



### **The Death of Job Boards?**

**Paula Santonocito**

*Social networking has become such a hot topic at recruitment conferences these days that several industry experts are now predicting the end of job boards. But is this really likely to happen?*

#### **Research shows**

Not according to new research from WEDDLE's, a leading provider of job search, recruiting, and employment resources.

WEDDLE's has been conducting an annual Source of Employment Survey every year since 1996 in order to understand how people look for and find jobs. Peter Weddle, publisher, author, and commentator, shared results from the most recent study, conducted between Jan. 1 and Dec. 31, 2009, which have not yet been released, with *HRWire*.

It's important to consider findings in the context of how respondents arrived at the survey. The vast majority came from an ISP, with search engines Google and Yahoo in the number two and three sources, respectively. In other words, respondents did not arrive at the survey via job boards, as might be assumed.

Moreover, unlike surveys that look at a specific demographic, participants in this study are representative of the workforce mix in terms of generations. In addition, an almost equal number of men and women responded. It should also be noted that the survey population includes more than 1,800 people, a number larger than is typical for online polls; indeed, several in-depth studies from other sources are based on fewer responses.

Among the questions WEDDLE's asked is "How did you find your last job?" A full 21.7 percent of respondents, by far the largest number, said an ad on a job board. The second most-popular source, tip from a friend, isn't even close at 9.6 percent.

People are twice as likely to have found their last job on a job board than through any other source, Weddle tells *HRWire*.

Newspaper ads come in at number three, with 8.4 percent, and a call from a headhunter is number four at 7.1 percent.

In the number five spot, however, is posting your resume on a job board, with 6.9 percent of respondents citing it as the source of their last job. What this essentially means is that, one way or another, 28.6 percent of respondents found their last job through a job board.

Where did social networking come in? One (1) percent of survey respondents said they found their last job using social networking.

This doesn't mean social networking isn't being used. An overwhelming majority of respondents, 72.1 percent, said they have used social networking but only a little, and 18.4 percent said they have used it quite a bit. When asked if it has been helpful, 71 percent said yes.

It might be easy to discount this data, in that it asks where people found their last job. After all, a last job could have been a while ago, right?

But consider the responses to the WEDDLE's survey question, "How do you expect to find your next job?" The number one answer is an ad posted on a job board, with 39.4 percent of respondents citing this method. In the number two spot is posting a resume on a job board, at 13.3 percent. Combined, these top two sources equal 52.7 percent. Put another way, a majority of survey respondents expect to find their next job through a job board.

"One clear conclusion is that job boards work," says Weddle.

Then why is there a movement to dismiss them?

We are a society that leaps on the latest and greatest thing, Weddle says, and sometimes in the zeal to embrace the new, we lose sight of the tried and true resources that we have.

"Just because something is new and different, doesn't mean it's better," he tells *HRWire*.

And, in fact, Weddle points out that social networking is not new. Job boards have included elements of social networking since the late 1990s, except then they were called discussion forums.

### **Job board experience**

Be that as it may, as the online recruiting world evolves, it creates new customer expectations.

"Job boards are not dead, but like in any industry, they have to continually change and morph to meet the needs of their customers-both candidates and employers," says Ted Daywalt, president of VetJobs, a leading employment site for military veterans.

He tells *HRWire* that as of April 5, VetJobs had 38,279 jobs posted, which is an increase of 40.76 percent over same day last year. "If job boards were dead, VetJobs would not be seeing this type of increase," Daywalt says.

Even though VetJobs has an excellent reputation, as evidenced by numerous awards, it continues to improve upon customer offerings. To meet the needs of employers, the site is adding a new candidate screening capability to give employers better qualified candidates. It is also enhancing its OFCCP compliance suite of services.

To improve the candidate experience, VetJobs recently expanded the Employment Assistance section of the site, adding many articles. VetJobs is also the only job board to provide a comprehensive listing of all legitimate U.S. based job boards. Meanwhile, VetJobs Career Advisor, a tool that helps candidates find direction in their careers, gets heavy usage.

VetJobs is taking advantage of social networking sites as well, setting up pages and information on LinkedIn, Plaxo, and Facebook. Unlike some who run job boards, Daywalt has embraced the social Web. "It's to the job board's advantage to incorporate social networks into their process," he says.

The various changes appear to be a winning combination. Candidate traffic at VetJobs in March was up 55 percent over same month last year.

## **Eulogy**

So, given VetJobs' statistics and WEDDLE's survey findings, *HRWire* asked Daywalt why recruitment professionals persist with the notion that job boards are history.

"Some of the people with whom I have discussed this topic like to substantiate their argument by pointing out how many job boards have folded. I do not think that argument is correct as what they are actually observing is a shakeout in the industry, which always happens during down times. In several niche areas there were way too many job boards. An example is healthcare and nursing. The ones that could not grow and meet the needs of their customers are going by the wayside," Daywalt says.

"The death of a few does not mean the end for the many."

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