

The Changing Landscape of the Job Search

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The job search process is a rapidly changing landscape, drastically different than even a decade ago, with implications for both employers and job seekers. New technologies, more data, and a changing culture across job markets have created sweeping changes within the process. From job posting boards, to social media sites (SMS), to integrative software and metrics, these paramount changes have stemmed from factors of access and magnitude. Online modern recruitment tools garner larger applicant pools through their remote accessibility and ease of access, therefore generating increasingly large datasets in the form of resumes, cover letters, and candidate profiles. As the job search process continues to evolve with the introduction of these new technologies and the integration of existing technologies, issues of objectivity, the personal versus the impersonal, the visibility of competition, and other ethical issues remain.

The History of Job Hunting

In early human hunting and gathering societies, the goal of survival inhibited the existence of any form of a job search or full-time craft specialization. As complex human civilizations developed throughout Egypt, Greece, and Rome, the need for specialization and craftsmanship grew, introducing the role of the apprentice to train and learn the craft. The system of apprenticeships, similar in some ways to the modern internship, continued for hundreds of years based off known interpersonal relationships and family tradition (SparkHire, 2015).

Sweeping changes occurred in the 1800s, with the immergence of the concept of a job search during the industrial revolution, as the need for a large pool of low-skilled workers increased. With technological developments in transportation, including nautical travel and the completion of the first United States railroad in 1830, access of job positions to a wider pool of potential candidates increased (SparkHire, 2015).

In 1921, the first known job interview was born out of the publishing of a written test of Thomas Edison's by the New York Times that was designed to evaluate the knowledge of candidates through questionnaire. The development and widespread adoption of the telephone later on in the century, officially changed the traditional face-to-face model of the interview and job search (SparkHire, 2015).

The adoption of the interview as a means by which to evaluate potential candidates only increased with the continued development of new technologies, such as the fax and the Internet, which continued the trend of a process absent of any personal connection, allowing remote access and higher need. In 1983, faxing applications to potential employers was all the rage, until the rise of the Internet in 1999 with the first job board appearing online soon after. Videoconference technology went public in 1995, and the early 2000s saw the launch and growth of social media marketing sites such as LinkedIn in 2003. Nowadays 66% of job seekers use social media sites during their job search, and 89% of job seekers report to use their mobile devices in their job search (Jobvite, 2015).

In conclusion, increased skill specialization, advancements in transportation, the birth of the job interview, the rise of social and digital media, and the integration and adoption of modern technologies have changed the job search landscape and increased access and magnitude over time (SparkHire, 2015).

Increased Access and Ease of Access:

Overtime, new technologies such as the telegraph, the telephone, the fax, the Internet, and most recently mobile networking sites, have not only transformed larger society as a whole, but have also had specific and lasting effects on the job search process. Kuhn (2014) found that the

dramatic expansion of online job sites has been closely paired with the general decline in associated communication costs across the Internet.

Increases in transportation and technology have erased the traditional obstacle of location. Access to employers and position posts online has allowed for potential candidates to apply remotely with little to no information on the potential company or position. There has been a specific recent trend towards the use of mobile devices in the job search, creating unprecedented ease of access to public job search databases, employment apps, and individual job postings (Kuhn, 2014).

The levels of access that have been a resultant factor of online technology, continue to generate ease of access and increase magnitude by way of 1) eased access to a large number of the same or similar position titles and job descriptions, allows candidates to use slightly modified generic cover letters to apply to dozens of jobs within short time spans, generating record applicant pool sizes, and 2) new software integration, allows for seamless integration, for example, a feature on LinkedIn allows for a one-click job application process, whereby job seekers can link their profile information directly to job application forms, auto-filling the desired entries with the candidates online profile information automatically.

The changes in the job search are not only limited to the job seeker. Recruiters and human resources departments have seen exponential growth in their applicant pool, adopting new technologies to help them sort, organize, track, and rank applicants. The new technologies and rise of social media have offered unparalleled access to the professional and private lives of potential candidates. Social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, are being used more and more by recruiters to gage if a candidate would be a “good fit” for the company. New communication technology is “challenging traditional self-presentation

strategies and behavior,” as intentional image construction and branding efforts of the individual are becoming more difficult as increasing numbers of information sources, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, are not only available, but widely seen by recruiters as fair game fair game to gage candidate quality and fit online (Rui & Stefanone, 2013).

