

Protect Your Resume

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When, as now, the professional labor force experiences a tight market, the need to protect your identity, while doing what you can to enhance your job prospects, must be given serious consideration. That said, if you don't want your resume to fall into the wrong hands, you'd better be careful where you send it.

I am amazed at how many attorneys, without a thought, send their resumes to blind ads in search of employment. I know that they would never freely send the contents of their wallet to unknown persons or entities. Yet, so many give little or no thought to freely sending their resumes, filled with personal and professional information, which really should be viewed just as confidential, if not more so, than the contents of their wallet.

Take the attorney who is working for a firm and wants to make a move. She no longer likes where she is working; she wants to find something else, but understandably, she doesn't want her current employer to know she is looking. What does she do? Surprisingly, more attorneys than you might suspect send their resume to blind ads (i.e., advertisements where the poster's identity is not disclosed) on Craigslist and other job search sites, with absolutely no idea who is receiving the resume, what those parties are going to do with it or who might find out that they are looking for a new job.

We live in a different age. An age filled with shadowy persons and organizations that are constantly on the prowl for confidential information. Some are parties intent on identity theft, while others work within the confines of the law to gain access to personal information at no cost, with the sole intention of adding the information to a database.

Some unscrupulous employers post blind ads, soliciting attorney resumes, only to thereafter contact a recruiter to request their help in the selection and recommendation of a candidate. Then, when the recruiter has used her knowledge, expertise, contacts and skills to select and recommend a candidate, the prospective employer advises the recruiter that the candidate she has recommended just happens to already be within their database as apparent justification for not paying the recruiter's fee or, at a minimum, entitling them to a discount. While a generally unsuccessful ploy, the tactic, as should come as no surprise, also results in the souring of relationships and the destruction of what might otherwise have been an excellent collaboration among all parties concerned.

Given the above, here are some things that you might want to think about as far as protecting your resume, controlling unintended release of personal information and control of the marketing of your professional identity during a job search.

First, do not assume that every job application you come across is legitimate. While many are, always keep in mind the value of your personal information and whom you want to provide your information to.

Second, take at least a fraction of the time that it took you to prepare your resume to research the company or firm that posted the employment solicitation you are prepared to respond to. As perfect as the job might sound, and as qualified as you might think you are for the job posted, if you cannot tell who is soliciting your resume, do not send it. Carefully examine the advertisement to determine if it refers to a job posting code or otherwise identifies the firm or recruiter who posted the ad, or provides a means of investigating who they are. Prospective employers typically prefer receipt of a faxed or emailed resume and cover letter, and understandably, prefer not to receive calls from eager applicants. Credible ads, posted by reputable recruiters and firms, generally identify the poster or enable an applicant to look up exactly who the recruiter or prospective employer is by name, email address or otherwise.

Third, seriously consider working with a well-regarded recruiter before you ever think of sending a resume to a blind ad. Much like the proverb, "For want of a horse a kingdom was lost," there is something to be said about working with a reputable recruiter, and how the failure to do so can lead to damaging one's reputation. Quality employers know the value of working with a recruiter and the benefits that they offer through their knowledge of the marketplace, their familiarity with potential candidates, client needs and expectations, and the qualities, credentials and experience that renders one candidate better-suited than another.

The above said, attorneys that freely send their resumes to unknown recipients have no idea of the potential repercussions of their actions, not to mention how badly it looks to have multiple copies of a resume floating all over the place.

Take the attorney that has sends his resume to countless blind ads without success and then elects to seek the assistance of a recruiter. The recruiter promises not to identify the attorney or send his resume to anyone without first getting the attorney's advance permission. Unfortunately, because law firms and other business entities often hold onto resumes received during the running of a previous blind job posting, whether legitimate or not, the act of having previously sent out resumes to anyone and everyone can come back to not only hurt and devalue the job seeker's reputation, but likewise hurt the reputation of the recruiter.

There are also the unscrupulous recruiters who run ads claiming that they are recruiting for a particular client when, in fact, an actual job does not exist. While the ad claims, for example, an imminent need for an attorney with particular credentials, the true purpose of the job posting is to collect resumes for future consideration or to build up a database of high-caliber resumes that can be supplied to potential clients as examples of the type and caliber of candidates they can expect to be introduced to if they utilize the particular staffing service.

A quality recruiter will always identify the party to whom they wish to send a candidate's resume. Attorneys that have made the mistake of previously sending out resumes to blind ads are strongly urged to inform any recruiter that they subsequently elect to work with, up front, of when and to what extent they engaged in such practice. An experienced recruiter can describe the potential ramifications of said practice and explain how such a situation can be professionally dealt with while preserving and protecting reputations. In summary, to be successful in the job market, first and foremost, do what you can to protect your resume as you would the confidential contents of your wallet. One of the best ways to do this is to locate and work with a bona fide recruiter with whom you can share your past job search efforts, among other things. Dealing with a reputable recruiter can be of immense value. A quality recruiter will keep your resume confidential and never supply your resume or name to anyone without first getting your advance authorization. Also, while a recruiter's main function is to match employers with well-suited candidates, recruiters are also an excellent source of employment advice, resume tips, information about prospective employers and the job market as a whole. Lastly, only provide your resume to people and entities you know or can verify, and never send your resume to blind ads that can come back to haunt you months or even years later.

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