

Job surfing

Online recruitment websites offer job searchers an alternative channel of discovery, providing they are hooked up to the Internet

Fancy a job in London? New York? Paris? Maybe Sydney? Melbourne? Brisbane? Whatever your destination, online recruitment services are opening up geographical markets that have traditionally been closed to all but international headhunters and, on the domestic scene, offering positions which were once found only by scouring local newspapers' classified pages.

Newspapers are traditionally the most widely used method of job advertising to date. They are one of two distinct methods used to transmit information about job vacancies, the other being the more informal approach through business contacts and friends, schools, shop windows and employment agencies. But even newspaper proprietors have jumped onto the technology bandwagon.

Job searchers can register with some sites for the purpose of either lodging their resumes or gaining free daily emails of jobs that are available, as well as to search and apply online for positions. Some recruitment sites also offer resources and advice for browsers on topics such as how to write a successful resume or hone interview techniques.

Online recruitment is growing. There are reputedly 5,000 recruitment websites worldwide, one-third of which are from human resources organisations. Take the following as an example of where Internet recruitment is at right now. Using Yahoo Australia's online search function, key in the word "recruitment" and you get a long list of references (65 at the last count) to follow up. Among them specific sites for the nursing industry, dentistry, permanent and temporary secretarial roles, flight attendants, market research personnel and miners.

Human resources consultants such as Morgan & Banks, Michael Page, Drake International and Nicholson International have websites. Then there are companies specialising in regions. Recruitment in Asia is covered by websites operated by companies including the Asia Partnership and Gemini Personnel. And don't forget job search sites Jobfind, Seek Communications and a host of other recruitment companies online: Alta Research, Peter Poynting Executive Recruitment, ARIA, Clayton Ford, Tanner Menzies and the Opus group. Searches on Altavista, Lycos, Infoseek, Hotbot and other search engines reveal many more relevant sites.

Says Paul Bassat, CEO of Seek Communications: "The online

recruitment business is very competitive today though the business is no more crowded than any other operating online. The one thing that has changed over the past 12 months is that recruitment on the Internet has moved rapidly away from being dominated by 25-39-year-old males looking for Information Technology (IT) jobs, to becoming more popular among women, at the same time encompassing a whole range of other occupations, split into five major categories: IT, accounting and financial services, sales and marketing, engineering and mining, and general administrative and managerial roles.

Bassat says that of the literally hundreds of classified websites online, a handful dominate the industry. These include newspaper giants News Ltd. and Fairfax, recruitment website specialists JobNet, Jobfind, Top Jobs, Monsterboard, Employment Opportunities Australia, and Bassat's organisation Seek Communications. Even the now defunct Commonwealth Employment Service had its own website.

"Increasingly, people are using the Internet instead of a newspaper to find a job. In the longterm, more advertisers will use the Internet as the medium upon which to advertise vacancies and more job searchers will use the Internet as a tool to find work," he says.

Seek, and others like it, work by acting as an advertising pool for the employers and an information source for job searchers. The website operators deal directly with employers and post a list of vacancies on the site. These can number in their several thousands and are updated daily). Internet users go right to the specific advertisement, make a note of the details and send in an application direct to the employer. Bassat says Seek research has shown that about 70 per cent of job applications are emailed to the employer by prospective candidates, the remainder faxed or posted.

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resumes or gaining free daily emails of jobs that are available, as well as to search and apply online for positions. Some recruitment sites also offer resources and advice for browsers on topics such as how to write a successful resume or hone interview techniques.

The cost to an employer of putting a job advertisement online can vary. Job listings websites such as Monsterboard and Seek charge between \$60 and \$75 per ad and the information can be updated by advertisers. Human resources consultants tend not to charge for the use of the website. Instead they provide the entire interaction between jobseeker, client and their organisation and levy a commission fee as they would to a company which walked through the door looking for personnel.

The Internet is seen by advertisers now as an additional, low cost medium in support of their newspaper advertisements. According to industry pundits, only 20 per cent of job vacancies ever make their way into newspaper classified pages because of the costs associated with print advertising. But with the Internet, more jobs will gradually find their way onto websites because the cost is lower.

"Newspapers' online recruitment sites are real and serious competition to us," says Bassat, "but their prime commitment at the moment is to their print products. The more they use the Internet, the more they cannibalise their print products, and print is where the profits are, at least for now. There is not enough money for them - as yet - in Internet recruitment."

But the newspaper organisations are competing successfully with the specialist recruitment sites and human resources consultants. They have done it by linking their sites across their various publications. Fairfax, for example, has a website in which all its publications participate. Jobs are collated

from the *Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age*, *Australian Financial Review*, *Sunday Age*, *Sun-Herald*, *Homes Pictorial*, *Newcastle Herald*, *Illawarra Mercury* and Fairfax Community Newspapers in NSW. News Ltd. does a similar thing for its titles. Users are invited to browse through a particular category - for example, IT, education, government, general or financial

A selection of websites

Fairfax -
<http://www.market.fairfax.com.au/jobs>

News Ltd -
<http://newsemployment.com.au>

ABC's Bush Telegraph:
<http://www.abc.net.au/rural>

Seek Communications -
<http://www.seek.com.au>

Drake International -
www.drakeintl.com. (select country)

Monsterboard -
<http://www.monsterboard.com.au>

JobNet -
<http://www.jobnet.com.au>

Jobfind -
<http://www.jobfind.com.au>

services - or input a specific job title, then select a job/s and apply direct. Pooling resources like this enables newspaper groups to cover jobs nationwide and offer job searchers a more comprehensive list of vacancies.

What can be done online?

In a speech at the "Connecting the Country" conference in September, Michael Lane of human resources consultancy

Drake International in Albury, said that successful recruitment websites are those that give users what they want by tailoring their content to users' requirements and focusing on customer service. His prerequisites for a successful website included:

- an extensive database of human resources-related topics;
- a variety of relevant surveys;
- the opportunity to take part in discussion forums; and
- the provision by the recruitment company of networking.

Lane said that in his experience, jobseekers had particular expectations from websites. They wanted a site to:

- provide a comprehensive and industry-specific jobs database;
- be regularly updated - preferably daily;
- include a provision for receiving a resume immediately;
- have some useful job tips to help find the right job; and
- focus on regular and ongoing customer service.

"There are several advantages in using online recruitment services," says Lane. "Firstly, the Internet gives flexibility in terms of communication. For example, you can put up a job listing one morning, build an appropriate database of candidates, then replace it with another listing after a week. And all the employer has to provide is a form asking for candidates to fill in pertinent information.

Secondly, most of the preliminary interaction between the employer and potential employee is via email which means that administrative costs are reduced and communication is unrestricted by working hours."

Karen Winton