

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Online Job Seekers

by Jim Dee, A&WMA Senior Manager, Communications and Internet Services

I have exactly seven points to make in this month's column. No more, no less. It seemed natural to tie that in somehow with the well-known "7 Habits" nomenclature, as made famous by Stephen Covey more than 10 years ago.

Covey's celebrated tome *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* taught 10 million people how to become more,

"Effective people are not problem-minded; they're opportunity-minded. They feed opportunities and starve problems."
—Stephen Covey

well, *effective*, through achieving what he called a paradigm shift. This involved a lot of soul searching and so forth—and fortunately, we covered "searching" in a previous *Using the Internet* column (see "Seek and Ye Shall Find," October 1999).

Likewise, paradigm shifts have seen a good deal of print in this column. Indeed, the Internet has an interesting way of transforming our approach to so many things. You can now buy groceries, do your banking, book flights, peruse libraries, participate in auctions, tour homes, order new shoes, talk with friends on the other side of the world, and so on.

For the technically oriented, finding a job on the Net isn't a particularly new concept; it wasn't long after the Internet's exponential curve began to skyrocket that employment sites showed up. Monster.com, for instance, has been

around since 1994, when it was known as The Monster Board. In fact, Monster.com is the final result of a 1999 merger between The Monster Board and the Online Career Center (which was launched in 1993, and begun in 1992).

So these sites have been around for a while. In the early years, they catered almost exclusively to computer programmers and offered little or no main-

stream value. Since then, however, these sites have proliferated and matured. No matter what your field, the Net offers some of the best career opportunities currently available. Following are exactly seven points to make your Net-based search *highly effective*.

1 MONSTER.COM

This site currently enjoys the leading position among Internet career sites. It has all of the expected functionality, the most jobs, and of course, those loveable monsters who bring their Web pages to life. If you're unfamiliar with the way employment sites work, or if you've never visited Monster.com before, the best introduction would be to access the site, scroll all the way down to the bottom of their home page, and click on the "help" link. Actually, my only criticism of the

site is that it doesn't cater to the newcomer very well. In all fairness, though, the interface is extremely intuitive, and most will find the experience enjoyable.

My advice would be to start with a basic search. If you're looking for an environmental manager position, it's actually preferable to start with the one-word query "environmental" instead of the term "environmental manager." One of the neat features of Monster.com is the sub-search capability. Users can continue to narrow the results lists with additional search criteria, as necessary. Here's an example.

As of this writing, a search for "environmental" brings up more than 1000 listings. If we sub-search on the word "manager," the list narrows down to 476 jobs. This is a good time to put in some specifics. For instance, if you'd like to eliminate sales positions, just enter "not sales." Even after that round, the list still approaches 400 entries. Chances are, there will be something there that matches your background well.

One of the great benefits of this and other online career services is the ability to immediately apply for jobs online. In order to do this, you'll need to become a registered user, which requires filling out a profile and submitting a resume. This is a free service, and can be accomplished in a matter of minutes. On Monster.com, just click on "My Monster," and follow the prompts.

When you get to the part of the form that asks for your resume, make sure to



inform the results lists of your searches; the higher-priced ads appear first, under the assumption that they'll get the most exposure. This means that the jobs at the top of your results lists aren't necessarily the most current or the best paying. Headhunter.net navigation rule: Read past the listings marked "upgrade" to be sure you don't miss great jobs appearing as "basic" listings.

3 TARGET EMPLOYER WEB SITES

Even with the hundreds of thousands of job descriptions on the two sites discussed above, and with the perhaps hundreds of thousands more on similar sites, individual company Web sites should not be overlooked. Because of the multimedia/multi-industry scope of the generic descriptor "environmental," listing a top-10 guide to "environmental" Web sites here would be misleading at best. However, using your Net research skills, you should be able to hone in on Web sites for companies where you'd like to work. Many, especially larger, corporate Web sites include job listings. For mid-size companies, you'll often find contact information for HR departments or, even better, the decision-maker for the position you want. Companies with thousands of employees, however, usually pose more of a challenge for the Internet visitor. You may have to fill out special forms, format your resume and cover letters per the specs of their Web site, and submit to a general database pool. In either case, though, chances are that your inquiry will be taken seriously. Many will respond with at least an e-mail or postcard, and some may follow up with a phone call.

