

# Job Board Success:

How to launch a  
profitable career site

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## Excerpted from “Job Board Success”, © 2009 Jeff Dickey-Chasins

For complete copy, visit: <http://www.jobboarddoctor.com/the-job-board-book/>

### Job board software: buy, build, or lease?

Up to this point you’ve been expending prodigious amounts of time but not much money. However, a job board is a piece of software – a website that you can either buy, lease, or build. Regardless of your choice, you will now **spend money**. So let’s take a closer look at our choices:

1) **Build it:** For most of us, the initial choice is simple: we’re not programmers, nor are our relatives, and thus we will buy or lease some sort of software. But for companies with technical staff, or for those entrepreneurs with programming skills, building the job board may be a reasonable alternative. Let me offer this word of caution, though – I have been through several painful cycles of job board software development, and what seems at first to be a simple project (‘gee, let’s put classified ads on the internet!’) quickly becomes a morass of details and scope creep.

If despite my warning you are intent on tackling the construction of a job board, begin (as you should with any complex development project) with a detailed specification of what the board will (and will not) do. Spend some time looking at other job boards to decide what features you want. Your developers should be able to find open-source script that can provide a foundation for the basic site. Expect a minimum of 90 days development and testing. Enough said.

2) **Buy or lease:** There’s a reason why so many job board owners purchase or lease (subscribe) their software: it’s easy and robust. Many vendors have been in the job board market for years and multiple revisions, which gives you the opportunity to use products that are tested and (somewhat) refined. Sure, it’ll cost something up front, but not as much as you might fear.

If you do decide to buy or lease, your journey has only begun (again, I speak from personal experience). The process of evaluating which vendor you use can be extremely time consuming. Here are a few ways to make it less arduous:

a) Look at other job boards and determine which services you **must** have and which would be nice but not essential (see previous chapter). Don't forget to include behind-the-scenes features such as a billing system, reporting, ecommerce, and so on.

b) Consider your **technical capabilities**: do you have an existing server that can host the software? If not, then you should only consider hosted solutions. Also, are you going to administer the system? If so, be prepared to spend plenty of evaluation time looking under the hood of the software. Also, find out how they charge for any customization you may require.

c) Consider your **marketing capabilities**: do you have an efficient existing method reaching your seeker and employer audiences? If not, you may want to consider a supplier that includes you in a larger 'network' of career sites, such as JobTarget or Adicio.

d) Finally—and I realize this is somewhat intangible—make sure you select a vendor that you can work with comfortably. Do you understand the explanations their technical staff provide? Are they responsive? Do you like the way their customers' sites look and work?

You'll find an appendix of job board software suppliers at the end of the book; consider it a starting point. New vendors continue to appear every month. A thorough web search is advised. You should also contact job sites that you like (in terms of functionality, appearance, and so on); ask them who created their site. It's best, of course, to choose sites that are clearly not competitive with yours.

### ***Evaluating and testing***

You'll quickly narrow down your list of potential suppliers by applying the questions listed above. For the vendors that are left, you should be as systematic as possible in evaluating their software. Putting your requirements (both the 'musts' and 'would be nice') in a spreadsheet is helpful. Vendors should be willing to give you access to a full working version of their site. You'll want to view it from three perspectives: **job seeker**, **employer**, and **site administrator**. Below are some items to consider as you conduct your evaluation:

**Job seeker perspective:**

- can I search jobs without registering? (can this be set administratively?)
- what criteria can I use when searching? (for example, can I search by a geographical radius? by region? by certification?)
- how easy (or hard) is it to post my resume?
- is a step-by-step 'resume builder' provided?
- can I upload my resume? If so, what document formats are allowed?
- how many resumes can I create?
- how is my uploaded or created resume used when I apply for a job (if at all)?
- can I track my job applications?
- can I 'save' a job in my personal account for future reference?
- can I create 'job alerts' (jobs that match my criteria emailed to me)?
- can I 'highlight' myself to employers? how?

**Employer perspective:**

- can the employer buy services online (i.e., via ecommerce)? All services, or just certain types?
- can the employer load several job postings at a time (i.e., bulk load)? How does that work?
- how easy or difficult is the user interface? Does the employer system require hands-on training? Online help? Other types of assistance?
- how customizable is the job posting form? Can the administrator add additional fields?

- can the employer track applications to each job posting? How much or little information is retained?
- can the employer customize the appearance of the job posting via addition of a logo or image, video, modification of text appearance, etc?
- does the system include a company profile that is visible to job seekers?
- how powerful is the resume search tool? Are the fields used in the search customizable, either by the employer or administrator?
- can resume search results be saved? Can searches be turned into resume alerts (i.e., the results emailed automatically to the employer)?
- can resumes be viewed without identifying information, such as contact information? (this is useful as 'trial run' info for prospective buyers)
- what types of reports are provided to the employer, if any? How are these accessed?
- does the system provide invoicing? If so, does the invoicing integrate with any accounting systems?
- can the employer set up 'auto-respond' emails that are attached to their job postings?
- do the job postings allow applications via an applicant tracking system (ATS), such as Taleo, etc.? An Apply button? A direct email link?

**Site Administrator perspective:**

- can employers set up their own accounts, or is this function restricted to the administrator?
- how easy or hard is it for the administrator to change forms, pages, and other areas of the job board?
- how customizable is the overall look and feel ('skin') of the web site? Is the customization done by the vendor? The administrator? A 3<sup>rd</sup> party? What is the cost, if any?
- How easy or difficult is it to add employer accounts? Job seeker accounts?
- Can employer accounts be set up to have multiple users?

- Can employer accounts tie individual job posts to individual company profiles (typically this is most useful for ad agency accounts)?
- Do the job posting listings include any type of SEO features? If so, what, and how are they configured?
- Can the job board accept bulk imports of job listings from aggregators such as Indeed or SimplyHired? Can it export its job listings as an XML file or other feed to other sites (for crossposting)?
- Do the ecommerce functions also include the ability to sell other products?
- Does the site have 'hooks' to integrate a 3<sup>rd</sup> party ad banner system?
- What additional products (besides job postings and resume search) are available for employers – and already bundled into the job board?

These questions are of course not exhaustive, but they give you guidance on the types of things you should cover during your evaluation.