



WHITE PAPER

Virtual Impact

The Internet's Effect on How Candidates Look for Jobs and How Companies Look for Candidates



Over the last 20 years, the way people search and apply for jobs has changed drastically. A long way from scanning the classifieds, the methods used to find jobs today are much more varied and sophisticated. The most successful job seekers are now turning to social networks, blogs and other Internet tools. Likewise, employers and recruiters are utilizing these same resources to find and place highly qualified candidates.

Though the past several years have been particularly challenging, with fewer opportunities for those looking for work, the job search methods available have increased considerably. Consequently, the process has become easier for some and overwhelming for others.

This white paper defines some of the most commonly used and useful Internet tools available today for candidates seeking employment and companies seeking employees, and explains how both candidates and companies can harness these resources to successfully market themselves to one another.

Defining the Tools

Employment Sites

Some of the earliest recruitment tools available on the Internet were employment sites. The most notable of these is the job board. A job board, in its most basic form, lists open positions to which candidates can apply. Many sites allow candidates to post their resumes, which then have the opportunity to be searched by employers or recruiters. Some job boards offer additional services to both candidates and companies, including career and recruitment advice, resume writing tips and virtual career fairs. CareerBuilder and Monster are two of the largest employment sites, though there are thousands in existence. Most job boards charge employers

to post their open positions; however, there are some sites, such as JobSpider and Jobvertise, that are free to both companies and candidates. Other employment sites charge job seekers a membership fee or a fee for premium services. These sites typically host specialized job posts, mostly upper management and executive-level positions. One such site is the TheLadders, which offers a searchable database of \$100,000-plus jobs to senior-level professionals. Another service, Exec-U-Net, offers networking and job search benefits with fees dependent on length of membership.

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Other niche sites allow job seekers with specific skills to apply for jobs within their fields and employers to fill specialized positions. Some examples of these niche job boards include TalentZoo, a site that lists advertising, digital, marketing and media jobs; AccountingJobsToday, a job board dedicated to accounting and finance professionals; and NursingJobs.org, a site devoted to nursing positions.

Job aggregators, like Indeed and Simply Hired, are search engines that pull posted positions from multiple job boards into a single database for employment seekers, resulting in what is often times a more comprehensive search. Companies can pay for sponsored jobs, keywords and links. Typically, a company pays when a site visitor clicks on its sponsored link, though some sites have per job or membership fees. Other job search engines, like LinkUp, index pages from employers' Web sites, giving candidates

the ability to find jobs that might not be housed on traditional job boards.

Social Networks

Social networks are online communities made up of individuals with similar personal or professional interests. The practice of social networking has grown increasingly popular over the past several years. No longer in its infancy, it has been adopted by the masses. With a variety of networks available to join, these sites appeal to multiple demographics. According to a

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study by Pew Internet, as of September 2009, 47 percent of online American adults use social networking. Not only has the number of social network users grown over the past several years, but the number of users with multiple profiles has also

increased. As reported by Pew Internet, 36 percent of users have profiles on two sites and 16 percent have profiles on three or more sites. These figures are up from the May 2008 numbers of 29 percent and 13 percent, respectively. In terms of the sites most frequented, the study found that 73 percent of adult social network users have Facebook profiles, 48 percent have MySpace profiles and 14 percent have LinkedIn profiles.

Facebook and MySpace are two of the most popular social networking sites. Facebook’s network alone is now estimated to be made up of more than 400 million individuals. Both Facebook and MySpace allow users to search for, connect and interact with people they know or would like to know. They let those with profiles publish information on any subject, send messages, share pictures and become part of various groups. Organizations utilize Facebook and MySpace

to create pages to further branding efforts and link their customers, prospects, employees and candidates.

LinkedIn has become the preferred social media site for those within the business community, due to its focus on networking, rather than socializing. With over 60 million members, the service provides a way for individuals to maintain contact with past and present colleagues and opportunities to make connections to potentially find jobs, share information and gain advice. The site allows businesses to create profiles and groups, affording both branding and recruitment possibilities.

Social networks are also available through some of the major job boards. CareerBuilder and Monster are both part of the social networking scene, with professional communities on their respective sites. CareerBuilder also has an independent site called Brightfuse for job seekers to create profiles and share information in much the same way they would on Facebook or LinkedIn.

