

How to Find Your Next Job for Free Using Social Networks, Blogs and Other Underutilized Web 2.0 Methods and Tools

By Glenn Gutmacher

I'm a veteran recruiting researcher, a/k/a sourcer: the online detective who finds talent (that's what we in the industry call job-seekers) that regular recruiters can't, in ways they don't know exist. I'm going to flip that around and show you how to use those ways to FIND a job.

I'm usually asked *not* to search major job boards' resume banks because those recruiters are supposed to cover that. Even without that restriction, realize that not all recruiters have access to job boards - it's free to you to post resumes, but it typically costs them a lot to search resumes.

HOW CAN WE FIND YOU?

So make sure your resume exists on many job boards AND on the open Internet where it's free to search. Upload it as a web page or even as a Word or Adobe PDF document, as long as it can be found by Google or another search engine. That means there must be a link to your resume from some other web page that is already indexed by a search engine.

Most Internet service providers provide free web page space with your email/web browsing account, so upload your page and add yourself to their member directory and you're set. Ditto if your personal pages are hosted on one of the larger virtual communities like AOL (<http://members.aol.com>), Tripod.com, MSN Live Spaces (<http://spaces.live.com>), etc. You can simply add your resume and link to it from your own homepage. Now we recruiters can find you... almost.

The other problem is that Internet resume search is predominantly based on keywords - including most internal databases in which employers and search firms store their resumes. So if a recruiter searches on the keywords that match your resume, bang - you're at the top of the list.

But what if they don't. Let's say you're a software developer; it was even your official job title, so naturally that's on your resume. But what if the recruiter only thought to search for "software engineer" or something else? It may seem dumb that these things aren't automatically matched, but that's the reality. (A number of recruiting industry software products do this, but far from every company uses one.)

Here's how you fix that problem for yourself: Go to a meta-job aggregator like Indeed.com or SimplyHired.com that grabs job postings from lots of different job boards, and search for a job like the one you want (or had). Review a number of the results. Make sure your resume contains all the alternate job titles and skill terms you see contained in job descriptions that are reasonably synonymous with yours. There's nothing stopping you from having a separate "Keywords" section at the bottom of your resume containing all these words and phrases. However, it's better if you can work them in nearer to the top of your resume,

such as in the Summary section, Objective statement, and/or the descriptions of your last few jobs.

TODAY, IT'S MORE THAN RESUMES

So now you have an easily-findable resume - great start! But some recruiters have a bias against job boards and easily-found resumes. They label you an "active job-seeker" and you aren't as desirable to them as someone who's gainfully employed or otherwise perceived to be a busy consultant-expert. (I'm about to show you how to become the latter, regardless of your status.) These "passive job-seekers" are found in other ways - and you can be there, too. Even among the majority of recruiters and hiring managers who happily review "active" resumes, they are more comfortable selecting people to interview if the person is a somewhat "known quantity".

In either case, how do you make that leap? Other parts of this book discuss LinkedIn, personal networking and other proven methods for getting an edge when you don't have connections into an employer. However, if that's all you do, you're shooting yourself in the foot.

Today's Internet sites and tools, dubbed "Web 2.0," can help you greatly, and they're almost always free (typically advertising-supported). Let's start with the virtual communities mentioned earlier. When you join one of those communities, you're not obligated to post family photos or accept dates from everyone you connect to. Instead, use them as a professional networking platform.

They typically host interest groups by topic and geography, so you can join all the relevant ones free, which lets you browse and search your fellow members' profiles. Look for interesting people (i.e., those working at companies of interest and holding job titles one to two levels above you in the corporate hierarchy, since they're in the best position to employ you). A second job title preference (but not to be ignored) is recruiter -- also known as Talent Acquisition Specialist (or Manager), sourcer, (executive) search consultant, and staffing professional (among others - remember the value of keyword synonyms when searching!).

