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Should Executives 'Blast' Resumes to Employers?

By Eileen P. Gunn

Flash! Zap! Ping! Faster than you can say "e-mail" you can blast your resume to hundreds, perhaps thousands, of recruiters and hiring managers who want to hear from ambitious, qualified candidates like yourself.

At least, that's what mass e-mailers tell candidates. The reality is more like that of the laid-off information-technology manager, who e-mailed 1,000 resumes without receiving a single reply. One reason for the low success rate is that his job-seeking rocket may have touched down in the mailboxes of people like Paul Glen, a solo consultant in Los Angeles, who has no plans to hire a colleague.

"I get a lot of these e-mails, usually addressed, 'Dear hiring manager,' " Mr. Glen notes. "I immediately purge them and block the senders as spammers."

The mass mailing of resumes is on the rise. About 24% of job hunters used e-mail services in 2002, compared to 12% in 2001, reports Peter Weddle, chief executive officer of Weddle's, a Stamford, Conn., firm that researches online job hunting.

He cautions that senior executives won't have much luck reaching retained executive-search consultants this way. For more junior candidates, "it's one part of a multifaceted job search," Mr. Weddle says.

The cost of an electronic mailing starts at around \$40 to \$50. When selecting a service, your best choice is one that recruiters or human-resource managers "opt in to" and that can target specific industries or regions, according to Mr. Weddle.

Yet the danger of contracting with such a service is that it encourages passive job hunting, says Steve Rothberg, president and CEO of CollegeRecruiter.com. "If it's used in conjunction with traditional networking and aggressive job seeking, then it can expand your reach," he says. "All it takes is one hit to make it worth the money."

Three Types of Services

Not all blast-mail services are alike. Here are the primary categories and the pros and cons of each.

1. Job-site mailers.

For basic and practical mailings, consider services that disperse profiles and resumes to the most popular all-purpose job boards, such as Monster.com and Hot Jobs.com. Two such services are Resume Rabbit and ResumeAgent. Resume Rabbit is the more expensive of the two (\$60, compared to \$40 for Agent), but it can send resumes to niche boards serving particular industries, such as ItJobs.net or SalesJobs.com.

According to Mr. Rothberg, some services in this vein try to charge more for extras, such as manually placing data on various boards instead of e-mailing it. But, he says, "I don't see the advantage. Do you care whether it's fully automated or manual, as long as it's done right?"

2. Company mailers.

In this category are services that send resume information to employers, supposedly to hiring managers. Some services might send resumes to corporate human-resource staffers and others to staffing-firm employees, while still more might mail resumes to a combination of the two. An example of this type of firm is ResumeXPRESS, which is owned by Workstream Inc., a Kanata, Ontario, maker of software that automates the hiring process.

While some executives will delete such e-mails and blacklist the people who send them, corporate HR professionals appear to be ambivalent toward mailings from these services. "I wouldn't not consider a resume just because it came in this way," notes Carol Martin, a career coach based in Burlingame, Calif., who also reads resumes for corporate clients.

However, not having to deal with resumes that arrive this way may be why HR executives don't object to the tactic. "If it's addressed to me, I look at it. But if it says 'Dear sir or madam,' I pass it over for scanning," says Robert Tenzer, senior vice president of human resources for Precision Response Corp., a customer-service outsourcing firm in New York.

At smaller companies, expect your resume to be zapped if it doesn't fit an immediate opening. But at large companies, such as Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu, which receives as many as 12,000 resumes weekly, an assistant usually scans them into a company database that's searched when a job comes up. "Our recruiters never see a resume until there's an opening," notes Mark Chain, national director of recruiting and human resources at the New York-based consulting firm.

In other words, this approach may be benign, but it's also a long shot at best. "It appears firms aren't even viewing applications placed via their own Web sites. I therefore can't imagine they're viewing any [received] via mass distribution," says Henry Bolte, a job-seeking IT executive in the New York area.

This strategy can backfire occasionally, too. Greg Antonelle, a recruiter with AimHire Associates LLC in Bedminster, N.J., says that he always asks candidates if they have applied to a certain company before he contacts it. "They'll say they haven't, and then the company will tell me they've gotten this [person's] resume 12 times in the last three months," he explains. "At that point I step back and tell [the candidate] to follow up themselves."

Experts agree that the biggest drawback to hiring a blasting service is lack of control after the "send"

button is hit. "One candidate's resume came to us 288 times, which starts to get annoying," Mr. Chain noted.

3. Recruiter mailers.

The last subset sends resumes only to headhunters. Four-year-old ResumeZapper.com has a bare-bones Web site, but both Messrs. Weddle and Rothberg recommend it.

Brian Alden, a co-founder of the Fredericksburg, Va., company, reports that the 10,000-plus recruiters on its mailing list completed profiles identifying their resume preferences. Job seekers complete an online form noting their preferred job categories and locales, and Zapper matches their resume to the recruiters.

Mr. Alden says the bulk of the site's recruiters signed up during the hiring crunch a few years ago and since then, at least 900 have opted out. Still, he argues that services like his have a role in today's job market.

"If you're looking for a job, more is better than less," he says. "You can't go to a job fair or networking event and touch 2,000 recruiters. So this is a way to network with people you haven't met yet."

Zapper's large database aside, recruiters' views of blasting services range from cynical to disparaging. One high-level search consultant even jokes that the subject lines of some e-mails remind him of personal ads.

"Resume spam guys? I hate 'em," says Robert Lambert, a managing partner in Irvine, Calif., of search firm Christian & Timbers' consumer-products practice. "I get 50 resumes a day, usually sent to the title I held two years ago." Mr. Lambert puts the unsolicited missives in a folder on his computer desktop. An assistant reviews them, adding any executive-level bios that might be of interest to the firm's database.

Mr. Antonelle and others occasionally read resumes that arrive via blasters, but say they'd question candidates who use them before forwarding their resumes to employers. One such query, according to a New York-based recruiter, is: Do they know where their resumes have been sent and if not, why? If you know where you want to work, she wonders, "why are you willing to cede control of your job search and of how your resume is received and the impression it makes" by using a blaster?

A good question, and not likely to be answered in a flash.

-- Ms. Gunn is a free-lance writer in Brooklyn, N.Y., who specializes in management and financial issues.

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