Blogs and Microblogs

Other recruiting resources on the Internet include the blog and microblog. A blog or microblog is an online journal through which a person, group or business records information, thoughts or pictures. Many blogs are interactive and include the option for viewers to comment on posts.

The main difference between a blog and a microblog is the length of the post. Blog posts typically average 100 to 500 words; microblog posts are much shorter. The most popular microblog, Twitter, allows members to post messages, known as “tweets,” up to 140 characters in length and to follow the posted messages of others. Currently, the site boasts 106 million registered users. “In just over three years, this micro-blogging tool has become a standard communication channel for brands, groups and individuals. It’s used for everything from

customer service, qualified sales leads, recruiting opportunities and general public relations,” states Mark Krupinski, Director of Social Media for MindComet, Inc., a unique interactive marketing consulting firm and agency that also develops marketing technology.

Content Monitoring and Information Gathering Services

There are a number of research tools available online for both candidates and employers. Two important resources are content monitoring and information gathering services.

Content monitoring tools alert users with updates, typically sent via email, when search terms in which they are interested appear on the Web. Google Alerts and Yahoo Alerts are two such tools, each operating within their respective networks. Some content monitoring sites allow users to search by content type, like news, blogs, comments or videos. Other paid services provide users a means to filter and trend the data.

RSS feeds also provide a means for both candidates and employers to monitor content on the Web. RSS feeds are used to automatically publish information that is frequently updated, such as blogs, news articles and videos. Readers can subscribe to feeds to receive updates regarding any topic in which they are interested.

Social media monitoring is a more specialized type of content monitoring. As its name suggests, social media monitoring is used by individuals and companies to track topics of interest being discussed through social media channels. Google Alerts and RSS feeds can act as limited social media monitoring tools by being set up to search blogs. In addition, there are services, both free and paid, dedicated specifically to social media monitoring that will track not just blogs, but many other social media channels.

Candidates and companies can also make use of information gathering services. A popular infor-

mation gathering service on the Internet is social bookmarking, which is a method for storing, organizing and sharing Web pages based on key words. Delicious is a well-known social bookmarking site. Other sites that offer services similar to social bookmarking include Digg, StumbleUpon and Google Reader. As users find pieces of information online they would like to store, they can bookmark the page on which the information appears, and it will be saved to a social bookmarking profile they create. Many blogs, articles and Web sites contain social bookmarking links so users can easily bookmark the item.

Discussing the Techniques

Networking for Candidates

R. Eric Gilpin, CareerBuilder’s President, Staffing and Recruiting Group, has noticed lately that “candidates are employing multiple strategies in their job search. It’s a highly competitive job market and they’re no longer relying on one or two resources in their job search. They’re expanding where they search and who they talk to and they’re increasing their frequency in interactions with connectors to potential job opportunities.”

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One of the resources candidates continue to utilize is networking.

Now, in addition to face-to-face networking, candidates are increasingly taking their networking activities to the Web. Online social networks provide limitless opportunities to connect with others. No longer constrained by their particular social circles, individuals can find and communicate with people they would have previously had no link to, building connections upon connections. Social networking sites allow candidates to post resumes,

join relevant groups, contribute to discussions and ask for assistance. Whether candidates broadcast their need for employment or simply build their networks, the amount of relevant connections able to be made is significantly higher than could be gained at any trade show, convention or meeting.

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and professional online presence. Gilpin is seeing a lot more candidates who “are building brands for themselves through social media and interacting with potential employers.” Social networks can not only help candidates build online brands, but also position themselves as thought leaders within their industries. Candidates can use their profiles to post relevant information,

respond to others’ responses, ask questions and participate in pertinent discussions. As long as the contributions add value, these efforts can help applicants stay relevant and distinguish themselves as desirable potential employees.

Candidates that make use of social networks primarily for personal, rather than professional, use will benefit by making their profiles private. This will ensure that information inappropriate for a potential employer to see will be significantly more difficult to uncover. Krupinski stresses how important it is to “properly use the privacy con-

trols of any social networks you’re participating on.” And to remember that “whatever you publicly post online can be searched on Google and stays on Google.”

