



How to Successfully Leverage Job Boards in Resume Writing and Job Search Strategy

There's no argument that searching for a job has changed tremendously over the past years. It's still an ever-changing environment that can leave even the most "job-searching-savvy" amongst us scratching their heads in confusion about the best way to go about their job search.

The typical approach is to hit the Internet, find job postings online, click the "Apply Now" button, and wait for the phone to ring. But it's not that easy! Job boards can be a waste of time and it's easy to be lulled into a false (and fateful) sense of security that using them would make your job search quick and easy.

While we don't recommend you spend a lot of time on job boards, there is a time and a place for using them. Let's explore industry best practices.

Job Boards – Love Them or Hate Them?

Before we jump into how to best utilize job boards for job search and/or job research strategy, let's see what our experts have to say about these online tools. While some career coaches and resume writers "hate" job boards, many can see the value in them, depending on their use.

Nay to Job Boards

- They have become the standard for job search although they are largely ineffective time wasters.
- It's very passive and doesn't often garner any results. Talk about a non-targeted job search!
- While job boards are commonly known for reaching thousands of employers and recruiters, often jobseekers' applications get quickly skimmed over or lost in a portal as they are competing among thousands of jobseekers locally and abroad.
- Job postings on job boards may be outdated or already taken (via internal hiring process) even though they are still posted. Some jobs may not even exist.
- According to CareerXroads, a recruiting site, only 12% of all hires can be attributed to job boards; other studies place the figure even lower.
- You get better results when you focus on professional networking to find your next position.

Yay to Job Boards

- You can set alerts for jobs of interest as it cuts down on 'trolling' time.
- All-in-all, job boards are not a one-stop shop, but when cleverly combined with networking, cold contacting, building a strong presence on LinkedIn, and other creative methods, they can help to open doors to your success.
- Some job boards aggregate jobs from the internet and allow you to set up searches where you receive an email each time a new job match appears.
- While job boards are a less modern form of applying to jobs; they at the least, put resumes in the applicant pool.
- Job boards can be a springboard but not the whole breadth of your job search strategy.

Like Them for Research

- Job boards can be a useful tool to research what companies are looking for in their prime candidates.
- Job boards can be utilized in the job search as not only a resourceful job application tool, but for researching, forecasting, and strategic planning.
- Job boards represent a great way for finding alternative titles and positions that match your skill, broadening what you know you qualify for (since some companies use very specific, niche, and unusual titles). Indeed.com (Indeed) does a very good job of finding similar opportunities and emailing those leads.
- The job board can be used as an aggregator. This helps to effectively keyword-optimize and tailor your resume.

As you can see, there is a wide range of opinions on how to best utilize job boards. Let's dive deeper into how to use these tools for research, resume writing strategy, and job search. Then we'll go into recommended job boards and alternatives to online job hunting.

Job Boards for Research and Strategy

Whether or not various resume writers and career coaches like job boards, there is an overwhelming consensus that they are useful for job research and resume writing strategy.

Research for Jobseekers

Conducting research online fuels the career planning and decision-making process for many jobseekers.

To identify companies that are hiring in certain sectors and locations, find the top recommended employers via reviews, discover in-demand jobs and skills, identify different titles that match your skills, and explore growing industries.

What are the pros? Searching for jobs online can sometimes lead to uncovering more career-related ideas/ possibilities and identify a broader range of opportunities where you can apply your unique combination of skills and experience to solve problems in an organization. You can then gather data to strategize your job hunt; e.g, building up a network, using social media, researching company websites, or seeking other means such as volunteerism, committee work, or referrals to get your foot in the door.

You can also find salary reviews for certain roles to see pay scales, which can help in the negotiation process.

Job Boards for Job Search

As you have read in the responses above, not all job boards are created equal and should not be the basis of your job search. However, how you go about your job search is ultimately up to you. Read on to learn effective strategy tips for conducting an online job search.

Research for Jobseekers

Whether you use job boards or not, it's important to create an Applicant Tracking System (ATS) - formatted resume.

Resumes posted to jobs on job boards, or uploaded to job boards, must pass through ATS screening.

The first test is the format. Most resume templates use text boxes and tables that cannot be read by ATS. Professionally written, ATS-friendly resumes are formatted properly and use keywords that ATS screens for, so that they will have a higher chance of being read by a human being.

The second test is content. It's important your resume includes rich, relevant language to demonstrate that you are a good fit for the position. Customize the resume and cover letter to each position because each company and department uses different criteria and keywords, even if the job title is the same.

Despite having the option to use the resume that is already on file, customize each application for every position you are applying to and tailor the achievements to support the targeted role.

Job boards are not as effortless as they appear to be; however, many job boards do give candidates the option to set up alerts if relevant opportunities are posted—set these up to be an early applicant!

Set Up Alerts

It is important to keep in mind that without establishing a clear set of parameters your inbox will be flooded with useless notifications. Search criteria should include job titles, industry, geographical radius, and salary range, so you may need to tweak these until the algorithm is aligned with your target roles.

It is becoming more apparent that text messaging is playing an ever-increasing role in the modern job search. With the end goal being to make it as easy as possible for recruiters to contact you, be sure to include text as an available option.

