



Making the Job Boards Work for You

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IT'S A FRUSTRATING DAY AT WORK, or perhaps you've suddenly lost your job. What's your natural reaction? Post your resume online, of course!

Many people feel that posting a resume online with a job board is all they need to do in order get their next great job. Truth is, it's a no-pain but often a no-gain career approach. With each submission of your resume in response to a job posting, you are essentially entering a lottery with hundreds or thousands of others to get the attention of a recruiter who, in turn, might forward your name along to a hiring manager.

Note: Before considering the job board approach to finding a job you should review Career Fulcrum Volume III, Personal Marketing Programs, which discusses other, more effective, approaches to getting hired.

If you feel strongly that a job board approach is the right one for you, leverage the principles in *Career Fulcrum*, especially *Volume III, Personal Marketing Programs*, to improve your chances of becoming "The Chosen One," (i.e. get the introduction to the hiring manager). Job boards tend to be fairly rigid in what they will allow you to communicate; still, with a little insight into how a recruiter experiences the response you submit via the job board, you can compensate by crafting a message that stands out.

Responding to an Opportunity Posted on a Job Board

A basic understanding of the interaction between recruiters and job boards is fundamental so you can plan your strategy to making job boards work for you. [Click here to read a related article, "How Job Boards Fit into the Corporate Recruitment Process"](#) including a detailed graphical representation of how it works.

A job board is akin to a cog in a Rube Goldberg machine (an invention that turns a simple task into a much more complicated one). Consider this scenario:

A hiring manager creates a new opening on her team. The hiring manager communicates the needs to a recruiter, who may or may not be well-versed in the proper skill sets needed. Naturally, the hiring manager doesn't have much time, so her description is brief and includes an off-handed comment about finding someone who fits in. *(The recruiter often is a good person who does the best they can do with extremely limited information and time. To read more about the recruiter's plight see the section "Recruiters – a gatekeeper challenge..." Career Fulcrum Vol. III, near the end of Chapter 4)*

As the recruiter scratches out a job placement ad, his thoughts are interrupted to attend a staff meeting. Finally, the job posting makes it to the job board. You now browse the job board, find the job posting, and respond with your resume to the paragraph of non-information. Your resume is sent out into the black hole of the company's Human Resource (HR) systems. Meanwhile, the job board wants to establish a relationship with you. *(The job board needs a relationship with you. The more resumes in their database, the more they can promote themselves and charge organizations.)*

Periodically the recruiter reviews all the resumes he's received. Some are reviewed between phone calls. Others are reviewed by a computer system. The resume lottery continues until a few are selected. Finally the recruiter proudly presents "The Chosen" to the hiring manager, who promptly responds, "Why are all these people *Fighters*? I'm looking for a *Writer!*" and so the process begins anew...

Ok, perhaps I stretched the truth a bit but, in reality, what's going on is often even more complicated and ever more challenging for you. Both the hiring manager and the recruiter are human (therefore imperfect) and have many concurrent needs pressing in on them. They often give very little thought to their *true needs* (this is unfortunate and short-sighted, but true). You can use their lack of thought as an opportunity for you to really shine (more about this later).

You have two strategic options to stand out in all this noise:

1. Statistically make enough responses to win The Resume Lottery.
2. Craft a message for each response you make based on the information you've identified through the *Career Fulcrum* exercises.

If the first option interests you, Stop Reading Now!!! You've got a lot of resumes to start posting!

In response to the second option, you may be thinking, "Crafting a unique message for each response I make will obviously slow down my overall response rate and it will be hard work." I don't disagree, but you aren't selling lemonade on the corner—we're

talking about selling **You!**

Note: In the next few sections, I'm going to be discussing how you can relate your job board experiences to your Personal Marketing Program (PMP) and its 10 steps as defined in Career Fulcrum Volume III. If you aren't sure what you want to do, the job boards are a terrible place to try to figure things out. Instead, try the exercises in Career Fulcrum Volumes I and II.