Networking for Employers and Recruiters

Companies are adopting online networking opportunities in record numbers. Many organizations have or are planning to establish blogs, Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter accounts. Companies are using these tools to connect with customers, potential customers, candidates and the general public. They are posting relevant content, sharing information about their products and services, obtaining and responding to customer feedback and questions and generally building their brands. For many companies, engaging in social media is what is expected by their customers. Businesses know, that by not participating, they are potentially dismissing millions of future customers and candidates. For those companies that are still hesitant to participate in social media, Krupinski asserts that this “new – and sometimes scary – media is nothing more than streamlined communication where customers have the ability to publicly engage with a company. Given this, it should be treated as just another communication channel to harness and, therefore, a natural evolution of business.”

Companies engaging in social networking should be mindful of the impression they are making not only on their customers and potential customers, but also on any future candidates they may be hoping to attract. Rather than relying on a potential employer’s corporate Web site, many candidates are now turning to more transparent sources to provide information about companies for which they are interested in working. Knowing this, companies should make sure that the image they are promoting through blogs, social networks and other online avenues is appropriate.

Companies must also make sure they have both a social media strategy and policy for usage in

place. A strategy will help ensure that a company is focusing its social media efforts and also that the projected image is in line with existing brand and marketing undertakings. It is important that the strategy is established prior to engaging in social media. As a starting point, Krupinski recommends that companies “identify two to three online efforts that would meet your business needs, set specific goals, execute them properly and be prepared to be in this for the long run as these initiatives take time.”

Like companies, recruiters can use networking to locate quality candidates. Recruiters may post and respond to messages on Twitter, Facebook or LinkedIn to notify others of job openings. They can search social network profiles and blogs to get in touch with individuals qualified for positions they are working to fill. And recruiters can take advantage of the multitude of profiles available online to build a pool of quality candidates for any future opportunities they may have available.

Researching for Candidates

Tools, such as Google Alerts, can be very helpful for candidates doing research. A candidate can set up alerts for job titles, companies, industries or any other term relevant to his or her search for employment. Alerts can be established to update the candidate on a daily or weekly basis. Google Alerts also allows the user to specify what types of information to search, such as blogs and/or news articles.

Social bookmarking, through a site like Delicious, is another way for candidates to collect research. A candidate might select articles about a potential employer, tips on interviewing or guides to creating resumes. The information is then organized and available for reference on the Delicious site. Subscribing to RSS feeds can be another way to keep abreast of industry or employer news.

Candidates should also take time to research themselves on the Internet to discover what

information is available for potential employers to see. In the event that there is untrue, negative information about a candidate online, every effort should be made to suppress it. There are Web sites that provide tips on burying unfavorable information and even companies that specialize in this service offering.

Researching for Employers and Recruiters

Research tools available on the Internet can also be beneficial for employers. Some of the best uses include competitor tracking and industry research. Additionally, hiring managers have begun using the Internet to research potential employees, conducting Internet searches to find any available information, both positive and negative, on candidates they have an interest in hiring.

Due to the increased utilization of the

Internet for informal background checking, many companies have implemented policies to help guide online recruitment behavior. This can be an important step for organizations to help minimize any negative consequences of using the Internet for candidate sourcing and hiring activities. Social network patrons commonly list religious and political affiliations and other information that would never be revealed on a resume or during a proper interview. This knowledge can make employers vulnerable to claims of prejudice against members of protected classes, necessitating consistent record keeping and compliance with all other employment regulations.

Just as candidates must research themselves on the Internet and monitor their online image and

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brand, so must companies. Frequently researching information being posted about a company is critical to maintaining its desired image. Social networking provides the opportunity to increase brand awareness and improve a company's image. However, there is also the possibility for negative information to be quickly spread via social networking channels.

There may be negative, and often false, information posted about a company or even specific employees. In some cases, this information is posted by a disgruntled candidate or previous employee. If this occurs, companies should utilize the platform to engage in the conversation, correcting the problem or addressing any incorrect information being posted. While it may not be practical or beneficial to focus on each instance, participating in the dialogue and providing valuable and relevant information can help counteract negative perceptions. Krupinski points out that "no one likes to hear criticism, especially about their brand or organization. However, it is important to note that if there are issues with your brand, then there is a conversation about it somewhere online. Given this, it's better to be a part of the conversation and learn from the individuals who use your product or are employed by it, instead of avoiding this opportunity altogether."

