

Job Board Success:

How to launch a
profitable career site

By Jeff Dickey-Chasins
The Job Board Doctor

Revised
2nd Edition

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1) 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 a new job through quaint methods such as friends, a sign in the window, or a newspaper classified. Then, in the early 90s, the first web-based job board was launched. OnlineCareerCenter was a 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 – why did job boards prosper? Simple – rather than keeping the job seeker at the mercy of whatever friend, sign, or newspaper is at hand, a job board leveled the playing field. Suddenly, no matter where a job posting originated, it was now available for anyone with access to a computer and browser.

And the attraction for employers? Lowered hiring costs and more applicants – at least in an ideal world.

That was then. This is now:

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

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

FACT 2) There are plenty of alternatives.

LinkedIn. Google for Jobs. Programmatic networks. Aggregators. Search engines. Career fairs. Recruiting platforms. Third-party recruiters. Even (gasp!) newspapers. If job boards don't measure up, job seekers, HR, and recruiting pros go elsewhere.

FACT 3) Most job boards have no brand.

How many job boards can you actually name? Quick, no cheating! Beyond a few top contenders like LinkedIn or Indeed, I'm betting that your list is short. Most job boards lack any effective **marketing and branding**. The result? Job seekers (and employers) forget about them – and the job boards end up spending lots of time and money reminding them of their existence.

It doesn't have to be this way. There are job boards out there making plenty of money. The job board industry has been estimated at \$20+ billion worldwide. But job boards are no longer the 'easy way to riches' they once were in the mid- and late 90s.

However, you *can* succeed with your job board or recruitment marketing site. This book will show you how.

NOTE: Although the term 'job board' is used (mostly) in this book, it is increasingly a dated and inaccurate term – although it continues to be common and useful shorthand. Some sites call themselves 'recruiting sites' or 'recruitment marketing services'; some call themselves 'career sites' or 'career hubs'; and some just avoid the whole thing. So realize that for the purposes of this book, a job board is simply **a service that brings candidates and employers together**. What you want to call *your service* is up to you!

2) Why do some job boards and recruiting sites succeed?

Should you launch a job board or recruitment marketing site? Look at the track record of others who have. Just like the restaurants that reappear in the same building left behind by the recently failed ones, each week brings a new round of job boards and recruiting sites to the web. If the failure rate is so high and there are so many competitors, *why should you even try?*

Because job boards are like any business – **if you know what you are doing, you increase your odds of success**. And because cumulatively these businesses generate billions of dollars each year. If you do it right, you can create a business that is profitable and valuable, and help employers and candidates.

Successful recruiting sites 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 board launches, re-launches, and redesigns, I can tell you that bringing 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.

The first audience: 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 three 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 three or four favorite sites they browse regularly. They may be 'watching' for employment clues on social media. They often 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**. This proportion changes in response to economic forces – it was much lower in the 2008 recession, and much higher during the recent pandemic 'boom'.

An interesting recent permutation of the passive job seeker is what some have called the '**poised**' job seeker. He probably has his resume posted for all to see on LinkedIn. He may be active in discussion groups, professional associations, and so on – but he doesn't think of himself as 'looking'. However, if the right offer comes along, he'll listen.

Whether job seekers are active or passive (or poised), 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 Craft Brewers", it **must** have jobs for brewmasters, bottlers, 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.

Question: What is the promise your site makes to job seekers? Spell it out!