



## **Lack of Response Means "Black Hole" to Candidates**

By Michelle Martinez

Seventy-seven percent of J.P. Morgan Chase & Co.'s hires, ranging from entry-level jobs to vice-president positions, started at the company's corporate web site. The move to more online recruiting has saved Merck & Co. several million dollars in the past year, said to Michael DeAngelo, a staffing manager for Merck. For certain jobs, it's not uncommon for Merck to receive as many as 2,000 resumes.

J.P. Morgan and Merck are just two examples of employers who continue to leverage technology to improve the cost and efficiency of the recruitment process. In fact, 69 percent of corporate recruiters responding to a Society for Human Resource Management "Recruiter Budget Survey" said that the Internet broadened their recruiting sources, and 44 percent said it made recruiting easier.

According to iLogos Research, the strategic staffing research and human capital metrics division of Recruitsoft, 94 percent of Global 500 companies have corporate careers websites-up from just 29 percent in 1998.

"Large companies that don't use online recruiting are becoming almost nonexistent," says Gerry Crispin, EMA board member and partner of CareerXroads, a Kendall Park, N.J., recruiting and staffing consulting firm.

But from the job seekers' point of view, searching for a job via the Internet is often intimidating and impersonal. Candidates tell tales of spending valuable time completing online applications and answering pre-screening questions with the result being no response from the company. It's this lack of human contact that is perhaps the prime drawback of online recruiting.

What employers need to consider, writes Crispin in a whitepaper titled, "The Job Seeker's Experience: Who Really Cares?," which he co-authored with partner Mark Mehler is: "When we give and receive feedback, we communicate in a way that influences how people perceive us more powerfully than most imagine."

So what kind of infrastructure can employers put in place to better communicate and respond to candidates? At the very least, says Crispin, there needs to be the most basic level of feedback which is the acknowledgement that the candidate's information has been received.

"A simple thank you can go a long way," he says. "This is especially true if a candidate has just shared his or her personal data with you and has some expectations about what comes next."

"At a minimum, employers must work with their applicant-tracking system vendors to include an auto-response mechanism for applicants once they apply," says Tracey Friend, senior manager, sourcing/research for Microsoft Corp. "Frankly, this is not enough and is frustrating to the job seeker. Also, this high-touch effort doesn't include the prospects or the people who are not quite ready to be considered candidates. Therefore, a company may only have a name + number, not a resume.

"At Microsoft, we are looking at recruiting as a sales and marketing function," Friend explains. "As part of this effort, we are working with internal marketing experts to gather best practices on how we can better manage and leverage our data. We will address privacy issues, the value of pipelining and building relationships with the people who submit their resumes and the value proposition of the candidate-relationship-management tool for staffing. The outcome of these efforts should positively impact the overall candidate experience. Our goal is to stay close to the candidate population and give them better control and comfort within the recruitment process."

According to Alice Snell, vice president of iLogos Research, a division of Recruitsoft Inc., "Corporations should follow candidate-relationship management best practices and communicate with all candidates who interact with a corporation. The initial response doesn't require resource-intensive phone or postal mail. Realistically, large corporations have to utilize technology solutions to manage the volume of candidate information, and can do so for both company and candidate benefit. An automated "Thank you...we've received your information..." e-mail alleviates jobseekers concerns that they just clicked their personal information into the proverbial black hole," Snell says.

"In addition to an immediate response acknowledging receipt of a candidate's information, corporations can leverage the power of robust candidate-relationship database systems to facilitate ongoing communication between candidates and corporations, create relationships and cultivate talent," explains Snell. "For instance, Job Agent technology-implemented by 22 percent of Fortune 500 companies-drives automated correspondence that notifies job seekers about new job openings that fit their skills and interests. Today, corporations can implement technology and processes that support better communication with candidates, reflect well on their employment brand, and lower their sourcing costs by leveraging- rather than ignoring-the information candidates have input into their databases."