

# Online Recruiting Strategist

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## COVER STORY

### A Strategy Shift: Companies Relying More On Their Own Corporate Web Sites

Job seekers visiting Retailology, the careers Web site of **Federated Department Stores**, enjoy one-stop shopping. They can search and apply for openings online and read about the company, the parent of **Bloomington's Macy's** and **Burdines** stores. They can research positions through detailed job descriptions, trace career paths at the Cincinnati-based firm and learn how employees like their work via a lengthy series of profiles. "We want the job seeker to understand what the Federated brand is all about," says Susan Burns, director of employment initiatives and college relations for Federated. "We want job seekers to see the depth and variety of opportunities. We want them to see the people we have working for us. It's a diverse population."

Federated is widely considered a trailblazer in recognizing the effectiveness of corporate Web sites in recruiting quality employees. It launched Recruitology in 1999 to target college job seekers and expanded it last year to reach out to candidates at all levels. A rapidly increasing number of large corporations, including **IBM**, **Microsoft**, **Apple Computer**, **Sprint**, **Texas Instruments** and **Bank One** have made the same discovery. They've expanded the information and services on the career sections of their own Web sites and taken great pains to direct prospective employees there.

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## A Strategy Shift..

A survey by San Francisco-based **iLogos**, which tracks Internet recruiting trends, found that 91 percent of Global 500 companies now use their corporate Web sites for recruiting. In 1998 it was 29 percent. "Four years ago, recruiting on the corporate Web site was something interesting," says Yves Lermusiaux, the president of iLogos. "Now it's mainstream." The San Francisco-based unit of staffing solutions vendor Recruitsoft researches Internet recruiting trends.

These companies have also found they can cut recruiting costs by relying more on their own Web sites instead of outside job boards, such as **Monster.com** and **CareerBuilder**, to find employees. That's become increasingly important in the present down economy. Among others, communications company Sprint has already shaved 40 percent from its Internet hiring costs since it made its Web site a more central part of its recruiting strategy, says Scott Biggerstaff, who oversees the company's Internet recruiting efforts. Yet Mr. Biggerstaff also says he's finding more employees through the Internet. "We want to drive traffic to the site," says Mr. Biggerstaff.

Says Steve Pollack, president of **WetFeet**, a San Francisco-based research and consulting company that covers recruiting: "If companies can get the job board costs out of their system, they'll do that." A 2001 survey by Wet Feet, which also tracks Internet recruiting, found that 22 Fortune 500 companies spent an average of \$280,000 on outside job boards.

Below you'll find four questions companies should answer in designing an effective career section:

### Are jobs easy to find and understand?

Corporate career sites shouldn't be mazes. If they're not making their job ads easy to find and understand, they risk losing potential candidates. Yet many companies bury the

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links to their career sections. Another frequent failing: Companies force job seekers to click to too many pages before they reach a job ad. Mark Mehler and Gerry Crispin, who publish the employment Web site directory *CareerXRoads*, believe three clicks from the company's homepage "is a reasonable standard for a visitor whose active expectations are to find and review jobs and then apply." Yet in a recent survey, they found that two in three companies require job seekers to click four or more times. Worse yet, 45 companies in *CareerXRoads'* study had broken links, preventing job seekers from gaining access to a page. Many companies also fail to write clear job ads. Among their major transgressions, they write descriptions that are too long and filled with technical jargon. Or they leave out vital information. Messrs. Mehler and Crispin believe companies should provide salary information, something they frequently omit.

Do job seekers know where they stand? If they're applying to computer manufacturer Apple, or Fortune 500 stalwarts **General Motors** or Texas Instruments, they do. These companies have used the Internet to stay in touch with their best candidates. Apple employees may go to the Web site at any time to find an update on the status of their application. Texas Instruments contacts anyone who's sent in a resume by email, mail or phone and usually reaches top prospects within 24 hours. This hasn't always been easy. The company has seen the number of resumes it receives skyrocket

from 10,000 a month at the height of the economic boom to 10,000 a week. Yet Pam Ferrell, the computer chip company's Manager of Bringing In Really Cool People, believes the prompt – and often personalized – response helps burnish the company's image. "We want everyone applying to Texas Instruments to walk away with a good experience whether we make an offer to them or they decline to accept employment," says Ms. Ferrell.

Do candidates know where they'll be working and what they'll be doing? Smart companies use their Web sites to tell candidates about their culture, as well as their pay and benefits program. Retailology includes discussion groups with company executives. In one recorded segment, Federated's chief executive discusses why he chose the retail industry for a career. In the company profiles, employees answer a series of questions about their work and the company. Detailed job descriptions outline skills needed for particular positions.

Is the company reaching passive job seekers? These are potentially top-flight candidates who aren't looking hard for work because they're employed. But these workers also don't want to miss great opportunities. They may have sent their resumes to companies several years before. Such firms as **Intel** and **Computer Sciences Corporation** are lauded for their use of job agents, a messaging system that notifies passive job seekers when a position comes available matching their skills and needs.