

Job Board Success:

How to launch a profitable career site

by

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The Job Board Doctor

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Why do most job boards fail to thrive?

“When anyone can start a job board, we’re really in trouble.” – apocryphal

A long, long time ago, people found work through quaint methods such as friends, a sign in the window, or a newspaper classified. Those days are, well, waning.

In 1995 (or 1994, depending on who the storyteller is), the first web-based job board was launched. CareerMosaix was a grand success and immediately created a bevy of imitators. These in turn begat Monster, CareerBuilder, Dice, and other sites which survive to the present day.

So what’s the attraction? Simple – rather than keeping the job seeker at the mercy of whatever friend, sign, or newspaper is at hand, a job board levels the playing field. Suddenly, no matter where a job posting originates, it is now available for anyone with access to a computer and browser.

And the attraction for employers? Lower cost and more applicants – at least in an ideal world.

That was the plan. Now for the reality check.

FACT 1) Most job boards aren’t that great.

Sorry to be so blunt, but it’s true. I’ve studied hundreds of boards over the past decade, and I can confidently say that most of them deserve to fail. Why? These websites fail to meet the lowest of bars: they don’t fulfill the promise they’ve made to jobseekers or employers.

FACT 2) Most job board owners don’t know what they’re doing.

FACT 3) Most job boards go out of business.

Well, you could derive this fact from the preceding two, actually. If your job board sucks AND you don't know what you're doing, then you're probably going to go under sooner or later.

But I'm here to tell you that it doesn't have to be this way. This book will show you how.

Why do some job boards succeed?

Should you launch a job board? Look at the track record of others who have. Just like the fast food restaurants that reappear in the same building left behind by the recently failed ones, each day brings a new round of job boards and career sites to the web. If the failure rate is so high, *why?*

Successful job boards understand that they are running a business with two sets of customers: **job seekers** and **employers**. The job boards that thrive learn how to bring these two audiences together while making a profit. This sounds incredibly simple, doesn't it?

Well, as a veteran of job launches, re-launches, and redesigns, I can tell you that getting these audiences together **profitably** is a complex process—but it is a process that you can master. Let's take a closer look at the two audiences for your job board/career site.

Audience #1: Job Seekers

Job seekers fall into two general categories: active and passive. An **active job seeker** is looking for employment. He has searched for job postings on two or more sites, has posted his resume, and has probably applied for several positions. Even if the active job seeker is employed (and approximately 60% of them are), he wants out of his current situation. Active job seekers tend to be very responsive—send them a survey, they'll respond. Promote a particular job or offer to them and they'll take a look.

The **passive job seeker** is not actively looking for employment, but she's willing to stay in the mix. Passive seekers will often have job alerts set up that send them job postings matching their skills, or they will have two or three favorite sites they browse regularly. They will not have their resume posted, simply because they don't want recruiters or HR personnel calling them. Historically passive job seekers have made up as much as 85% of the total job seeker population.

Whether job seekers are active or passive, they come to job boards and career sites because they're interested in the job postings: **what's available, where, and how much**. If your site fails to deliver what these job seekers want to see, they'll go away.

Another way to think about this is to consider the promise your site makes. For example, if your site is called "Jobs for Brewers", it **must** have jobs for brewmasters, bottling, beer sales, and so on. If it doesn't, then you've **broken your promise** to the job seeker. He will respond accordingly—not only will he leave your site, but he'll pass the word along to his friends, many of whom are probably brewmasters.

The most successful job boards have a strong sense of who their target job seekers are, what they want, and how they behave. If you're uncertain of how well you know your audience, go directly to Appendix A and complete the worksheet. Do not proceed with your job board until you have finished. Trust me on this.

Audience #2: Employers

For most job boards, employers pay the bills (this is also ultimately true for company career sites). They are willing to pay to access the audience of job seekers and collection of resumes that a job site has amassed.

Employers can be fickle. What makes them happy and satisfied with a job board on a Monday may not hold by Thursday. In general, however, employers want two things: a) response, and b) choice. The promise you've made to your paying employers is that you will provide them with a large enough audience of targeted, qualified job seekers that they will see applications to their job postings and a good selection of potential candidates in your resume bank.

Job boards offer many variations on these two basic products (such as featured employer ads, highlighted text, video, company profile pages, etc.). Yet at their core these additional

features reinforce the core value provided by job postings and resume access: **response** and **choice**.

Challenges and changes in the marketplace

The employment and recruiting industry is going through significant changes due to a severe and prolonged recession. These changes and their underlying causes should be taken into account as you make your decision to create and launch a job board. Here is a short list of factors that are currently in play – be prepared to discover more as you move forward:

1. Impact of **social media** such as Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, etc. on both job seeker and employer choices in employment decisions
2. Significant job losses and corporate restructuring in key employment sectors such as finance, manufacturing, and transportation will have a **ripple effect** as displaced workers flood other sectors looking for work, and as sectors related to these areas feel a decrease in demand.
3. **Price erosion and commoditization** in the job board market continues to accelerate, particular for less focused job boards.
4. Continued demands by employers and recruiters for job boards to **provide ‘pre-screening’** and other types of job seeker qualification will add technical and financial costs to job board operation.
5. **Low perceived barrier to entry** in the job board market has encouraged a profusion of boards in every segment. This creates confusion among both employers and job seekers, as it is not always obvious which board is truly dominant and significant.
6. **Consolidation in the job board market** at some levels and chaos at others means that once again, employers and job seekers may be confused about the stability of existing competitors and the validity of new entrants.

(This is an excerpt – to purchase the entire e-book, go to:

<http://www.jobboarddoctor.com/the-job-board-book/>)