

GET on Board

Internet job sites are revolutionizing the job search process By Anne Harding and Alethea Hannemann

For David Baker, landing a job in 1990 meant paging through newspaper help wanted sections, visiting the career center at University of California, Los Angeles to research biotech companies, sending lots of snail mail, and waiting weeks for an offer. The whole process took nearly two months.

The second time around, his job search took about two weeks.

Baker, now a research scientist at Halozyne Therapeutics in San Diego, started his second job hunt in 2003 after several years at Idec Pharmaceuticals and a few years spent traveling. He began by checking out www.biospace.com, met representatives of Halozyne a few days later at a career fair sponsored by the site, went back to the site to research the company and the position he was interested in, sent in his resumé, and got a call for an interview.

"It was about one week from the job fair until I accepted the offer," says Baker, a manufacturing scientist who works in process development and scale-up work for various cell lines and biological agents. "It's kind of a cliché that the Internet changed everything, but it really has," he adds.

Job boards can offer a number of advantages to the job seeker—speed, as Baker's example shows, as well as content that allows the searcher to read up on an industry and a company, link to other relevant sites, and even get a resumé consultation. Life sciences-focused job boards feature thousands of jobs at any one time.

But while the Internet should be an essential part of the life scientist's job search, it shouldn't replace networking, newspapers, and third-party players including executive search firms and recruiters, says Richard Kneece, CEO of Boston-based Massachusetts Technology Corporation, which runs the Web-based career and talent hubs www.HireBio.com and www.HireRx.com.

BETTER THAN THE BIG BOARDS

Job boards targeted to life sciences, pharma, and healthcare include Biospace.com (which recently merged with its sister site HireHealth.com), Medzilla.com, jobsience.com, HireBio.com, HireRx.com, and sites run by science publications and organizations including *The Scientist's* www.adsumo.com, *Nature's* www.naturejobs.com, *New Scientist's* www.sciencejobs.com, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science's www.sciencecareers.org.

"We all definitely have a huge advantage over the big boards because of our focus," says Kneece. "It's also an advantage for the employers," he adds. "Quite a few employers in our industry won't even post their jobs on the Monsters or the Jobs.com. It's really an automatic filtering mechanism."

HireBio and HireRx feature North American jobs, but also have a significant presence in Europe, Kneece says. Any given day there are 2,500 jobs on the site posted by about 80 clients, with 60,000 active resumé or profiles, while the site draws 250,000 unique visitors a month.

Employers, recruiters, and search firms use job boards heavily, but differently, Kneece notes. While companies prefer to post jobs and see who applies for them, search firms and headhunters will do the opposite; they tend not to post available jobs, but will troll through posted resúmes to find appropriate candidates.

WHERE TO BEGIN

With so many sites out there, where should a job seeker start? Begin by checking out each site, taking a look at the jobs posted there and who's posting them, says Amy Golitz, a former human resources manager for Serenex, who is now with Adsumo. Golitz recommends that candidates find an informative site where they can learn about the market, the companies, and job search strategies.

Darrell Bryant, former staffing director at Wyeth and now with Adsumo, also touts the extras on job boards. "Read the articles, check up on the featured employers," he says. "Maybe use the resumé service if you're not getting a good response with what you have. Do your research ahead of time, so if a company calls you, you're ready to go."

Most large pharmaceutical and biotech companies have their own job boards, which are very much worth a look as well, Halozyne's Baker points out. "That's another way to really learn a lot more about the company itself as well as the opportunities for employment at different companies."

Baker says he was hoping to be hired at a small startup so he could have a hand in building the company from the ground up, as he'd done at his previous job. And the 22 employee firm of Halozyne, which is developing three products based on its recombinant hyaluronidase enzyme, turned out to be a perfect fit.



KEYWORDS ARE KEY

It's crucial to include important keywords for your area of expertise in your resumé—potential employers will find you by searching on these words. A little research and a good look at your current position can help you figure out what keywords to use. "Keywords are about three things," says Adsumo's Darrell Bryant. "Technology, equipment, and day-to-day." Bryant suggests that job seekers get a copy of their current job description and the job listings for positions they're interested in, then note the common keywords.

When you write your resumé, make sure you describe your experience and education completely. "People often assume that if they list a job title, companies will know what their duties entailed," says Amy Golitz of Adsumo. "But if you do that, you miss the keywords." For example, Golitz notes that people from university labs often have managerial experience but rarely mention it on a resumé, choosing to emphasize the research instead. "But in industry," says Golitz, "one of the most important duties in a lab is management."

A NEW ADDRESS

Set up a separate E-mail account for your job search. "It will help you manage your job search a little better—plus it doesn't always look great if you're using your current employer's E-mail," says Massachusetts Technology Corporation's Richard Kneece.

CONFIDENTIALITY—BUT NOT ANONYMITY

The last thing you want is your current employer searching a job board and coming up with your resumé. While job boards give you the option of posting your resumé with no name attached, it's best to include some sort of handle, for example, your first name and your last initial, Kneece says. "If there's not a name in there, a recruiter is less likely to contact you—a recruiter is going to want to leave a message with a name."

To ensure your resumé doesn't end up in your boss's hands, both Bryant and Golitz recommend that you rewrite your resumé to give recruiters pertinent information without unnecessary details. Take your full name off your resumé and use your personal E-mail for a contact. And instead of writing the name and address of your current company, describe the company and include a general location. For example, saying you work for a Fortune 500 pharma company in the Northeast gives a recruiter enough information without putting your current job at risk.

TELL YOUR WHOLE STORY

Many job boards leave a space for you to include a short biography along with your resumé—make sure you do it, says Kneece, because this short bio can be the best place to get your real qualifications and skills noticed.