

CAREER CORNER

#9 IN A SERIES

Job Hunting On The Internet— Is Your Next Job Just a Click Away?

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Internet job hunting has forever changed the job search process and become one of the most popular tools for job searching. It's accessible, timely, convenient, cost-effective, and far-reaching. Employers use the Internet for recruiting candidates for the very same reasons. But before you begin your Internet search, there are a few points you should consider.

SEARCH WISELY

The Internet can be a very helpful job search resource, but you need to use it wisely. It is only one of many resources you should rely on in your quest for a new job. Electronic job hunting requires the same skills as a traditional job search. You must know what you want before getting started. Do research, target your goals, network, prepare a polished resume, and practice interview and salary negotiation skills.

PLAN AHEAD

It's essential to manage your time when job hunting online. With such an overwhelming amount of information available, it's easy to get distracted. Be sure to establish a navigation strategy before you begin. Approach your search by moving from general to specific. Start with several of the larger, better-known job guides, job sites, and job boards. The job guides are online resources for general career

information and contain links to many Internet employment resources. A few top ones include: TheRileyGuide.org, JobHuntersBible.com, and Jobstar.com. Major job sites, such as Monster.com, Careerbuilder.com, Hotjobs.com, Flipdog. com, and Headhunter.net, can be helpful because you can obtain the broadest overviews of job opportunities in your field and search among a variety of industries and listings. These sites often feature hundreds or even thousands of postings in numerous occupations. Most also have a key word search capability, allowing you to scan your selected job listings more efficiently. You should also take advantage of the extra features these sites offer such as job boards through which you can post your resume, search for jobs, and register for job-search agents. Search agents enable you to enter your job criteria and have a list of jobs emailed to you regularly.

USING JOB BOARDS

If you plan to take advantage of job board opportunities, be aware that those sites draw a voluminous amount of resumes. So, don't place all your eggs in one basket! Increase your visibility by posting your resume on a few different job sites offered via the Internet.

As you fine-tune your job search, consider targeting more specific niche boards, which are "specialty boutiques" dedicated to a particular industry, occupation, or job-seeker type (i.e., information technology, nursing graduates, minority candidates, etc.). Also check out geographic-specific job boards. Whether you want to stay local or relocate, these sites allow you to view job listings in your immedi-

ate area or openings in the city or state where you plan to move. Another excellent source of niche job listings is through professional organizations within your field. Not only do these sites have job ads, but they are also a great resource for networking. (See Related Resources.) Once you determine the sites that best fit your needs, be sure to bookmark them for future use.

CAUTION IS KEY

Whatever job boards you employ in your job hunt, remember they are only one piece of the job-hunting puzzle. Only a small percentage of job seekers successfully secure their ideal job on the Internet. Be selective in the job boards you visit. Proceed with caution; avoid sites with very few job listings, because you want to be sure you have numerous options and the best exposure. Review the list of employers that peruse the site before you begin to look for jobs or post your resume. Are they the type of employers for whom you would like to work? Find out how often the site is updated; how old are the job listings that are posted? Be a careful consumer. Determine if there is a fee for their services. Find the source of the site provider. Is there a name, address, or email address for contacting them with questions? Remember – you're in the driver's seat of your Internet job hunt.

GO STRAIGHT TO THE SOURCE

Once you have narrowed your job search, a final stop in your electronic journey should be the prospective employer's Web site. Replying to job postings directly to the employer can prove to be a very effective approach in your online job search. Here the job postings are likely to be the most current. By going directly to a company's Web site and thoroughly reviewing it, you can also collect an abundance of information. Company Web sites are great places to learn about employers, including their products and services. You may be able to locate their annual reports to review pertinent financial information, browse their site to get a feel for the company culture, and locate the human resources links to learn about job opportunities and download job applications.

PRIVACY PRECAUTIONS

While you may gain helpful exposure, it's important to weigh the risks and the rewards of placing your resume online; privacy is not guaranteed, so don't post it indiscriminately. Think about who might see it. Read a site's privacy policy carefully to find out who will have access to it. If a company's policy states that it takes no responsibility for its partners, those partners may then legally post your information without your knowledge or consent.



Also be careful with the personal information that you present, such as home address and phone numbers. You can limit your exposure by posting your resume only to job bank sites where recruiters need passwords or where you have to give the okay before they can see it.

To ensure the highest level of privacy to online resume posting, go directly to the source. Email your resume and cover letter to the person who accepts them for the employer. Not only is this more secure, but it can prove to be a most effective approach. In the event that a contact person is not listed for that job posting, look for the email address on the company's Web site.

FOLLOW DIRECTIONS

When posting your resume, read the employer's guidelines for submission carefully and apply only to those jobs that match your interests, skills, and background. Make sure your resume includes key words that reflect your experience and the credentials for which the employer is looking. Lastly, only send your electronic resume one time; don't blanket the employer with multiple copies of the same resume.