FOCUS ON THE BIG SOCIAL NETWORKS

Two good places to look for professional interest groups are Ning.com and LinkedIn's Groups Directory (www.linkedin.com/groupsDirectory). Also find specific contact information for any of 10 million people at over 1 million companies with the business card trading service, Jigsaw.com.

You can't ignore the two largest social networks nowadays: Facebook.com and MySpace.com, each with over 100 million profiles. Though teens were their first customers, they are no longer the majority of users, so what are you waiting for? Even if you're not yet a member, here is a quick way to search MySpace profiles to find interesting people using Google.com's main search box (type this exactly, including punctuation and spaces):

[site:www.myspace.com](#) ("occupation * CPA" OR "occupation * accounting manager") (intitle:Atlanta OR intitle:Georgia)

The only things you have to change are what job titles and locations to use for the kind of person you want to find. If you do not have a MySpace account, you may need to start one in order to contact people who do not list public contact information on their profiles. It's also good to create a MySpace profile (need not include any compromising photos of yourself!) to give potential employers another way to find you.

On Facebook, the regular search (www.facebook.com/srch.php) lets you type a job title and/or company name and finds people with that in their profile across the entire Facebook network. The profile search (www.facebook.com/advanced.php?ref=search) has many more search criteria to narrow your results, but only searches within your Facebook networks (i.e., your school/alma mater, your geographic area, and your current employer) and your directly-connected friends (equivalent to 1st-degree connections on LinkedIn).

You can change your location under Facebook Settings up to twice every 60 days. This is great if you desire to relocate: now you can see and search for people in your target metro area. To jumpstart your network, use Facebook's Friend finder (www.facebook.com/findfriends.php) to upload your email address book or IM list file, or search Facebook using a name or email for a particular person. (Most social networks offer this functionality.)

There's a lot of buzz nowadays about Twitter (www.twitter.com). With over 10 million members, this may be the most popular way to communicate over mobile devices. However, you don't need a cellphone to use it. The website's advanced search (<http://search.twitter.com>) lets you search for people by keywords and/or geographically. Note the syntax below:

- SQL near:Boston within:50mi

Replace sql with your keyword/phrase and Boston with your target metro area, and you will find everyone who has ever made a post containing your keywords and lives near that city. This works internationally (e.g., type sql near:Amsterdam within:50km), too. It's beyond the scope of this article to explain other ways to use it, but start with their help/FAQs.

So what if you have someone's name and want to learn more about them? Try using a social network aggregator: these are sites that gather profiles from many social networks and let you search all of them from one place. Examples are 123People.com, Wieowie.nl, Pipl.com, Spock.com, Wink.com and - a nice twist for network monitoring - Spokeo.com lets you aggregate all your friends' (personal and/or professional) sites into one location so you can stay up to date with all their "goings on".

IT'S TIME TO REACH OUT

Now that you've found lots of interesting people, reach out to them - at first, with a short message, and not with a desperate plea for job help. Focus on reciprocally-beneficial networking. Say you found them on X

site, they seem knowledgeable/interesting in your professional area of interest, and ask how you can help THEM. Yes, you heard me right: Instead of being like every other job-seeker who wants something, you're offering something instead. Like honey, this refreshing approach attracts more bees.

Use whatever tools the community offers to communicate: sometimes emails or instant messaging (IM) addresses are displayed, or you may have to use their internal message system. Don't send your resume, but it's fine to include the web address as a link at the end of your message.

SHARE YOUR EXPERTISE, BUILD YOUR PERSONAL BRAND

Don't stop there. These communities also give you the opportunity to convey your expertise. This is the "personal branding" concept that career consultants advocate nowadays. You can put that on steroids using Web 2.0: answer questions posed by others in your industry that show you're knowledgeable, and append your auto-signature to each post (include that resume link again!) so it's easy for the reader to reach you. LinkedIn Answers (www.linkedin.com/answers) lets you search through questions and answers and automatically links your responses to your profile.

