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(54) Title: INTERACTIVE EMPLOYMENT SYSTEM AND METHOD

(57) Abstract:

INTERACTIVE EMPLOYMENT SYSTEM AND METHOD

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION:

Field of the Invention

5 The present invention relates to data processing for business methods, and relates more particularly to interactive systems and methods for matching candidates to available job openings.

Description of the Related Art

10 With increasing frequency, the Internet is being used to match job candidates and employers. There were approximately 40 million job placement transactions which took place in the United States in 1999. It is estimated that about 10% of these transactions involved the Internet in some manner, e.g., a candidate finding a job posting online, or an employer finding one or more candidates online. With the prospects of increasing economic growth coupled with the surging popularity of the Internet, it has been estimated that the number of job transactions may increase to 48 million by 15 2003, with a corresponding increase in web-assisted transactions to 40% or more of all such job transactions.

 In typical configurations, a web hosting site or other type of addressable network device, allows candidates to store information relating to their education, employment history, job skills, personal references and the like. Candidates may also search listings of available job openings. These 20 sites additionally allow employers to search through profiles of a plurality of candidates to find those with desirable characteristics.

 In order to generate revenue, a company which hosts a job-placement web site typically charges employers a subscription fee or a flat fee to post available job listings for a pre-defined period of time and to search the site. Candidates, typically, are not charged a fee to store their profile 25 information or to search stored job listings. However, banner adds and the like are usually placed on

the site to generate advertising revenues that are generally dependent upon the number of 'hits' a web site receives over a predetermined time. Candidates typically greatly outnumber the number of employers who access a job-placement site. Thus, candidates who access the web site provide a source of revenue by generating hits, even though they are not charged subscription or transaction fees.

While this has been the predominant business model for job-placement web sites of the prior art, a subscription or flat fee rate may be unfair to certain employer-subscribers. For example, a particular employer who subscribes to a job-placement web site may find that the site does not attract a substantial number of qualified or desirable candidates in a particular field of interest. Such an employer-subscriber might then decide that the subscription fees are unjustified or an inefficient allocation of resources and thus, may choose to discontinue subscribing to the site.

Accordingly, there is a need for an interactive employment system and method which generates revenue on the basis of the number of qualified candidates that employers actually find through the use of a job-placement web site. It would be furthermore preferable to charge employers only for those candidates with whom they are particularly interested, rather than charging for all candidates that match a particular job description. In this manner, more employers may choose to continue using a job-placement web site incorporating this business model, since the amount of money they are charged is proportional to the number of suitable and desirable candidates that the employer finds through the site.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In order to address and solve certain of the foregoing shortcomings in the prior art, the present invention provides an interactive employment system which allows a candidate to enter profile data, including identification data, and to match their criteria and then view available job postings. The system further allows an employer to search profile data corresponding to a plurality of candidates and returns search results corresponding to candidates who match the search criteria. The search results can include a percentage match between each profile and the search criteria. The system can also withhold identification data corresponding to each candidate, such as the name and/or contact information for each candidate. After search results have been displayed, the employer can review certain portions of each candidate's profile data, such as previous and current job experience,

positions held, education level, and the like. The employer can then provide or authorize a payment for each candidate for whom the employer would like to receive the identification data, so that they may contact the candidate through their normal hiring process.

Upon submitting profile and identification data, candidates can specify that certain employers are to be excluded from receiving the identification data altogether. When non-excluded employers receive a candidate's profile, the candidate can be contacted via e.g., an e-mail message, a written letter which is generated and sent to an address designated by the candidate, a facsimile notification, an instant message transmitted to the candidate's browser, and the like.

Further features of the present invention include allowing the candidate to undertake a general skills test in which the candidate answers specific questions. The answers, in turn, may be used to generate a ranking or grading of the candidate. An employer can receive the ranking report for a candidate who undertakes the skills test in exchange for an additional fee.

In one embodiment, a candidate can further enroll in online training programs, such as a continuing education program, specific software application training and the like, to increase the candidate's skill set. A fee to participate in such online training can be charged. For a further fee, the web host or a third party can administer a test of the candidate's skill level related to the received training and provide the results of this test to interested employers upon payment of a fee.

The web site host can charge further fees for providing background checks, such as criminal history checks, credit checks and driving histories for a particular candidate. The web site host may also charge a fee to employers for the provision of payroll and other administrative services for a particular candidate.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWINGS

Further aspects of the instant invention will be more readily appreciated upon review of the detailed description of the preferred embodiments included below when taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, of which:

FIG. 1 is a block diagram of an exemplary network system for accessing a server which matches candidates to available job openings;

FIG. 2A is a schematic block diagram of exemplary components of a remote terminal of FIG. 1;
FIG. 2B is a schematic block diagram of exemplary components of the server of FIG. 1;
FIG. 3A is an exemplary candidate profile database stored by the server of FIG. 2B;
5 FIG. 3B is an exemplary job profile database stored by the server of FIG. 2B; and
FIG. 4 is a flowchart illustrating exemplary steps for locating an available job opening and suitable candidate according to one embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

10 Referring now to FIGS. 1-4, wherein similar components of the instant invention are referenced in like manner, a preferred apparatus for matching candidates to available job openings and accompanying methods for using the same are disclosed.

Turning now to FIG. 1, depicted therein is an exemplary computer network 10 through which remote devices 20, 30 may communicate with one or more host servers 12 via network connection 14
15 in any known manner. Although computer network 10 is preferably an Internet-based network, it can be also a local area network (LAN), a wide-area network (WAN), an intranet environment, an extranet environment, a broadband wireless network or other type of computer or communications network, such as those enabled over public switched telephone networks. Remote devices 20, 30 may be any computing device, such as a personal computer, a workstation, a network terminal or any
20 other device that can communicate with central server 12 over the network connection 14. Remote devices 20, 30 include one or more candidate remote terminals 20a, 20b and one or more employer remote terminals 30a, 30b as described further herein below. Server 12 may include any number of computer servers which cooperate to maintain the system of the present invention and perform the methods for using the same.

25 In one embodiment of server 12 maintains a web site which is hosted on the Internet. A candidate or employer communicates with the server 12 through remote terminals 20, 30 which can be equipped with hardware and software that accommodates Internet access over network connection 14. Alternatively, the server 12 can host a bulletin board site or a separate community of network servers, such as those maintained by AMERICA ONLINE. In that case, a candidate or an employer
30 communicates with the server 12 by dialing directly into the server 12 using the appropriate remote

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