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New jobs Web sites cater to niche applicant pools



Jeffrey MacMillan/Capital Business - RemarkableHire co-founders Jamey Jeff, left, and Scott Rothrock. The start-up aims to help employers find skilled engineers and developers.

By Steven Overly, Published: April 15

As the nation's job market continues to improve, albeit more slowly than many would like, a fresh crop of employment Web sites are coming online to connect niche groups of job seekers with vacant positions.

RemarkableHire, a Northern Virginia upstart with software still under development, is among the latest outfits. Co-founded by Scott Rothrock and Jamey Jeff, the company aims to help employers scour Web sites and forums where techies congregate to find skilled engineers and developers.

“We strongly believe that the best candidates are not spending their time hanging out on job boards or frequently keeping their LinkedIn profile up to date and polished,” said Jeff, a former Discovery Communications executive. “The best folks are already in jobs and doing a good job at them.”

RemarkableHire is trying to break into a sector that is already competitive. Web sites that collect resumes and list job openings are plentiful and generally well-trafficked. They often contend, however, with swings in supply and demand based on the economic outlook, which in recent years has been less than stellar.

When unemployment is high, there's an influx of active job seekers and few opportunities. When unemployment is low, there may be a glut of available jobs.

The latter presents a far more fulfilling business proposition for job boards and employment services firms, which largely make money by charging a listing fee to employers, said Mark Marcon, a senior equity analyst at Robert W. Baird & Co.

"The model is paid for by the employer, so to the degree that there are more jobs that are available that need to be filled, that creates more demand," Marcon said.

"The stronger that the employment becomes, then typically you see more churn in the labor force because potential job seekers feel more confidence in leaving their current post," he added.

An online shift

The nature and scope of many new job boards has begun to shift, focusing on specific industries or types of workers, rather than the applicant pool at large, at a time when competition for jobs is particularly fierce.

Jeff at RemarkableHire said the company will focus its efforts on the tech sector, at least initially, in part because those jobs have weathered the economic downturn better than others.

"The tech sector has been fairly resilient, but even as the economy starts to turn around we think there will be even more robust hiring in this space as companies that may have pared back on their innovation ... are going to start putting more money into those sort of endeavors," he said.

RemarkableHire is not alone. Bethesda-based OppsPlace.com debuted in February to help minority job candidates and minority-owned small businesses secure work with large corporations, which pay between \$20,000 and \$40,000 a year to create online profiles, list jobs and screen applicants. Such companies as Strayer University, Capital One, General Motors and FedEx have already joined.

"The goal is to help companies find qualified diverse talent that can meet their needs and be great strong employees within the organization," said Kelli Richardson Lawson, president of OppsPlace. The site is the idea of Black Entertainment Television founder and RLJ Cos. Chairman Robert L. Johnson.

"It's absolutely critical to be differentiated and offer something that is meaningful and resonates with our target consumer," she said.

Social networks have created a new class of competitors that allow employers to target prospective applicants by their location, academic background and personal interests, among other information.

Marcon said these Web sites are quickly capturing market share. For example, his research firm projects LinkedIn will generate more revenue from recruiting than Monster.com by the end of the year.

"It does seem like the labor market is recovering, in fits and starts certainly, but the trend has been positive," Marcon said. "As that continues to strengthen there will continue to be more and more demand for the services that are provided by these various boards."

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