4 OTHER WEB SITES

While Monster.com and Headhunter.net enjoy the lion's share of the Internet's career-portal business, there are nonetheless many other major sites worth your time. This list is in no way comprehensive. In fact, part of your general online job search should include performing a Yahoo or Alta Vista search on "employment" to see a wider listing of options.

Careerpath.com. This is a really great site that lets you search through the employment ads from nearly 90 U.S. newspapers (and one from the United Kingdom). It's a fantastic concept and, depending on the market you're after, could prove fruitful in your search. While they do have relationships with *some* major papers, such as the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, they're still missing some major newspaper resources (such as the *Wall Street Journal* or, say, the *Portland Oregonian*).

Newspaper and magazine sites. Both of the papers mentioned above as unavailable through Careerpath.com offer employment listings through their own sites. The *Wall Street Journal* maintains an excellent career resource at *careers.wsj.com*, catering primarily to professional and managerial positions. The *Portland Oregonian* can be found at *www.oregonian.com*, and

take some extra time to review your resume for its use of "keywords" (i.e., those words or phrases most likely to be searched for by headhunters and human resources [HR] professionals). Online resume rule: Verbosity is good! It'll get your resume noticed.

Monster.com has some additional features, such as job agents that perform daily scans of the listings and e-mail matching position descriptions to you; the ability to keep up to five custom cover letters that you may use when applying online; a great resume management feature; message boards; and chat events. These services are free to registered users.

2 HEADHUNTER.NET

Your next destination should be Headhunter.net. With 150,000 job listings, chances are good that you'll locate some interesting job listings. Headhunter.net is a different animal than Monster.com. It tends to cater to the more cost-conscious employers and recruiters. In fact, much of its success is due to its low \$20 job posting fee. The positions, however, seem to be as good as those on Monster.

One distinguishing feature here is the unique search engine. Searches can be performed by keyword, job characteristics, location, or compensation. A search with the following specs returned more than 1000 listings: "Manager, environmental, full-time position, degree required, paying more than \$50,000 per year." Obviously, these needed to be narrowed down. Changing "manager" to "air quality" reduced the list significantly (to four postings within a 30-day trial period).

One important note for navigating this site is to keep in mind its pricing structure. While a basic listing costs only \$20, there are more expensive listings available. These higher fees

also includes a searchable employment-listing database. Needless to say, there are thousands of such sites in existence, and many will have the local career resources you need. Tip: Go to Yahoo.com, click on News & Media, and you'll see links to 6000-plus newspapers and 2000-plus magazines.

Resume distribution services. These services, often Web-based businesses, broadcast e-mail resumes to thousands of HR, management, and placement professionals simultaneously. While some theorize that such services are of little true value, others swear by them. In any case, the services are generally inexpensive. Headhunter.net maintains a list of these and related services in their Candidate Resource Center. You'll find the link to the center on the left-hand side of the Headhunter.net home page.

5 EPA AND GOVERNMENT JOBS

If you'd like to conduct your U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) job search online, you'll have to visit the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Web site at www.opm.gov. The employment area goes by the name USAJobs, at www.usajobs.opm.gov, "the U.S. Government's official site for jobs and employment information, provided by the OPM." To find EPA jobs, click on "current job openings," then on

"agency job search," and then select "Environmental Protection Agency" from the box. You may also enter keywords, geographic region, and specific job opening dates.

Another nice government site is the Federal Jobs Digest, at www.jobsfed.com. Registration (free) is required, and permits access to thousands of listings. In addition, the site offers a fair amount of federal career resources.

6 A&WMA WEB SITE AND ASSOCIATION WEB SITES

It's only natural that professional associations play a significant role in the employment arena—or, at least, they should. Where else can employers target so precise an audience? Be sure to explore the Web sites for the associations to which you belong.

For A&WMA members, an employment database is accessible by visiting the site at www.awma.org, logging into the Members-Only area, and then selecting "view current openings" within the Employment Services area. Members may also post their resumes for viewing by any Web site visitor (member or not). For nonmembers and members alike, A&WMA's Web site also offers a Professional Development & Career area that lists links to several national and international employment sites—many specializing in environmental positions.