PERSONALIZE YOURSELF

When emailing your resume, you will have to personalize yourself. This is where the cover letter comes into play. Often people forget to include this traditional letter, given the quick nature of the Internet, but your electronic resume should always be accompanied by a cover letter. When submitting the cover letter online with your resume, take care to make the letter long enough to sell yourself while still being as brief as possible.

THE EMAIL

Remember, your initial communication with the potential employer is very important. When sending your cover letter and resume electronically, copy and paste both and send them within the body of the email. Do not send the resume as an attachment. Most employers do not want to receive attachments because they could contain viruses. The only exception to this rule is when an employer specifically requests an attachment. It is also important to cite the job you are applying for in the subject line; this will allow the employer to know what they are receiving in the email before opening it.

FORMATTING

As with the cover letter, you will also have to consider the formatting of your electronic resume. Use "text only" (ASCII) format when submitting both your cover letter and resume. This format is a universal text language that allows for different word processing applications to read and display the same text information. If you send your resume and cover letter from your own personal word processing software, which has its own native format, to a recipient that has a different program to view documents, your submission could be a mess of jumbled words, formatted incoherently. Using ASCII format enables your online resume and cover letter to be retrieved and viewed by prospective employers the way you intend them to be viewed, no matter what kind of word processing software you use.

FOLLOW-UP

After posting your resume, follow up with the employer by sending a longer cover letter and a printed copy of your resume by regular mail (i.e., snail mail). This will not only show your interest in the position but will remind the employer of you and establish some familiarity. However, don't overdo it! Limit your follow-up, after sending your hard copy cover letter and resume, to once every three to four weeks. Maintain an Internet log to track where you have posted your resume and when to follow up. A record of postings will also be helpful once you find a job, because you will want to remove previously posted resumes.

USE ALL ANCILLARY RESOURCES ON THE 'NET'

Not only are you able to review job postings and research occupations and industries via the Internet, but you can also access many supportive functions that can help in other essential aspects of your job search. There are many sites that can assist with expanding your professional network, preparing for interviews, designing your resume, researching employers, and securing salary negotiation tactics. As you proceed through your job search process, inevitable questions will arise. What is the best resume format for you? How do you prepare for different types of interviews? When is it okay to talk salary? How can you obtain insider information about a company's culture? Let the Internet come to the rescue! There are a multitude of reputable resource sites where you can get the basics on how to tackle each of these topics and more. (See Related Resources.)

COVER ALL YOUR BASES!

Job hunting online is becoming the norm. The benefits of the electronic job hunt are alluring. The Internet invites you to explore career options that you may not have considered before. It offers boundless accessibility, eliminates geographic boundaries, and is cost effective, while providing increased exposure for your resume and highlighting your technical literacy to potential employers. However, Internet resources should compliment your conventional job hunting basics, not replace them. Don't spend all your time job hunting in cyberspace. The Internet job search should not represent more than 20-25% of your overall search efforts. Remember the human element. You still need effective oral and written communication skills. Networking is still one of the most advantageous methods of obtaining the job you want. Also, be sure to have two versions of your resume, one for human eyes and one for the computer's eyes. The paper resume is not defunct. Some employers do not yet require or promote the use of electronic resumes, and some still want to view an aesthetically pleasing, fully formatted hard copy.



THE FINAL MESSAGE IS:

Take advantage of the Internet's vast resources, but remember it's only one of many tools to rely on during the job search process. By integrating the online approach with traditional job search techniques, you will be well-equipped for the transition to your next job or career.

See Related Resources on next page.

Questions or comments about this article?

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RELATED RESOURCES:

eResumes and Resources, eResumes.com

http://eresumes.com/eresumes.html

Prepare Your Resume for Emailing or Posting, The Riley Guide http://www.rileyguide.org/eresume.html

Guide to Researching Companies & Industries, Quintessential Careers

http://www.quintcareers.com/researching companies.html

Networking, Monster.com

http://content.monster.com/network/

The Art of Networking, Quintessential Careers

http://www.quintcareers.com/networking.html

Resumes & Cover Letters, The Riley Guide

http://www.rileyguide.com/resprep.html

Create A+ Cover Letters, CareerJournal.com

http://www.careerjournal.com/jobhunting/resumes/20040309-kursmark.html

Job Interview Guide, Susan Ireland

http://www.susanireland.com/interviewwork

Salary Negotiation Guide, Susan Ireland

http://www.susanireland.com/salarywork

Job Sites By Category (niche sites), Quintessential Careers

http://www.quintcareers.com/job_resources.html

Yahoo! Professional Organizations

http://dir.yahoo.com/Business and Economy/Organizations/Professional/

Company Research (Insider Reports), Vault.com

http://www.vault.com/companies/searchcompanies.jsp

Enrolled students and alumni can access many additional career related links at the Excelsior College Web site. Go to www.excelsior. edu, then login and click on the Career Resources link on your *MyEC* page, or for graduates, click on the *Alumni Connection*.

