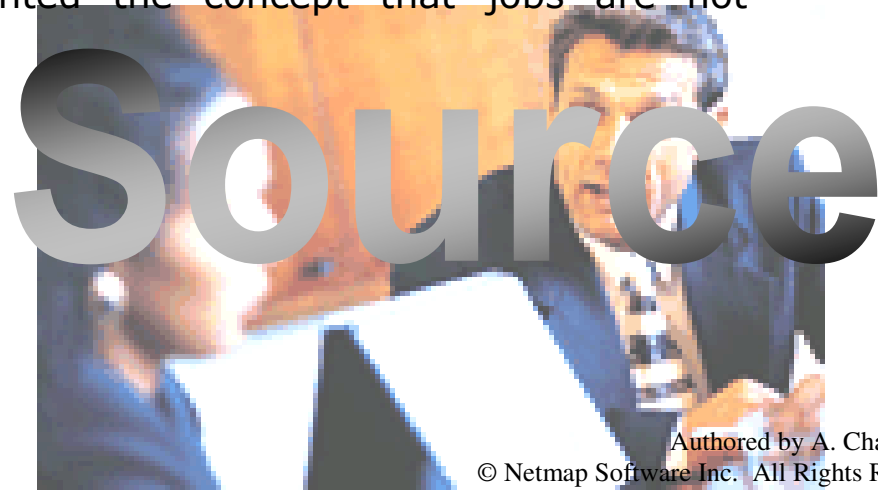


---

# The Trusted **'Much complicated, the way of the Seeker of Jobs is!'**

A long time ago, in a market not too far away, job seekers were inundated with just about everything they could possibly want. Those who could market or even show they had internet skills were given free reins in their job opportunities. Of course, we learned our lessons soon after. The jobless recovery has led to a primal decay in an obscure portion of most applicants' minds and has imprinted the concept that jobs are not available. There has been a glass or perhaps diamond barrier that has been formed in the minds of job seekers and employers alike. The internet has added to this invisible shield for job seekers in finding jobs.



### **Where be the galaxy, tell me young paduan?**

As can be seen by the latest statistics from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), an estimated 9 million people are currently unemployed as of August 2003. The BLS also submits a separate report where the number of "discouraged" workers that encompasses both discouraged and workers who wish to work but are not seeking due to various reasons including family problems, health, etc. totals over 5 million additional workers. Although these statistics are not hard and fast - since they are based on household inputs, surveys and polling, for a relatively large size sample they are adequate and provide accurate suggestions as to the real state of the job market.

More recently in the news, we can see a small upturn in the number of small businesses with improving sales vs. declines. As small businesses comprise a large percentage of the workforce providers (given over 16 million employers in the United States), we can see possible improvement in the job market, but it is likely that job seekers will remain disheartened.

*From the job applicant's perspective there is rarely a moment that passes when they aren't concerned about what happened to the last resume they had sent in to Big Company.*

### **Feel the Flow**

Today's tried and true method of searching for a job has deteriorated from the techniques used in the past, especially those of the internet job boards and fast email communication techniques. From the job applicant's perspective there is rarely a moment that passes when they aren't concerned about what happened to the last resume they had sent in to Big Company. Instead of seeing a viable response when they follow-up and pick up the phone to the HR people at Big Company, they are greeted with cold, disheartening responses that lead to further discouragement as they try to find a living. Even with supportive comments, job seekers usually know when they're not wanted. How many

job applicants see the automated response email or don't even receive an email to their applications online now? Considering the current status of the industry, this can be seen as highly predictable. Professional courtesy has almost vanished due to the difficulties in maintenance. It was inevitable that the job boards and HR services would begin a fight head-to-head against resume distribution services online. In many cases, both are one and the same, generating business from the employer's money and the job seeker's time. Just peek a little bit at some of the complaints listed on the job seeker forums that are active. A good forum is the Vault, where job seekers are generally in the upper middle class or higher, have had decent jobs, are usually college graduates, and complain vehemently about the "the black hole". The average belief that their resumes are literally falling into an abyss may just be true.

Given the incident rise in job board mania, the increased numbers of internet savvy users of these boards, and the rise of various automated distribution services that send resumes to every human resource access point on the net, we have seen a bottleneck of highly untargeted information. As the most efficient job seekers are turning to networking and firms that use networking techniques to find positions, the myriad of resumes coming in the email must undergo extensive filtering to evolve into viable lists of candidates for positions. The expenditures here are enormous, especially for the technical sectors.

**There is no try, you must! Network that is.**

This entire process had led to a general disbelief in the effectiveness of anything but networking as a proven technique. Less than 6% of jobs are found through the internet (Drake, Beam, Morin study 2003). However, job seekers plow their resumes into these job boards despite limited results. Organizations such as Monster.com claim over 800,000 available positions in their database, and surely some of them must be valid, unfilled, and the perfect fit. The job seeking community however, seems to have already discounted this method as a routine with unreliable responses. They will do it because it's easy. To click a button and distribute a mass email to thousands of recruiters and HR offices is far easier than actively pursuing specific target companies. It's simple and they bet on a lottery with the hopes that the filtering software

can validate their filtered keywords. Job seekers relying on personal networking have validated the proven technique but now face the hurdle of getting through to the decision makers within an organization - the hiring managers. Many have set about this task with diligence.