7 NETWORKING

Employment advice books usually stress the power of networking. From e-mail to newsgroups to membership databases, the Internet can play a significant role in this process. Here's an example: When I moved to Pittsburgh in 1997, one of the first job-related things I did was a bit of online networking by searching through a portion of America Online's 20 million-name member database (specifically, through those members who

explaining how I found their name, and (2) requesting information about the Pittsburgh employment market. The advice I received proved invaluable. People were glad to help, and a few offered solid leads. One even managed to arrange an interview!

This final point is a natural extension to number 3 on our list. Once you've located the right contacts, drop them a friendly e-mail. HR professionals receive this sort of e-mail all the time, but it can be more productive to seek and contact the managers,

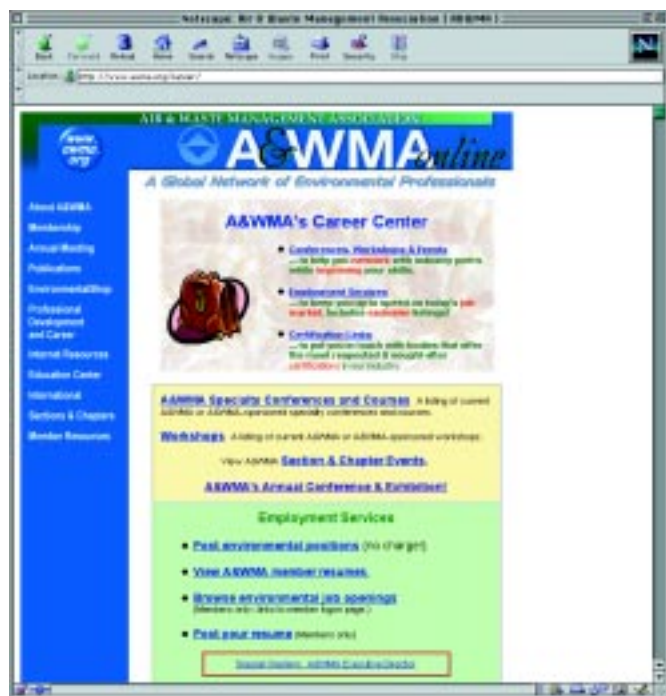
directors, and executives directly. Important: Before you send unsolicited e-mails, make sure you've employed as much "Netiquette" as

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possible. In general, be brief and to the point. One Netiquette-safe trick for distributing your resume is to keep the resume online in HTML format (i.e., as its own mini-Web site); then, in these kinds of communications, point people to the online version if they care to learn more about you. If you don't have the capability of setting up a Web version of your resume, you should avoid sending the entire document unsolicited. It's generally better to query first, and indicate that the entire document is available upon request.

CONCLUSION

Internet employment resources abound. This article offers a broad overview, but does not purport to have covered every angle. The trick to conducting a fruitful search lies in locating those resources that most closely match your individual style and needs. No matter what your preference, the value here is the maximization of the exposure you receive for the relatively little amount of time necessary to conduct a thorough search; in a word, "effectiveness." ☺



have created profiles, an available AOL option). I queried with "Pittsburgh" and some keywords related to my field, and was presented with a list of a few hundred matching e-mail addresses. Of those, 80 or 90 were members with careers similar to my own. I then contacted those people with a brief message (1)

"But I Don't Want to Work for Someone Else"

Good point! While the main focus of this article has been on finding the perfect job, one could argue that the perfect "job" can be found through self-employment. Of course, the Internet can help you in this area as well. Here are a few links to get you started:

- **Inc. com:** <http://www.inc.com/>. A veritable library of small business and entrepreneurial ideas. Home of *Inc. Magazine* and other well-known Inc. products.
- **Small Business Administration:** <http://www.sba.gov/>. This is the official site of the Small Business Administration. The site includes national, regional, and local information, and is probably the best starting point if you're considering starting your own business.
- **Yahoo! Small Business:** <http://smallbusiness.yahoo.com/>. Yahoo! has set up a nice, well-organized guide. Worth a trip.