

## Getting Results with Your Online Resume

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From *Advanced Online Recruiting Techniques*

You're job-hunting; perhaps you've submitted your resume to a few career sites. But you're not getting the response you expected. Your problem may be how e-ready your resume is.

### **Technology's Role**

Recruiters have little free time and want relevant resumes fast. Up to now, employment technology has responded with software tools that search for resumes on the open Internet and in some proprietary databases, primarily using keywords. Ditto for the functionality on most major third-party Web sites focused on careers (portals) such as Headhunter.net where employers can register (and typically pay) to search resume databases.

The better career portals either ask recruiters to enter their criteria for ideal candidates, or if the recruiter has already submitted job descriptions, the portals use artificial intelligence to automatically ascertain which resumes would be appropriate. In either case, these resumes are sent to the recruiters and typically then imported into the company's own database.

So when a recruiter logs in to find out who might be good for Job Opening X, it's usually a process of matching recruiter keywords to keywords on the job-seeker's resume. If, for example, the recruiter wants a full-time software engineer who knows ASP, Javascript and DHTML in a SQL Server environment with experience in a financial company who can work in Boston, then s/he expects resumes to pop up that contain all those words and, ideally, a candidate already living in Eastern Massachusetts.

### **Step 1: Mass-Distribution**

Let's pretend you are such a candidate. How do you ensure that your resume is among those appearing on the screen of that recruiter? Get your resume widely distributed and it will move around the Internet. This deserves its own article, but in brief: Register and post your resume on as many relevant sites as you have time for, including the big general portals (I mention a few below) and niche sites for your industry and/or metropolitan area. Bonus if you upload to sites with free-access resume databases (see CXR's index)—lots of recruiters and resume software tools grab those resumes.

Services that bulk-email your resume to thousands of recruiters may help if you feel you're in a relatively high-demand field that's overcrowded with candidates (e.g., Information Technology), but be ready to pay \$20-\$50 and realize the recipients are mostly third-party recruiters.

If you are concerned about your current bosses discovering you job-hunting while doing their own resume searches, only use portals that "blind" your identity (look for links like "privacy" or "anonymity" when registering or in the site's resume builder tool). For portals that lack this, beware--or sign up for a free anonymous email account from Hotmail.com or the like and use that, your state, zip code and area code (followed by a fake number) as your only contact information on the resume.

### **Step 2: Building the e-Resume**

Using a Microsoft Word version of the lovely printed resume you've formatted so carefully can be the kiss of death online. Bearing in mind the keyword-dominated recruiting world you face, let's build the ideal e-

resume from top to bottom. The previous paragraph alludes to the contact information section. Omitting your name and street address need not hurt your callback rate. But the rest is important, because recruiters can (and do) search geographically using area codes, states and zip codes. For example, you could list:

Anonymous Jobseeker, Initial Contact Email Only  
Norton, MA 02766, (508)555-1212, [hiremenow@hotmail.com](mailto:hiremenow@hotmail.com)

Next comes the “Keywords” or “Skills Summary” section. This contains all the words that a recruiter might search by in order to find someone like you. Done properly, it’s a long paragraph that reads like a laundry list of typical job titles, technical skills (e.g., software packages and languages), soft skills (e.g., detail-oriented, good communications skills), certifications (e.g., CPA, SPHR), and—importantly—all their synonyms, with each phrase separated by a comma. See [www.recruiting-online.com/resume.html](http://www.recruiting-online.com/resume.html) for a sample.

Synonyms are vital because the phrase that *you* associate with a given skill might not be the same words that a particular *recruiter* uses to describe it. For example, you may call yourself a junior account executive, but in another company, “entry-level sales representative” is the term. So your keywords section should contain both phrases. To find synonyms, use the thesaurus feature in Microsoft Word or at [www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com) (assuming you don’t want to buy a paperback thesaurus book).

Acronyms also deserve this treatment. You may think of yourself as a VB programmer, but a recruiter less familiar with the jargon will search for “visual basic.” On many portals, unfortunately, that search would not uncover resumes with just “vb” in the body. To find the meaning of most any technical acronym (or the acronym for any technical phrase), visit [www.acronymfinder.com](http://www.acronymfinder.com).

If you think this section looks funny compared to the other sections of your resume, you might be tempted to place Keywords at the end. Don’t, especially if you have a multi-page resume. Some portals and company resume databases impose a maximum number of characters for storage. If your resume exceeds that length, the end gets chopped off. You wouldn’t want all those important keyword search-matching terms to be lost, right?

Other sections of an e-resume may look much like what you already have. However, if you’re missing any of the elements within the following sections, add them.

**Objective:** Optional, though I’ve seen some people use this heading for their Keywords section, and work the terms in this way: “I seek a position at [desired type of firm] needing an individual with the following characteristics: [keyword laundry list here].”