Crafting the Message

If you're going to use a job board to get a hiring manager's attention, you'll need to read between the lines of the job posting and attempt to anticipate what problems the hiring manager is trying to solve (See PMP Step 2 – Research and learn...). Use the Organizational Triangle construct to create a message that can be understood by the recruiter (even though he or she may be hampered by their limited understanding of the true needs of the role), but a message that is sophisticated enough to hold the attention of the hiring manager. This would be a good time to review how the Organizational Triangle helps you see the potential relationship between you and the organization from the organization's perspective (see *Career Fulcrum Volume I, The Basics*). Even if the message isn't directly on-target, a close miss may be enough to open a dialog so you can zero in on a problem that you can solve and thereby get hired! (See PMP Step 3 – Personal Value Proposition.)

Responding with a simple introductory cover letter is not enough (see PMP Step 4 –Strategies and tactics...). You must be able to articulate what outcomes you'll deliver and how you can lower risk and resource demands. Again, use the Organizational Triangle to guide you in articulating your response. While you can review your Personal Triangle to consider how rewarding you may find the prospective opportunity, you should stay focused on the *organizational* side of the triangles in formulation of what is, in essence, your value proposition to them. There'll be opportunities for you to express your personal wants and desires later—for now concentrate on what the organization wants.

In your response be sure to include a link to your Personal Discovery Center, which will contain much more detail about how you can provide value, giving the facts to back up your claims (see PMP Step 5 – Personal Discovery Center and PMP Step 6 – Action Objectives). By doing this you are more likely to make your case to the hiring manager rather than having a recruiter make it for you. With the abundance of information you can provide in your Personal Value Proposition, its going to be much easier for the recruiter to let the hiring manager experience it for themselves rather than relay it.

There are many benefits to this approach. It will help you articulate who you are and

what you can offer. During the interview process, you'll be practiced in expressing how you can help the hiring manager solve their problem by hiring you. An in-depth understanding of what you can provide can set you well ahead of others who react at the spur of the moment and don't take the time to understand the situation (see PMP Step 7 – Dialog with your Audience). More examples can be found throughout *Career Fulcrum*, especially in *Volume III*.

This approach is especially effective when the hiring manager hasn't seriously considered what the true needs are (remember the Rube Goldberg scenario?). If you can understand the needs better than the hiring manager or recruiter, you'll be in a strong position—provided you can articulate them. Use your secret weapon, the Organizational Triangle (see *Career Fulcrum, Volume I*).

You may want to consider imbedding your arguments into the content of your resume or as a header on your resume. This may be a non-traditional approach, yet remember that cover letters frequently do not make it to their final destination intact. System incompatibilities are rampant in these immature environments. Don't let yourself get hurt by them!

Posting your Resume on a Job Board

Posting your resume into a database that recruiters can search through is probably the single most *ineffective* way to find a new job, unless you have a rare skill that is not easily found.

The worst part of resume databases is the fact that there is no inherit context in which you get to sell yourself. Don't be tempted to limit yourself to just posting your resume (remember that your resume is only reflective of past events). At a minimum, you want to try to promote likely outcomes that you want to provide to a prospective employer.

Also, you'll need to give thought to keywords that will help your posting be found. Make sure to spread the keywords throughout the content of your resume and proposed outcomes. Don't just list them out; you must still make a convincing argument that you are worthy of further review.

Final Thought

Remember, ultimately a job board is no more than an introduction tool. It's what you do with that introduction that will make or break you.

About the Author

Alex Pecoraro has a MSEE from Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana and a BSEE from Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts. He has been designing job board infrastructures since the mid-90s. He is a consultant to several Fortune 500 firms including the world's second largest staffing firm, helping his clients to design candidate HRIS systems. More recently he's become an evangelist to help people better express themselves and get the technology out of their way.

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