Using online research tools can also be valuable for recruiters. They may set up alerts or bookmark items regarding labor market statistics and employment projections or certain industries and companies. These tactics may not help recruiters find candidates, but will help them stay informed about their particular areas of expertise and possibly guide them to their next client.

Companies and recruiters can additionally use online research tools to mine candidates from competitors. By using a content or social media monitoring tool, a company can follow its competition to learn about layoffs, new hires, mergers and buyouts. Likewise, a recruiter can receive these types of alerts for competitors of compa-

nies on whose behalf they are working.

Seeking for Candidates

Job boards, such as Monster and CareerBuilder, and aggregators, like Indeed and Simply Hired, host thousands of job opportunities and are a great starting point for a candidate's employment search.

Though many candidates are discovering other sources to find jobs, employment Web sites still provide the benefit of having many relevant opportunities

located in one place. Another benefit of these sites is that they allow candidates to search for jobs in a very specific manner, inputting locations, salary requirements, degree information and other key words to get lists of the exact types of opportunities in which they are interested.

Social media sites can also be helpful seeking tools for candidates. In terms of job hunting, candidates can use microblogs, like Twitter, to search for relevant employment terms within messages, provide value through responses or direct messages to potential employers and subscribe to updates through tools such as TweetMyJOBS. TweetMyJOBS is just one of a number of tools specifically designed to help candidates find jobs through Twitter. Like Facebook and LinkedIn, Twitter is built for networking. The site is well designed to build connections and begin relationships with people who may ultimately connect candidates to jobs.

Facebook and LinkedIn can also be useful employment seeking tools. The Marketplace section

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of Facebook contains a jobs listing, and LinkedIn also has an area that houses a searchable database of open positions posted by employers.

Seeking for Employers and Recruiters

Internet seeking tools can be used fairly easily by employers to both broadcast open positions and to find candidates. Job boards are a useful means to accomplish these goals, as they house thousands of candidates' resumes in one location, making it convenient for hiring managers to find candidates with the specific skills and qualifications they seek. With the attention of thousands of job seekers, these sites are also an ideal place to post jobs employers need to fill. According to Gilpin, "While employers use a variety of tools as part of their recruitment mix,

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they continue to utilize job boards as part of their hiring strategies. According to CareerXroads' 9th Annual Source of Hire Study, U.S. employers said that career sites and job boards accounted for 35.5 percent of new external hires in the United States in 2009.”

Recruiters can benefit from using employment sites as well. Job boards are able to quickly deliver specific lists of potential candidates based on criteria input by the recruiter.

Social networks are also valuable tools for companies and recruiters seeking the right candidates. A strong network of qualified candidates, even those not actively looking for work, can be a great resource. Though the job market has changed dramatically over the past several years, passive candidates still seem to be preferred by many employers.

Peeking into the Future

The popularization of social networking and other online tools has dramatically changed the job search and recruitment process over the last five years. As technology continues to evolve, so too will candidates' and employers' use of the Internet. Creative ways for candidates and companies to set themselves apart are popping up often. For example, video resumes or viral advertisements posted on video-sharing Web sites have become more popular recently, a tactic that would have been thought of as silly just a few years ago.

In terms of what the future holds, Gilpin believes that "job boards will continue to evolve into a more consultative role ..., offering much more than job postings. Data-driven solutions, targeted advertising, social media consulting, innovative technology and more will be crucial to meet the ever-evolving needs of employers." Gilpin further states, "Job searches will become increasingly dynamic as seekers continue to use the wide variety of tools at their disposal. Social media will play a big role."

Taking advantage of available tools and outlets is important, but it is also important that both companies and candidates understand what is right for their specific needs. The best way to locate the right candidate or opportunity in the manufacturing industry is not likely to be the same for the financial industry. Rather than use as many online tools as possible, both candidates and companies should research and target their efforts to those that will provide them the most value in their respective searches.

The Power of PrincetonOne

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cruiting, retention, staffing assessment, training and organizational development. Through seamless, cost-effective solutions, clients are able to improve workforce performance and achieve critical business objectives. With 30 years of experience, PrincetonOne delivers unified recruitment solutions and measurable results for more than 600 clients around the world.

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