolo Heath LLP notes that employers increasingly treat resume fabrications as a fundamental breach of contract, leading to swift, just-cause terminations. When companies are burned by "too good to be true" hires, they deliberately introduce friction into their hiring process, including assignments, multi-round live technical assessments, strict camera-on policies with identity verification, and exhaustive background checks. Employers are also actively looking for red flags: resume details that conflict with LinkedIn profiles, unexplained audiovisual delays, robotic responses, frantic typing immediately after a question is asked, and aggressive demands for remote-only arrangements to avoid in-person accountability.

Complaining about lengthy hiring processes is pointless. Employers have every right to protect themselves against opportunistic dishonesty. It's the job seeker's responsibility to prove they're who they claim to be. With employer skepticism at an all-time high, actively earning trust gives you a distinct competitive advantage. This advantage can be achieved through five fundamental strategies:

1. Initiate direct human contact: Skip applying online, which is like playing the lottery. Instead, reach out to recruiters and hiring managers directly, even if it means picking up the phone. A clear human voice sets you apart from the avalanche of automated spray-and-pray applications.
2. Build visible industry proof: Active engagement in your field creates an irrefutable public record. Publishing original insights, speaking on panels, or contributing to industry bodies leaves a footprint no AI prompt can fake.
3. Provide documentation of past productivity: Don't just claim you can deliver results; show tangible proof. Share work samples, post-campaign analyses, or performance reports to demonstrate that you deliver.
4. Offer professional references upfront: Before being asked, provide contact details for past managers and peers. Verifiable references dissolve a hiring manager's skepticism faster than an impressive interview answer.
5. Demonstrate real-time problem-solving: Offer to conduct an unscripted whiteboarding session or a live diagnostic exercise. By walking an interviewer through a problem live, you prove your expertise is real, not fed to you via an earpiece or a second monitor.

Employers aren't intensifying their hiring processes to frustrate job seekers; they're protecting themselves against fraudulent job applicants and fraudsters. With distrust becoming the default assumption in hiring, proving your trustworthiness can be your biggest competitive advantage.

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