

CAREER AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICES SYSTEM AND APPARATUS

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED PATENT APPLICATIONS

[0001] This patent application is a division of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 12/059,728 filed March 30, 2008 which is a division of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 10/101,644 filed Mar. 19, 2002 entitled Apparatus and Methods for Providing Career Employment Services.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] This invention relates to network connected information systems, and, more particularly, to network connected information systems providing data processing applications in connection with optimizing individuals' employment searches and career opportunities, and optimizing employers' recruiting and hiring processes and decisions.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] Finding and hiring highly qualified employees or talent for specific jobs is one of the most important objectives an employer undertakes. In furthering the employer's objective of hiring the best possible employees, an employer would ideally have access to detailed information regarding as large a pool of talent as possible and the pool of talent would include prospective employees who are highly qualified for the particular job that the employer seeks to fill. Without such information, a great deal of time and expense is often expended by employers in connection with their recruiting and screening functions, while, nevertheless, achieving unacceptable results.

[0004] Traditionally, employers have found potential talent among new school graduates through school-related job counseling resources, in response to classified advertisements for particular jobs, referrals from existing employees, and through the use of third-party recruiters ("headhunters"). Each of these alternatives is inefficient, and some are costly, as well. Furthermore, employers' articulation of the skills they seek to hire are imprecise. Typically,

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school-related job counseling resources, classified advertising, and word-of-mouth referrals deal in generalities.

[0005] When an employer seeks to hire an experienced employee, the pool of talent, within which a search is conducted, is often limited to individuals who have already worked in a particular job within a particular industry. Although it may be meritorious that a prospective employee has current or prior experience in a particular job within a particular industry, individuals with experience in other jobs within other industries may possess the particular skills that an employer requires for a particular job. Yet there exists no efficient means for identifying such individuals in other fields who may possess the precise skills sought by the employer. Consequently, an employer's employment recruiting and hiring processes and subsequent operations would be greatly enhanced if the employer could efficiently and cost-effectively identify highly qualified talent both within and without the industry and occupational categories of the employer.

[0006] Another employment problem faced by employers is that they often do not know when a particular employment position may become vacant. Specifically, while it is a business courtesy to provide two weeks notice of termination of at-will employment, employees occasionally terminate employment with less than two weeks notice. Additionally, it may occur that an employee may be terminated for a reason necessitating less than two-weeks notice, and injury, illness, or death may cause an employee to become unavailable to perform his or her job function. Further, even if a full two weeks is available to hire a replacement employee, frequently two weeks is not enough time to hire a person, particularly for skills that are in high demand.

[0007] Another problem faced by employers is that they may stop searching for more highly skilled employee(s) than they have, if an employment position is currently filled. Consequently, an employer's recruiting and hiring processes, and subsequent operations, would be greatly enhanced if the employer could efficiently and cost-effectively identify highly qualified talent on a continuous basis. Accordingly, there is a need in the art for a practical continuous recruiting system.

[0008] Another employment problem faced by employers is that there is no uniformity among employers in how they communicate the requirements, compensation, and benefits of their employment positions to the public. As a result, it is difficult for talent to efficiently and cost-effectively identify the universe of employment positions for which their skills may be suited. Consequently, an employer's recruiting and hiring processes, and subsequent operations, would be greatly enhanced if the employer could efficiently and cost-effectively communicate detailed information about the skills and experience they require, and the compensation and benefits they offer, in a structured manner that facilitates the search by talent for optimal employment opportunities.

[0009] At the same time that employers are encountering difficulty in identifying highly qualified employees ("talent") to fill specific employment positions, talent is struggling to find the employers and employment opportunities that best match the talent's skills and objectives.

[00010] For talent, establishing and developing a career involves finding, researching, and targeting employers. Traditionally, talent has used the same sort of inefficient means to find employment opportunities as employers have used to find talent. Talent has generally relied on school placement resources, replying to classified advertisements, and word-of-mouth referrals from persons who may already be employed by a particular employer, a process that is as inefficient for talent as it is for employers. And traditionally, talent has relied on résumés to present their qualifications, yet there is no uniformity of résumés among talent. Talent generally must "tailor" their résumés to respond to particular employment opportunities, and talent may have only a limited understanding of the skills being sought by a particular employer. As a result, résumés are often unwieldy devices for employers to consider.