### **Your Target You Must Seek. Find and Concentrate.**

The hiring manager is a key point person and in the eyes of the average job seeker, the HR unit is only an obstacle. Not to be disconcerting to the average HR person, but applicants view HR people as barriers to entry. The applicant doesn't examine the value to the organization until they've been hired (nor can you expect them to). However, this process generally extends the efforts of the job seeker to circumvent HR completely and target the hiring manager in their job search. It is extremely difficult for some HR staffers to complete their tasks in finding appropriate candidates in this fashion, but there's no way around it. The hiring manager is the mark and they will be the prime focus in a competent job search.

So how does the job seeker reach the hiring manager? What is the most effective way? A precept known in some circles is that of "Trusted Sources". Hiring managers rely on trusted sources. Let me repeat that - Hiring managers rely on trusted sources. Clearly, who is the trusted

*The problems for HR includes how to establish that trust factor with the decision makers within the organization.*

source for the average hiring manager? The top three are a close personal friend, a trusted colleague in the same company, and the manager's boss in that order. Unfortunately, in most organizations, human resources is not much higher on the trust list than a database referral. When the job seeker employs personal networking techniques, he will most often take advantage of personal contacts to find an introduction to the hiring manager, bypassing HR altogether.

This can sometimes be highly disconcerting, but that's an essential ingredient in a social structure of any sort, people will usually rely on someone they trust before they rely on anyone else. Of course, some companies have highly trusted HR departments that can always recruit top notch talent - but these are exceptions rather than the rule.

Let me give an example of how this fits in the business world: John is a hiring manager. He receives a stack of 10-20 resumes from you (an HR manager) that are carefully filtered and screened for the requisition that he submitted. He receives a phone call from a good golfing buddy about someone he knows that would fit the position well. He then receives a message from his boss in his email about another person that he should look into. If John is the average 60-hour workweek project manager, he'll be looking first at his friend's recommendation, his boss's recommendation, then will skim through the stack that you gave him rapidly and maybe select one or two of them to interview. The effective personal networker is the one who makes sure that John receives their resume through his friend or his boss - NOT through HR.

### **The Death of the Star Potential Employee**

John's example is just a typical scenario with realistic observations. For the hiring manager to completely put his faith in another individual for a recommending a candidate for a position that he is personally responsible for brings a basic dilemma in recruiting to the forefront. How much of a "Trusted Source" is the HR staff? The job seeker still remains in his own dilemma and world of doubt as she puts forth all her energies trying to circumvent the gatekeepers in HR to reach the decision maker on the other side of the corporate information fence. HR remains the "evil empire" to the job seeker as is so vividly displayed by the efforts of our favorite HR character in the Dilbert® comic strips.

The problems for HR includes how to establish that trust factor with the decision makers within the organization. It also includes building external relationships with potential employees and being able to attract the most talented to join. This conflict resolution remains at the forefront of an epic struggle between good and evil, right and wrong, unemployed and HR. Well, maybe not that epic, but definitely

disturbing. The job seeker remains knee-deep in a complicated series of steps, with many unknowns about the inner workings of a corporate structure and hierarchy. Following protocol alienates the average job seeker, nullifies their efforts, and reduces their incentive to join, whether they are talented individuals or not.

In many ways, Human Resources, with broad leverage over the internal structures at a firm can make the application process easier, more courteous and less impersonal if they haven't already by introducing both sides, hiring manager and potential employee to each other as a facilitator if not an intermediary. The employee still remains the most critical resource for most organizations and to find the best resources takes an effort that is highly personal. People will only deliver if they know the other side isn't carrying a light saber. The trusted source factor applies to both sides, but in many cases it is sorely missed. My question to you as an expert in managing human resources is should you not be a trusted source for those seeking employment as well? If services are offered to make it easier and more effective to establish new employee relationships there is no doubt that increased productivity will follow. Regardless, HR is at worst just above used car salesmen, and at best looked upon as a necessary evil by many - partially because of the 'gatekeeping filter function' mythology that has evolved over time. Maybe it's time to look towards building HR as a more personalized service rather than limited to the ineffective job boards and techno-hype that come with them. Hopefully you will find the path of the Job Seeker to be more enlightening. May the trusted source be with you!



Mr. Ananda Chakravarty has been a systems developer for many years working at firms such as Raytheon, and e-commerce companies. After completing an MBA he has concentrated efforts on development of organizational structure, analysis of resources, and developmental focus on tools to enhance employee productivity, placement, and morale. Most recently he has been involved in the development of specific software tools to assist job seekers in managing relationships and organizing a powerful job campaign. The latest tool offered is the CVTracker Personal Network Management system. You can read further material regarding this topic at [www.cvtrack.com](http://www.cvtrack.com) as well as examine the resource guide with respect to the power of personal networking. If you would like to contact Mr. Chakravarty, direct email to [achakravarty@cvtrack.com](mailto:achakravarty@cvtrack.com).