

From Recruiter to Jobhunter

Contributed by Wendy Jacob

So my second blog entry was going to be about Google Wave (don't worry folks - it's already written and you'll get it soon enough!) but I read a great post last week on Twitter and decided to change tack.

@grahamsalisbury wrote:("I am beginning to regard online job boards with the same degree of suspicion that I normally reserve for Wikipedia")

I couldn't help but smile! I've been in the same job for nearly five years now, working as a recruiter, and I'd kind of forgotten what it was like to be a job seeker until recently. I shan't bore you with the gory details, but basically my employer has had to cut my hours due to the recession and so I've had to look for additional employment to supplement my income and keep Mr J in PlayStation 3 games (I know, I know...!) Anyway, the employment issue is resolved (temporarily at least) and I was lucky enough to not be looking too long, but this was my first time as a job seeker in some time and it was really quite humbling!

Last time I was job hunting, local papers were still reasonably en vogue and, while job boards were very much in the picture, there seemed to be just the one or two big names that were worth a visit. But how things have changed now! Now my local papers are all affiliated with (different) jobs boards, there are niche boards popping up all over the place and (maybe it's just me, but) there seem to be even more 'big name' boards too! Now I've no problem really with the number of job boards in existence; as a recruiter I've advertised on plenty in the past (with mixed results!), but what I did find particularly annoying was the way the same jobs were duplicated over and over on all of them.

Some employers were guilty, but it was mostly the agencies with the multiple postings. And you can bet your bottom dollar half those posting were out of date too. Job hunting is a drain at the best of times, but I felt as though whole evenings were just vanishing into a black hole!

Other than spending half my life trawling the internet for vaguely relevant and still current job vacancies, my biggest quandary was which jobs to apply for. The current market means that most of the jobs I liked the look of didn't pay the kind of salary I was used to getting (and in my part of the world, salaries aren't really that great anyway). You work hard to get to where you are and no-one wants to take a step backwards, but at what point do you put your pride aside and say that some income is better than no income? I've always said (rather arrogantly) that there's no reason for me to ever be unemployed - there is always the counter at McDonalds or the checkout at Tesco. But that's really not true any more; even these entry level jobs have people queuing to apply because some income is better than no income. And there you have it! Who would employ me; a somewhat overqualified candidate with no recent retail experience, over someone who's been made redundant from Thresher or Woolworths who is far more relevant?! But how do you decide what's worth the effort? Do you apply for anything and everything and hope that something sticks, or do you do what you'd normally do (if jobs weren't so fiercely fought over) and stay targeted and focussed, even though there are less relevant positions to apply for? It's so difficult to decide. It's easy to judge people who apply for jobs they're totally over qualified for, but the reality is that many people are not in a situation where they can support themselves and their families with no income.

Though I didn't apply for that many positions in the end, I got not one reply saying thanks but no thanks. These were applications directly to employers rather than through agencies and the funny thing was that this neither surprised nor bothered me. And that made me feel a bit sad. When did such disrespectful behaviour start becoming so universally acceptable?!

Unfortunately I don't have the answers to these problems, but I did want to share my experiences. It's a tough market out there and, as recruiters, it's easy for us to get caught up in our work and forget that we're dealing with real people: They have feelings, families and responsibilities just like us, and they are trying to doing their best. We can all show a little more compassion. Put yourself in the jobseekers shoes for a few minutes and ask yourself how you'd feel.