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RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

What Do Job Seekers Want to See on Your Web Site?

If you're not using your Web site to attract talented candidates, you're missing a great opportunity. Here are some tips for standing out from other employers online.

By **Melanie Rembrandt**

Even with the numerous dot-com layoffs, recent studies indicate the need for new employees remains high, especially for IT workers. As Harris N. Miller, president of the Information Technology Association of America, puts it, "Skilled technology workers -- still a highly desirable commodity to IT and non-IT companies -- are facing more cautious hiring practices than the 'irrational exuberance' that some say described 2000. However, our 2001 numbers suggest that hiring has by no means halted for IT workers; rather, demand still far exceeds supply in this market."

Nowadays, the Web is the resource of choice for finding a job. Does your company have an effective online presence to compete for today's top talent? Here are some tips for creating a successful company Web site that gives job seekers and visitors what they want: valuable information, fast.

Provide a high-feature, professional job site

Many job seekers will receive their first impression of your company via the Internet. This is your opportunity to present a favorable company image with a site that is user friendly. Don't try to impress visitors with too many graphics or banners -- these just make your site look crowded and busy. Also, make sure you have an editorial professional (in-house or not) proofread the site for grammatical errors and misspellings. Finally, check all your links before the site goes live to make sure they work properly and connect to current information.

These might sound like simple factors, but top candidates notice the little things that can make a company Web site look unprofessional. Remember: You don't like to see mistakes on candidates' résumés. Why should they see one on your site?

In addition, you should take advantage of Web technology to offer a host of easy-to-use online features. Offer fast links to your current openings, ways to apply online, and direct contact information to satisfy job seekers. Be sure to include interesting, detailed job descriptions, and emphasize your company's special qualities (promotion opportunities, extensive benefit package, European travel, etc.). These tools can help you respond to candidates faster, expedite the entire hiring process, and even access those elusive, in-demand candidates whose résumés have a shelf life of a mere 24 to 48 hours.

Offer information to make you stand out

Ask yourself what you would like to see on a company's Web site as a job seeker. What makes your company a great place to work? Successful employment sites include the following information:

Company benefits -- Company benefits are a very influential part of the overall compensation package given to new hires. Providing this information on your site before the hiring process begins can help to attract top talent. On your Web site, mention insurance plans, retirement packages, vacation accrual, promotional mobility, stock options, and educational opportunities. Publicize any unique benefits such as day care programs, gym memberships, dry cleaning services, company car and laptop computer usage, flexible hours, and travel.

Carefully review everything your company has to offer, and then promote it online. Providing key information can mean the difference between winning and losing a qualified applicant to the competition.

Company culture -- Potential candidates want to know what it's like to be an employee at your company, and the Internet gives you many ways to present your culture and corporate highlights. Use your Web site to provide an inside look at your work environment. Try some of the following examples:

- Show a brief "day in the life" video.
- Give a virtual office tour.
- Post videos or transcriptions of employees describing what they like about their jobs.
- Exhibit photos taken at company events.
- Display a welcome letter from a top executive, or better yet, post an audio/video clip.

Give visitors a sense of what it is truly like to work in your company's unique culture.

Business model -- With all of the recent dot-com layoffs, many qualified job seekers are looking for work at profitable businesses that provide stability. By explaining your company's business model and background in understandable and optimistic terms -- with graphics, flow charts, etc. -- you can possibly gain the interest of these candidates.

Company announcements -- Include a section that describes company news and events to give site visitors a feel for your brand and your company's position in your industry. List updated media clippings, internal promotions, memos, newsletters, testimonials, and other promotional data.

Professional topics -- Use the employment section of your Web site to promote your company as an industry leader. Professionals will be more likely to visit and return to your site if it contains industry trends and information. Here are some items you might add to your site:

- Articles written by experts in your company
- Links to professional organizations and key news sites relating to your business field
- Online forums where visitors can communicate problems, solutions, and trends with each other
- Question/answer columns and surveys to help establish relationships with fellow industry leaders, potential customers, and candidates
- A feedback tool visitors can use to send comments to contribute to site improvements

Student and mentor advice -- Guide young people interested in working in your industry by providing online educational, training, and mentor information, such as schedules for special classes in the local area. Creating relationships with students early on can lead to hiring dedicated interns, part-time employees, and college graduates in the near future.

