Finding a Job on the Internet: Hype vs. Reality

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Are you looking for a new job or consulting assignment? Will you be looking in the near future? No problem. Just post your résumé on the Internet, sit back, and wait for the offers to come pouring in.

That's the hype, anyway. The reality is quite different. In September 2003, the big job board, monster.com, contained more than 25 million résumés—but only 800,000-plus job listings. That's a ratio of about 30 to 1. Competition for jobs is stiff, even on the Internet.

But that doesn't mean you should forget about doing an online job search. You could be putting your career at risk if you did, because, according to a 2002 iLogos Research study, 70 percent of Fortune 500 companies listed jobs on at least one of three major Internet job boards.

So what can you do to improve your chances of getting a job online? Here are some tips to get you started.

Use the right résumé format. Before you post your résumé on a job board, read the instructions. Most boards require a *plain text* (also called ASCII) version of your résumé that contains only the characters found on a standard keyboard—nothing fancy like centering or bold text. If you paste your word-processed résumé onto one of these boards, the formatting will be lost or, even worse, translated into meaningless characters. An ASCII résumé, on the other hand, will retain its formatting and readability.

Include keywords in your résumé. The résumé you post online must include keywords. These are just the buzz words that describe the skills and experience that are important in your industry and profession, like *accounts payable* and *cash flow analysis.* Employers and recruiters use keywords to search for résumés, and yours won't be found unless it contains them.

Update your résumé posting. When you post your résumé on a job board, make it a practice to update it every week or two. You don't have to make any changes to the content; you just have to go through the update process to have your résumé *stamped* with the current date. All else being equal, the résumés with the most recent dates will show up at the top of employers' search results—and that's where you want your résumé to be.

Post your résumé on niche boards. Although it's important to post your résumé on a few of the big boards, don't leave it at that. According to a CareerXroads survey, 21.2 percent of Internet hires in 2002 came from other job sites, including niche job boards. To find a specialty board that's right for you, go to the websites of associations that represent your industry or profession.

Apply at corporate websites. The largest number of Internet hires in the CareerXroads survey, 58.9 percent, came from corporate websites. To take advantage of this fact, come up with a list of companies you might like to work for and find them on the Web. Then submit your résumé directly to every company that has an application form on its site. Most will want your ASCII résumé but read the instructions to make sure.

Network using a Web résumé. Last but not least, try combining Internet tools with more traditional job search techniques. One powerful combination is to use a Web résumé (a résumé displayed as a website) with the networking method. Include the address of your Web résumé on a business card and give it to prospective employers and other contacts you meet. If you spark their interest during your conversation, they will be sure to look for your résumé online.

References

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