Create a System for Tracking

If you are planning on setting up a job board, be systematic about it. Track your movements online in order to stay organized. By keeping a simple spreadsheet, you can stay on top of your applications and progress. Here are some components to track to avoid confusion and frustration:

- Company Name
- Title / Reference Number
- Job Description (copied into individual cell or linked tab or document)
- Job Board Used
- Application Date / Closing Date / Hiring Date
- Name of Resume / Cover Letter Used
- Point of Contact with Contact Information (if known)
- Date of Contact / Phone Interviews / In-Person Interviews

The hiring process can move at a snail's pace, but if you are called for an interview a month after applying, you'll be better prepared through this process.

Another trick is to track down the hiring manager and contact them directly. This will often require some investigative work, but through a combination of Googling, reviewing company websites, and running filtered LinkedIn searches you can usually pinpoint the person with hiring authority.

It's a good idea to find your targeted contact's email with a free email hacking tool. After applying, you can send an email to the manager to let them know how interested and excited you are about the position.

Mentioning one or two of your most notable accomplishments is a great way to entice them, and course, if they share any common ground or mutual connections this can be mentioned to establish familiarity. If the hiring manager is impressed, they can have HR flag the resume for an interview or line a meeting up directly.

Avoid the Time Suck

Statistics have shown that only 2% to 3% of jobs are filled through job boards. This is because candidates are competing with hundreds of people. Some advertised jobs are already filled but the organization is required to advertise, and some employers are simply doing market research about the candidate pool.

Don't get sucked down the job board black hole. Job boards shouldn't take up more than 25- 30% of a professional's job search. Blue collar candidates may find sites like Indeed to be the easiest way, however. But again, it still shouldn't exceed more than 40% of time spent job searching.

Recommended Job Boards

Whether for research or for application, some job boards rise above the rest for ease of use, reputation, and information shared.

LinkedIn.com

LinkedIn came to the top for most of our resume writers and career coaches because of what they now share with applicants on the site's Jobs tab. As of this writing, some features are:

- Seeing who at the company has posted the job (with a link to their LinkedIn page!)
- Viewing the top 10 skills the job poster says are needed for the job, and how your skills (in your profile under Skills & Endorsements) compare. This is huge!
- LinkedIn is always on that list because of its global reach.
- Volume of jobs that are posted on LinkedIn coupled with the fact that recruiters favor the platform.

Indeed.com

As an aggregator, Indeed collects descriptions from many other sources such as company websites and other job boards. The upside of this approach is that it provides a lot of jobs in one place and offers email notifications when a candidate's profile matches a job description.

It also excels because:

- It keeps track of candidates searches, so you can look at them again.
- It gives relatively realistic estimates of salary levels; until American companies list salaries in their job postings like many European companies do, this may be the best available.

- It gives reviews of the company by current and former employees.
- It links to company sites.

Professional Association Boards/Niche Boards

Another way to increase your chances of selection is to apply to jobs posted on professional association job boards. National and local chapter job boards list positions only for their members, which means less competition.

Jobseekers can also access niche job boards in their area of interest to further streamline the job search process. For example, DICE.com (Technology), Constructionjobs.com (construction jobs), idealist.org or charityvillage.com (non-profits), or Workhoppers (Freelancers).

If you have a specific career goal in mind, try an industry-focused job board. Employers and recruiters rely on such platforms to find qualified candidates who know what they are looking for in a career. For example, www.careersinfood.com lists all kinds of jobs for professionals in the food and beverage industry. It offers a variety of great tools for job seekers to find the right company or the right opportunity. iHire also has 56 industry-specific talent communities—from iHireDental to iHireConstruction and beyond—that connect job seekers with employers more efficiently.

If you are a college senior or recent grad, check your college's job board if they have one (check the Career Center page). They'll likely learn the recruiter's name. In both cases, they'll have much less competition than you see on the "big" boards and may even have more network connections.

Alternatives to Online Job Boards

The old adage is still true—it's not what you know, it's who you know.

Begin networking! A job application through a web site is not enough, even with your genius resume! You still must find contacts in the company you are applying with and cultivate relationships to support your application. Because of the short timelines in many application processes, this strategy is less effective when used with an application than when used without an application, before a job is listed.

Association job boards also have another advantage over advertised job listings. You can use member directories to find members of the organization in order to research their challenges, goals, and culture before you apply and interview. In the process, you may also find positions that are not advertised. These "hidden" jobs comprise about 75% of the job openings and are your best bet for locating great positions with little or no competition.

It's also recommended for you to apply to jobs using the company websites rather than job boards. When a jobseeker applies through a job board, he/she needs to establish a connection with the employer or key decision-maker beforehand through LinkedIn, in person, follow-up, or via referrals.

Networking serves as a key piece in job searching along with showcasing compelling brand marketing collateral. Through networking, you may learn about leads that haven't been published and this may lead to getting nominated by company insiders for those jobs.

Conclusion

The objective for this tip sheet wasn't to put you on either side of a job board love / hate spectrum, but rather to encourage you to see the angles at which you can approach these online portals with some hope of return on investment.

Ruling job boards out altogether may or may not be your best solution. Just as a resume needs to be targeted to each job description, your approach to job boards should be targeted towards your needs.

Whether you avoid job boards or not, being educated in the pros and cons of the resources available will help you as you work to secure a job in today's fast-paced job market.

Still Have Questions?

Let's stay in touch!

POWER-TO-CHANGE

'Your path to career success'

Anne Galloway

Careers Consultant, Resume Writer, & Interview Trainer

+31 (0)6 1556 1377 anne@power-to-change.eu www.power-to-change.eu
www.facebook.com/powertochange.eu www.linkedin.com/in/annegalloway1