Local community facts -- Provide information about your community to capture the interest of non-local site visitors and job seekers willing to move to a new location. Focus on the unique characteristics of your local area and give detailed descriptions of specialized stores, schools, organizations, housing costs, recreational facilities, climate, family life, etc. Supply contact numbers and links to local affiliations so candidates can receive more information.

If your company is involved with a charity, be sure to have a brief section on your site promoting all volunteer activities, events, and fundraisers. Highlight contributions rather than increased profit margins to let visitors know that you're part of a greater community.

Offer a security blanket

Mention any special safety features you provide such as a protected server environment, encryption software, different options for sending résumés, and anonymous job posting capabilities (by which a candidate controls all the information disclosed to potential employers using an online profile that hides names, addresses, and current employer data). If potential candidates feel comfortable using your site, they will be more likely to apply for your job openings online and return in the future.

Go that extra mile

Since competition for today's top talent is fierce, offer special, convenient features designed specifically for job seekers. These can include the following:

Detailed job searching and easy response tools -- How do candidates look for a job on your site? Can they search by keyword, category, or location? Impress job seekers with different search methods, precise matching capabilities, quick response options via phone, fax and e-mail, and easy ways to contact hiring personnel with questions.

Ability to e-mail a friend -- Can visitors send a job listing on your site to a friend via e-mail? This is a great feature that helps you "get the word out," increasing job posting exposure and company awareness.

Résumé and cover letter submission in original format -- Can candidates send a cover letter and résumé to your company that will look like their original? Many job seekers will not spend time reformatting their résumé to fit a company's online needs. Make it as easy as possible for candidates to send you their information.

Links to career resources, interview techniques, assessment tools, books, etc. -- Do you give job seekers a reason to return to your site? Provide interesting career information that is fast and easy to use. Include links to educational materials, tips on finding a new employer, interview techniques, and pertinent career articles. Job seekers will be more likely to return to a site that provides valuable, timesaving tools and data catering to their particular needs.

Be creative, but intelligent

There are many innovative ways to attract top talent to your Web site and stand out from the crowd. Start by listing the unique qualities your company has to offer. Focus on a specific group of job candidates and think of creative ways to entice these people to work for you. Where do they hang out? What do they like to do in their spare time? Use this information to create a strategic, cost-effective recruitment strategy. For example, you could do any of the following:

- Host an online chat session with an expert in a particular field from your company.
- Attend or sponsor a local sporting event or charity fundraiser to recruit new hires (such as hosting tailgate parties at football games or sorority/fraternity charity balls at top colleges across the country).
- Hold a small conference to discuss industry trends and career choices.
- Provide free training on a particular subject such as financial planning after college, interview techniques specific to a certain field, dressing for success in the business world, etc.
- Invent a contest with prizes your targeted potential candidates would be interested in winning (such as an essay competition where the winner gets to spend a day working with the CEO of your company, a new business wardrobe, or a computer lesson with one of your top technical experts).

Your tactics will depend on the exclusive characteristics of your company and the specific qualifications you are looking for in new hires. Take the time to research your targeted group, and focus on the image you want to project. Otherwise, you could waste time and damage your company's professional reputation.

In her book *"A Corporate Guide to College Recruiting,"* Sandra Grabczynski gives an example of several companies that used free beer in their college recruitment efforts. The book states, "The students came for the beer and didn't interact with any of the recruiters. The companies realized they were wasting their resources and attracting the wrong type of students." Plan your recruitment process carefully to find the most qualified candidates.

What makes you unique?

You do not need a big budget to have an employment section on your company's Web site. It just takes a little extra effort to explore the unique qualities your company has to offer, target the needs of your potential candidate group, and look into options for how to get your message out there. The secret to successful online recruiting is to provide

valuable information to job seekers quickly and easily. Remember that you're trying to "sell" your company as an exciting, unique place to work. If you can make the "sale," you can effectively compete for top talent.

About the Author:

Melanie Rembrandt is the public relations manager for [CareerSite Corporation](#), an e-recruitment infrastructure solution provider. CareerSite currently powers more than 70 e-recruiting sites comprising over 25,000 registered recruiters of its powerful Recruiter Desktop solution.

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