

Think Twice Before Posting That Resume

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Q: A headhunter has asked me to sign an exclusive presentation contract with him.
Good idea? Bad idea?

A: A decade ago, I would have argued against putting all your eggs into one recruiter's basket. For the upwardly mobile, the Internet has changed my mind. I speak heresy.

Resumes live forever. Once your resume leaves Earth to live in the stratospheric reaches of the Web, you can't control it, and it may turn up anywhere, anytime, including on your boss's desk.

But what if you've been cagey—wink, nudge—and only listed events prior to your current job? Can't you just tell your boss that the resume is old, posted before you took your present position and you have no idea how or why it's still alive?

Sure you can, but the missing information describing your present employment is probably your best selling strength if you're on the market.

Moreover, employers are realizing that once your resume is up in Web lights, you'll continuously be contacted if you seem to have what's wanted somewhere. And if you're having a bad day, you might just be tempted to say, "I'm gone."

When you're targeting the fast track to the best jobs, nothing beats being brought to an employer's notice by an important third person—and a recruiter qualifies. So it well might be to your advantage to sign one or more "exclusive presentation" agreements, each defined by specific clients and time parameters.

A typical "exclusive right to present" agreement usually is pretty simple and direct: "I (your name) grant (name of recruiter) the exclusive right to present my resume along with any information pertaining to my background and experience to (list of clients by name) for the time period of (six months)." What's in it for you?

The Fordyce Letter (www.Fordyceletter.com), a recruiting industry favorite, reports in its August issue that "people who two years ago put their resumes on the big national job boards are still hearing from recruiters and companies even though they have accepted other employment." Not only do the resumes live on eternally, they may migrate to unintended databases.

Several candidates told The Fordyce Letter that they posted their resume in one place and it ended up on dozens of others, even though they deactivated their resume on the boards where they originally posted it. "Marked for life" is the way one candidate put it.

The chances that your resume will escape from its designated cyber box are multiplying. Recruiters now accuse one of the national job boards of making copies of the national job boards of making copies of resumes sent in response to advertisers' job postings, then adding those copies to the job board's own resume database. The job board denies the practice, but recruiters are disbelieving. I don't know what to think until more facts are in.

But my previous advice that you have pretty good privacy when you send your resume into cyberspace in response to specific job ads may no longer be valid. Some job seekers will be happy to find out their resumes are getting additional eyes, but others wince at the loss of privacy and the right to control where their information goes.

Job ads have long been openly “scraped” – a term for what happens when robots/spiders scour the Web looking for job ads and aggregate them on a second and unrelated site. Now resumes, too, are being scraped. Ethical scrapers send you an e-mail and ask if you’d like to be included in the second database and are guided by your response. But most scrapers don’t get your permission and take your resume to places unknown. When you don’t know where your resume is, how can you call it back to make changes?

Employers are becoming more resistant to paying recruiters big fees to search the Web when they can do it themselves cheaper. That’s why recruiters need fresh inventory that employers can’t find elsewhere. If you want a recruiter to present you, think carefully before pinning cyber wings on your resume. Plus, there’s that risk of discovery.

As outplacement consultants Kay Stout of Right Associates in Oklahoma City says: “I’ve had friends who learned the hard way to not post their resume if they were still employed and their paycheck provider found their resume on one of the Web sites.”

Remember, online resumes may never die. They just fade away into the timeless Deep Web.

Do you have an employment question for Joyce Lain Kennedy? Write to Careers, Joyce Lane Kennedy, Box 368, Cardiff, CA 92007 or e-mail jlk@sunfeatures.com