



SPECIAL REPORT

HUMAN RESOURCES & EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

Taking it to the streets

Web job search is no substitute for face-to-face when seeking new career



CATHERINE DOMINGUEZ / SAN ANTONIO BUSINESS JOURNAL

Don Huse, president and CEO of career-management firm Venturion, says the Web can create a false sense of security for job seekers.

BY SANFORD NOWLIN

Monster.com. CareerBuilder.com. SimplyHired.com.

There is no shortage of Internet sites promising help for jobseekers.

While resume-matching pages and job-search boards may make your hunt easier, employment professionals caution against making the Internet your only — or even your primary — resource as you scout for a new career.

The Web can lure career hunters into a false sense of security, says Don Huse, president and chief executive officer of San Antonio-based career-management firm Venturion. Nothing, he added, beats reaching out directly to potential employers.

“Person-to-person contact is really the

best way to find out a potential employer’s objectives,” says Huse, who’s helped place executives and managers with companies including Valero, USAA and Rackspace. “It’s also the best way for you to articulate how you can help them achieve those objectives.”

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Workforce Solutions Alamo

Self assessment

Huse recommends that jobseekers start the search process by undergoing a rigorous self-assessment that examines both their strengths and weaknesses. They also should ask what sort of organizational values and culture best meet their long-term goals.

From there, people should pinpoint companies that make a good fit and begin building face time with the managers who actually make hiring decisions. That face time, according to Huse, may come at chamber breakfasts, industry mixers or any number of networking events.

Personal contact is vital, experts say, because most hires are based on relationships

JOBSEEKERS: Web is a nice tool in job search, but in-person increases the chances

not resumes. As many as 80 percent of skilled job positions are filled informally, not through a standard search and interview process, Huse says.

“When was the last time you saw a listing on a job-search board for a sales rep for Nike?” he asks. “You haven’t. That’s because those jobs just aren’t getting posted.”

Another reason to rely more on personal relationships than the Internet is that human resources departments often use computer searches to match job descriptions with terms in applicants’ resumes. That means a single poorly chosen word in your resume can mean it’s simply passed over.

As a result, Huse and others recommend spending just 10 percent to 20 percent of your time online during a job search. Especially since Web surfing cuts into valuable networking time.

“An effective job search is all about strategic relationships,” says Eva Esquivel, communications manager for Workforce Solutions Alamo. “And you can’t build those when you’re on the Internet.”

Listen and look

Esquivel advises jobseekers to keep their ears open for opportunities and openings even when they’re not in professional settings. Friends, neighbors and casual associates may have heard news about expansion plans or recent management shuffles.

“It’s not just about talking to the CEOs and the people who make hiring decisions at companies,” she says. “It’s also about asking the people you talk to all the time about who they hear is hiring. Even your hairdresser may have heard something you can turn into a lead.”

Passivity is the key enemy of any jobseeker, says John Challenger, chief executive officer of Chicago-based outplacement firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas Inc. “People rely too heavily on their resumes

to do all the work,” Challenger says. “You can’t just post your resume on the Internet and wait for the market to come to you. That’s very seldom how it happens.”

Challenger says he understands the allure of the Internet during a job search. Looking for work involves frequent rejection — and those blows to the ego can feel less profound when they’re absorbed online rather than face-to-face.

“There’s nothing wrong with using those sites, but I tell people to go online and check them after dinner,” he says. “Don’t do it during the day. Although it may be tempting, don’t let it be a substitute for your search.”

Don’t pull the plug

While experts warn jobseekers not to use the Internet as a crutch, they don’t recommend pulling the plug on it, either.

Indeed, some sites may be quite useful as they try to determine the best course for their search, says Esquivel of Workforce Solutions Alamo.

Online labor market information, for example, may allow jobseekers to locate in-demand professions and — if they’re willing to relocate — to pinpoint areas where employers are in a hiring mode.

Workforce Solutions’ Web site (www.workforcesolutionsalamo.org), for example, includes a list of Targeted Demand Occupations, or jobs that are projected to grow in the region both in number and pay. The organization also gives career-center visitors access to Career Coach, an application that allows them to match pay expectations, experience and training with potential openings.

Post a profile

Huse of Venturion also recommends leveraging the online professional-

networking site LinkedIn.com. Jobseekers should post an up-to-date profile cataloging their skills and training and also link to other LinkedIn users willing to vouch for their experience and character.

“LinkedIn is very often the first place your name comes up when someone does a Google search, so you really want to put your best foot forward,” Huse says. “The difference between job boards and LinkedIn is that when a potential employer looks at your LinkedIn profile they also see your professional connections and relationships.”

In addition, experts recommend jobseekers Google themselves to see what comes up.

If you find outdated resumes or work data that could confuse potential employers, remove it.

Similarly, scour any blogs and social networking sites for pictures or personal information that may be perceived as unprofessional.

And if you have additional time, experts add, you may increase your Internet visibility by commenting on professionally relevant blogs or posting lengthy and well-crafted reviews on Amazon.com of books relevant to your field.

But, again, experts say an online presence doesn’t substitute for taking the job search to the streets.

The key to any search, Huse adds, is to create and strengthen personal ties. And, even in the 21st Century, handshakes are better relationship-building tools than mouse clicks.

“What it really boils down to is being proactive instead of reactive,” he says. “Figure out who you’d like to work for and find out who runs that department. Do some research, find out what they’re looking for, and get yourself in front of that person.”