The two largest sources of these niche discussion groups by industry subtopic where people are asking questions and (relative) experts are answering are Google Groups (<http://groups.google.com>) and Yahoo Groups (<http://groups.yahoo.com>). At these sites, type unique keywords/phrases to find people talking about your subject matter. For example, if I were a quantitative investment guru, I might type "equity derivatives." This will lead you to posts within particular groups. Join relevant groups, see what people are saying in their posts, contact the interesting/knowledgeable ones (they can help you find a job, too), and reply to a discussion thread when you have something useful to say. Another way to find free discussion lists by topic keywords is Catalist (www.lsoft.com/lists/listref.html).

Also start a blog - a type of online diary - most social networks have this functionality built in to create yours. To see what others are doing, use a blog search tool like Technorati.com, IceRocket.com or Google blog search (<http://blogsearch.google.com>) to find others. Some are even industry-specific (e.g., legal blogs via Blawgsearch.com) but with the right keywords, you can narrow your results on any of them.

A good way to stick your toe in the water is by responding to others' blog posts by typing a comment: Under each post, click the comments link or type in the box provided. Say something complementary and/or semi-intelligent (constructive contrasting opinions are also fine), and you can't go wrong.

When you're ready to start posting to your own blog, don't waste your posts talking about restaurants or what you cooked for dinner (unless you seek a job as a chef!). Focus your opinions on what's happening in your industry (positive or negative) or simply share a few links to interesting tools or articles you've seen, with brief commentary on why

they may be valuable. Again, make sure your blog links to your resume, just as all your discussion list posts should link to your blog and resume.

You never know who's going to find one of your comments interesting and now can follow the links to learn more about you. This process effectively pre-sells you to your target audience without having to set up interviews! Some may ask you to contribute a post on their blogs (do accept, if it is a reputable resource) and you should offer likewise. Don't wait to volunteer a guest post if you respect others' blogs and have started to build rapport with them by commenting on their posts, etc. This typically results in the blogger initiating direct communication with you. Before you know it, people will start linking to your posts and forwarding links about you to others looking for an expert like you - did you realize you are one at this point? - without you even knowing!

READY FOR THE NEXT LEVEL *AND* SCALE UP EFFICIENTLY?

Now you're making my job of finding you easier. Here's how you can make it a *lot* easier for all the recruiters out there: Get your thoughts distributed even more widely by using more social networks. When you register with sites like Myspace, Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook and others that let you blog and share content in other ways, you increase your exposure - and thus the chance of being noticed by the right people.

What are those other ways to share content? Audio, video and social bookmarking are three hot ones nowadays. Social bookmarking is sharing your favorite links with others. Sites like ClipIt (www.clipit.com), Digg (www.digg.com) and Delicious (www.del.icio.us) facilitate this. If you discover neat resources, post them. You'll get more fans.

With simple free tools and a \$20 webcam on your end, you can produce short audio and/or video segments called "podcasts" which can include whatever you'd type in a blogpost, plus open other content possibilities thanks to these dynamic media. Why not interview experts in your field and post those on your blog? Or do a short how-to video yourself. When you go to an event, blog about what you see - and let them see it, too. For great examples of online video and podcasts that will give you ideas, go to Blinkx (www.blinkx.com) and Everyzing (<http://search.everyzing.com>) and type a unique phrase to find relevant content. These search YouTube.com and many other sites all at once.

Now you're saying, "Glenn, wait, I don't have time to post on all these sites!" Time to leverage Web 2.0: tools like Hellotxt (www.hellotxt.com) and Ping (www.ping.fm) allow you to post once and that message is auto-posted to your account on *all* of those sites. Even though these tools currently allow only universal text posting, that can be a link to your podcasts, too.

SUMMING IT UP

All this may strike you as overwhelming. But remember, you don't have to do everything above to succeed - though the impact of each is synergistic

with the others. Try a couple of techniques above that resonate with you, at first. As you start to see success with positive response from interesting professional contacts, that will motivate you to try other things. Even after you land that next job, you'll still be using social networks because their career value continues even while you're working!

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