**Education** (should follow next section if work experience is greater): Include the institution name, the city and state, the degree (spell it out both ways -- e.g., “Bachelor of Arts / B.A.”-- note the space on either side of the slash), the month and year earned, the major and minor, the GPA and commendations (e.g., 3.6 GPA cum laude). Some recruiters search by all these things.

**Work Status:** Are you a U.S. Citizen, a Visa holder (if so, what type), or what? What’s your available start date for the new job? Want full-time, part-time, contract and/or internship? Have a security clearance? What level? Don’t assume that’s all obvious to recruiters.

**Experience:** Each job should comprise its own paragraph. Company name (or type, if you wish to stay anonymous—for example, “top-tier pharmaceutical conglomerate” if you don’t want to say “Pfizer”), City and State (or region, for anonymity), Job title, Start and end date, and Job duties (be detailed). However, realize many recruiters search for people who have worked at a particular firm. If that company name isn’t on your resume, your resume may be skipped.

**Skills:** Anything not covered in your keywords section, such as--important--listing the number of years of experience beside each skill. This is increasingly important in technical arenas where, say, a veteran is desired, but a junior programmer, even with all the right keywords, won’t do.

**Certifications and Licenses:** Even if you listed these in your keywords section, include them here with the name of the organization that issued each one, where that organization is located (city/state) and the completion date.

**Locations:** If you’re willing to move for the right job, include “relocate” somewhere on the resume. Even better, list the particular states and area codes you’ll consider. Recruiters search for all of these!

**Honors and Activities:** Special awards or recognition, volunteer work, etc., all makes you look more well-rounded. It’s OK to toot your own horn to help stand out.

**Salary (or Compensation) Requirements:** If you really do have minimums, put those here (break out annual base salary from bonuses or stock options). Otherwise, call it “Desired Pay” followed by an amount and indicate if that’s yearly or hourly.

References: “Available upon request” is sufficient for printed resumes when you’re trying to reduce the page count, but if you don’t require initial anonymity, it doesn’t hurt to include references on an e-resume.

Last but not least, eliminate boldface, italics, any unusual or small (under 10 point) fonts, bullets or other special characters, unless the site you’re using specifically supports them. Otherwise, they can only trip you up by preventing the resume from being read properly by the database.

### **Resume Builders of the Portals**

If you do the above, using the top portals’ resume builders (not to be confused with their job search agents--another useful tool) will be a breeze—you can just copy and paste. Otherwise, their builders will take you through it all step-by-step. However, expect to spend 15-45 minutes online finishing.

The biggest problem with each portal’s resume builder is that the resumes are only available to recruiters subscribed to that particular portal’s resume database. It’s worth doing biggies like those below, but also create a public web page version of the resume (most ISPs include free web page space as part of your monthly fee, or use free services such as Geocities.com or Tripod.com). Ideally, register it on the major search engines (e.g. AddMe.com and SiteAdd.com are free) to increase the likelihood your resume is found by ‘Net searchers.

America’s Job Bank ([www.ajb.org](http://www.ajb.org)) has the least feature-rich resume builder of the top portals, though its Location section uniquely uses mileage radius for up to three specific zip codes (or three states or countries) to specify where you’d consider working. Contrast that with CareerBuilder.com’s differentiator: an interface where you can edit your uploaded resume on the Web with boldface, italics, underscore, bullets, alignment, font type and size tools.

Some portals, such as JobOptions.com and Monster.com, allow you to store multiple resume versions, and let you choose the appropriate one to apply for jobs you find on their site with just a mouse-click. This kind of targeting will help your results, and save you time if you apply for many positions!

Other portals, including Jobs.com, let you choose any one of about a dozen fonts and pre-set page styles to store your resume on their site. The latter is great because it automatically selects the employer’s desired style for whichever jobs you apply to via their portal. In the “email” function, type destination email addresses, a subject line and optional note. Those recruiters get the message with a direct link to view your resume online in your designated format. Monster sends the resume as a text file, and shows a history of where you’ve sent that resume version.

One site not among the top portals is HireAbility.com. Though geared to IT contractors, everyone may want to use it for its resume builder. You can upload your resume in MS Word, TXT, XML or RTF format, which populates their Resume Toolkit (quite accurately, I found). Add other data prompted by the toolkit, then download your resume in HTML, XML, PDF or RTF formats – even for use on your own site.

As technology improves and standards for job postings and resume data emerge (see [www.hr-xml.org](http://www.hr-xml.org) for actions by a leading recruitment industry consortium), keywords will be replaced by more accurate data matching systems. In the meantime, however, a keyword-heavy e-resume, widely distributed, in combination with searching for jobs and applying, can dramatically improve your online results.

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