

KEY WORDS: BEING THE CANDIDATE RECRUITERS WANT TO TALK TO

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Finding people through job sites can seem like a daunting task for many recruiters. If you reply to a recruiter's job listing on one of the popular job sites like Monster, HotJobs or CareerBuilder, chances are you'll be one of 200 or more people responding. Most recruiters will only look through the first 20 or so resumes. One way to distinguish yourself when replying to a job ad is to use a unique and catchy subject for the email message.

HOW RECRUITERS SEARCH FOR CANDIDATES

Another way to increase your odds of being selected by a recruiter, which can be even more powerful, is by taking steps to increase the chances your resume will be found when recruiters search the job sites. The best way to do this is to optimize your resume for keywords recruiters might be searching for. Because there are so many resumes on the job sites, many recruiters use complex boolean search strings to try to find someone who matches the job description they're trying to fill. Just as an example, let's say the job the recruiter is trying to fill calls for an administrative assistant who can write letters, edit spreadsheets and handle email and scheduling. The recruiter might search for "Word and Excel and Outlook and administrative assistant." The resume that will come up first will probably be the one that mentions those 4 things the most. Guess what happens to an administrative assistant who knows Outlook but didn't mention it on his/her resume? They wouldn't even come up in the search.

Especially during an economic downturn, many companies ask recruiters to find people who can essentially handle the tasks of what might have previously been more than one position. So the recruiter may be looking for someone who primarily has one set of skills, but who also has another set of skills that most people with the first skillset don't have. Many recruiters and HR people are not familiar enough with the positions they recruit for to know that the skill combination the company's seeking is unlikely to exist in a single person. So they take on the task of searching for someone with the wide range of skills the hiring manager is seeking. When they find someone who mentions all the skills on their resume and whose current and prior job titles fit with the job they're trying to fill, they're excited and eager to recruit that person! This puts you, the job candidate, in a much better position than being one of several hundred people replying to a job listing.

BEING THE CANDIDATE THE RECRUITER CAN'T WAIT TO TALK TO

When your resume is one of the few that come up in a recruiter's search for resumes, you become the prize the recruiter wants to win. This is the reverse of the scenario you find yourself in when you reply to a job ad - in that case, the job is the prize. You gain significant power by being the customer the recruiter wants to sell the job to. Here are some tips for structuring your resume so recruiters will find you in searches and then want to offer you the job:

1. Your primary skills should be mentioned several times in your resume, and in different ways. For example, if you're an attorney, you should use that word several times in your resume as well as the word "lawyer."
2. Even if you only used a particular skill briefly (like for only 3-6 months), mention it on your resume. If you learned about a certain technique in a continuing education course, that can be mentioned on your resume. Of course you should make clear in the text of your resume what specific, albeit limited, experience you have with the skill. A company would rather hire someone who has some exposure to a skill than none at all, and by mentioning the skill you increase the chances you'll be found in the recruiter's search for resumes.
3. Your previous job titles need to be congruent with the type of job you're seeking. If you're looking for a

job as an Administrative Assistant, it would probably be better to have "Administrative Assistant" listed as your current job title than "Office Manager." There are fewer office manager jobs than admin assistant jobs available, and you don't want the recruiter to think you're overqualified when they look at your current and previous job titles.

4. Make sure your resume has been checked for spelling and grammar errors. Use the spell check in Microsoft Word. Have someone who's a good writer review your resume for grammatical errors.

5. Make it easy for someone to skim your resume quickly. If you have a lot of different skills, having a section where your skills are listed with bullet points can make it easy for the recruiter to see at a glance that you have the skills they're looking for.

In addition to editing the weekly newsletter for HireSites, Scott Brown also was responsible for the development of its flagship services, ResumeDirector and ResumeArrow. HireSites specializes in resume distribution and posting services to help job seekers streamline the search process. For more information, Scott can be reached via email at sbrown@resumedirector.com or by phone at (212) 545-5318.