[00011] Also, it may be difficult for talent to determine which employers to target for potential employment, and which potential opportunity represents the optimal use of their skills. Accordingly, talent can waste much time and energy trying to find the right position and may, nevertheless, fail to find an optimal position.

[00012] Furthermore, it is difficult for talent to identify an appropriate format for expressing his or her skills to an employer. It is also difficult for talent to know what types of information to share with a prospective employer. Consequently, it is advantageous for talent to have the ability to maintain his or her résumé, including a detailed description of training, skills, and experience in a uniformly structured manner on both a current and cumulative basis (a “talent profile”).

[00013] Even when a person is employed in a desirable position, economic or other circumstances may cause the unexpected termination of his or her employment. Specifically, talent may be laid-off or terminated at an unanticipated time. Even if a talent is not terminated, economic conditions may cause his or her employer to go out of business. In some circumstances, talent will be provided with adequate notice or severance pay to allow for adequate time to seek other employment in the event of undesired termination. However, in some circumstances, there is inadequate time. Accordingly, there is a need in the job placement industry for systems that allow talent to be continually in the job market or at least ready to enter the job market on short notice.

[00014] Known methods of recruiting include the process by which a manager will prepare a job description, and send the description to a human resources (“HR”) department, which may check its files of résumés to determine if a qualified applicant has previously contacted the company. The HR department may also consider qualifications of internal candidates, and finally, the HR department may place a classified ad in a newspaper or trade publication. The company may also retain the services of a professional recruiter, who may have connections with suitable talent. In addition to classified ads in printed publications, other media may be used to publish advertisements for talent.

[00015] As distributed computer networks such as the Internet have become widely used, it has become possible to provide classified employment ads to mass markets via on-line databases and publications. Most major newspapers now have on-line editions that may be used to search classified ads for job positions. For example, the employment classifieds of the Kansas City Star newspaper may be searched on line at <http://www.kansascity.com>.

[00016] Such on-line databases provide convenient access by employers to an audience that is potentially beyond the scope of coverage of subscribers to the printed newspaper. The on-line databases also have an advantage to talent in that talent is better able to search for jobs by geographic location or keyword. Of course, both of those features are present in regular newspaper classified advertising. Nevertheless, on-line databases of classified ads share the same major drawbacks as printed classified ads. First, both are highly unstructured and without uniformity of job parameters. Second, both solicit highly unstructured résumés without uniformity from prospective job candidates. Third, both involve the placement of advertising in exchange for an up-front payment obligation by the employer/advertiser.

[00017] Because a cost is associated with posting a classified ad, there is an economic disincentive for employers to post jobs other than those for which there is a current (or currently expected) vacancy. Furthermore, the classified advertising model employed by newspapers and existing on-line employment sites attracts almost exclusively jobs for which there are current (or currently expected) vacancies. Accordingly, many fewer jobs are advertised than actually exist, and because much of the talent that is currently employed are not continually looking, the jobs that are advertised attract a much smaller pool of highly qualified talent than actually exists. This situation is bridged at significant cost to employers by their use of headhunters who recruit currently employed persons who may be willing to change jobs for a better opportunity, but are unwilling to continuously bear the burden of the search effort.

[00018] For employers with on-going recruiting and employment problems, the inefficiencies of existing mediums of finding the best, and, in many cases, sufficient talent for a job is a serious problem that contributes to on-going operational inefficiencies. Likewise, for talent who would like to have access to the complete picture of available jobs, the economic disincentive placed on employers to provide information about all of their jobs is a serious problem that diminishes talent's ability to optimize his or her career.

[00019] For employers, the classified ad system allows a company to develop a group of résumés of persons who have responded to ads. Employers may also consider classified ads

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