

# Who's looking online? Most firms don't know

BY DAVID BROWN

WHILE ONLINE job boards have become an essential component of most recruitment strategies, many organizations haven't yet figured out how to create a good one. In fact, companies have very little understanding of who is visiting the career sections of corporate Web sites or why, a new study shows.

Many of the commonly held perceptions among employers are in fact off base, said Yves Lermusiaux, president of iLogos Research, the company that conducted the study, *Perception vs. Reality: Jobseeker Behaviour Online*.

For example, many employers believe experienced candidates don't seek jobs online, that portraying corporate culture has little value and that online candidates won't answer skill-based questions.

And, there are a number of what might seem like basic rules for online job boards or corporate career Web sites that are still being ignored, said Lermusiaux. For example, a lot of companies still require applicants to give their name when applying, but nearly one-quarter of people say

they don't want to give their names. That number is even higher for people looking at senior positions, he said.

Companies are either stuck in an old paradigm and haven't adjusted to what today's online jobseeker wants or else requests for changes get bogged down in corporate red tape and the resources to make the changes are never available — a common problem facing HR departments, said Lermusiaux.

A lot of people in HR have been saying for a long time now that HR is strategic but for the most part other people in the organization still don't appreciate that, he said. Another recent study of chief information officers revealed HR and recruiting is nearly their last priority in terms of providing help.

The other findings from the survey of career Web site visitors:

- Most are employed and 21 per cent of respondents said they were "happily employed." Passive jobseekers are apt to arrive at the career site after browsing the companies main site for other reasons, such as research into products or services, yet other research from iLogos shows that

many companies don't have a direct link to the career site from the home page.

- More than 40 per cent were seeking mid-level to senior positions, eight per cent were looking for a director or executive position.

- Almost every applicant wanted an acknowledgement after applying.

- Applicants want information on corporate culture when visiting a corporate career site. More than one-third would like to read testimonials from current employees and 29 per cent said they would like to see virtual tours of facilities.

- Where organizations may be used to holding back benefit information until the interview, 82 per cent of respondents said they wanted to find benefit information on the site.

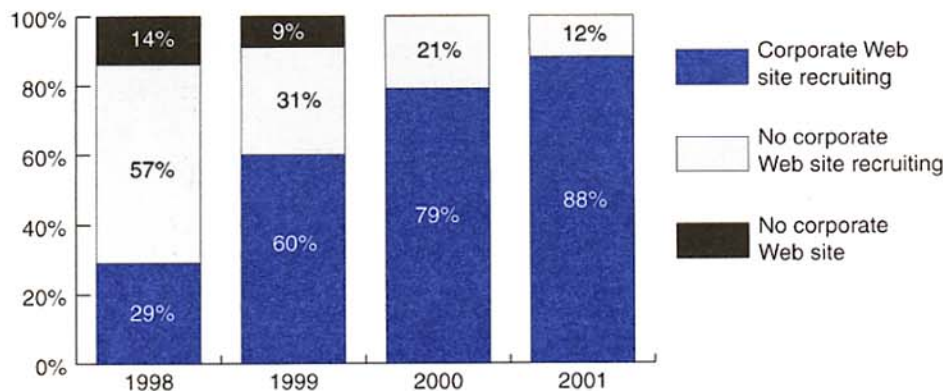
- Jobseekers want details about salary. Traditional reluctance among employers to keep compensation private for fear of competition finding out or creating internal employee dissatisfaction must end.

- Almost 90 per cent of candidates

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## Growing popularity of online recruiting

Employers are increasingly using online recruiting tools to find talent. In 1998, just 29 per cent of the top 500 global companies had a career section on their Web sites, compared to 88 per cent in 2001.



Source: iLogos Research, 2001

# Online reality

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said they were willing to answer skills-based questions. This provides an opportunity for employers to come up with a shortlist but very few employers use skills-based questions as part of the initial screening process.

Despite the economic slowdown, there will continue to be a tough fight to find talent, particularly the top talent, said Lermusiaux. And even though most companies still aren't doing it very well, he predicts online recruiting will become even more important and more popular.

There are people who say that the future is not very bright for third-party recruiters, he said.

Recruiting online is more efficient and if it is done properly, HR departments save money they will otherwise have to spend on external recruiters, he added.

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But Kevin Dee, CEO of Eagle Professional Resources, an Ottawa-based IT staffing firm said he believes that no matter how good online recruiting gets, organizations wanting to focus on their core business will need third-party recruiters to help them find talent.

"I've been around the IT business for 25 years and we keep hearing different things are going to put people out of business," he said. When online recruiting first caught on, people said it was going to put the middle-men, the recruiting agencies, out of business. Technology and innovation always has an impact, he said, but it isn't going to put him out of business. In fact, his company has been able to use online recruiting to improve their business. "I was told when we started that we were dead. We've grown from \$18 million to \$50 million this year," he said.

While, theoretically, any company could use the Internet to recruit its talent, Dee said companies might be disappointed if they think a good career Web site will be all they need.

The strength of online recruiting is volume, not quality. "If I go to the Internet, I can find thousands of people with Oracle skills but I never know what the quality is," he said.

As more and more businesses are focusing on their core business they will find it beneficial to use a recruiter to assist them in finding talent.

"My core business is creating and maintaining a database of top-notch candidates."