There has also been a trend towards informal recruitment of highly desired “passive” candidates, or individuals that are not currently on the job market or job seeking. The idea of recruiters functioning as “talent acquisition,” has encouraged more and more recruiters to use social media profiles to actively seek out talented passive candidates before they go on the market, with these “passive” candidates being tracked anonymously or openly. Data shows that LinkedIn can increase your chances of landing higher-paying jobs, as hiring managers aim to fill positions high on the pay scale. This also suggests that it’s much more likely to land a job for higher-level managerial jobs than for low-paying jobs using LinkedIn (Brooks, 2012; McDonald, Benton, & Warner, 2012).

Increased Magnitude of Response Rates

As access increases, so does the magnitude of the applicant pool, and subsequently the quantity of applications. Marketing, finance, government, and hospitality sectors are more likely than average to receive over 250 applications. 51% of specific job or position postings receive over 50 applications (Jobvite, 2015).

Job boards, such as Monster.com and Indeed.com, have fueled an unprecedented increase in the magnitude of applicant pools, from their inception in 1993 (SparkHire, 2015). Large job search engines have allowed job seekers to access job posts from recruiters all over the world, searching by location and job title. The impersonal nature of the online job search, combined

with increasing competition within international job markets, have fueled higher application output, especially for entry-level candidates or individuals with small or inapplicable professional networks, resulting in overall larger applicant pools.

Social Media Sites, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, and Twitter, rose in prominence throughout the 2000s, with today, 96% of recruiters reporting to utilize social media marketing in the job search process (Jobvite, 2015). Social media sites, similar to job boards, fuel the generation of large candidate pools through their unprecedented physical factor access, and ease of application processes.

The Development of Technology and Data Analytic Software

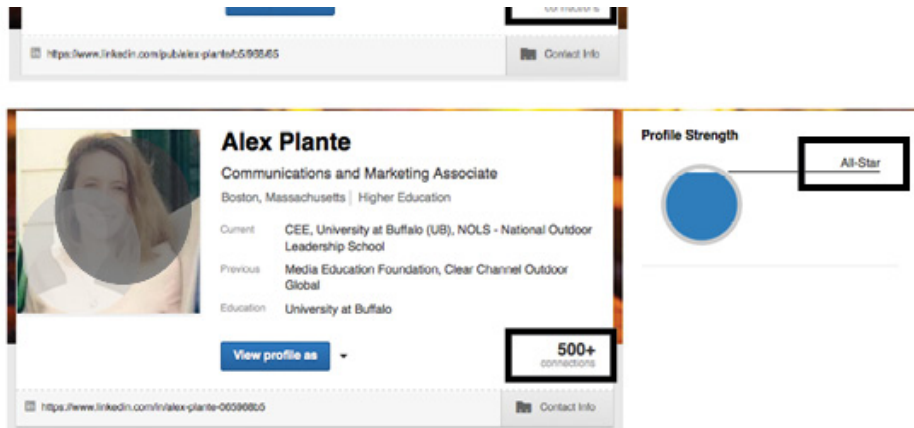
Online recruiting often generates large data sets of hundreds of submitted resumes that create a need for software to electronically organize, classify, sort, and rank potential candidates. In fact, 72% of recruiters believe that data analytics is important to the modern hiring process (Jobvite, 2015). As a result, there exists a plethora of different resume parsing software systems available on the market today. The increased magnitude in response rates has sparked the need for software to electronically organize, but often run metrics and statistics on the applicant pool in order to pair down qualified candidates.

One of the most widely utilized data analytical tool that is used today is any type of resume parsing software that has the ability to look for specific keywords, skills, or phrases delineated by recruiters, to identify relevancy and the level of qualification a specific candidate for a specific job posting. LinkedIn software integrates word-parsing software into a larger algorithm that ranks candidates for open positions (job postings).

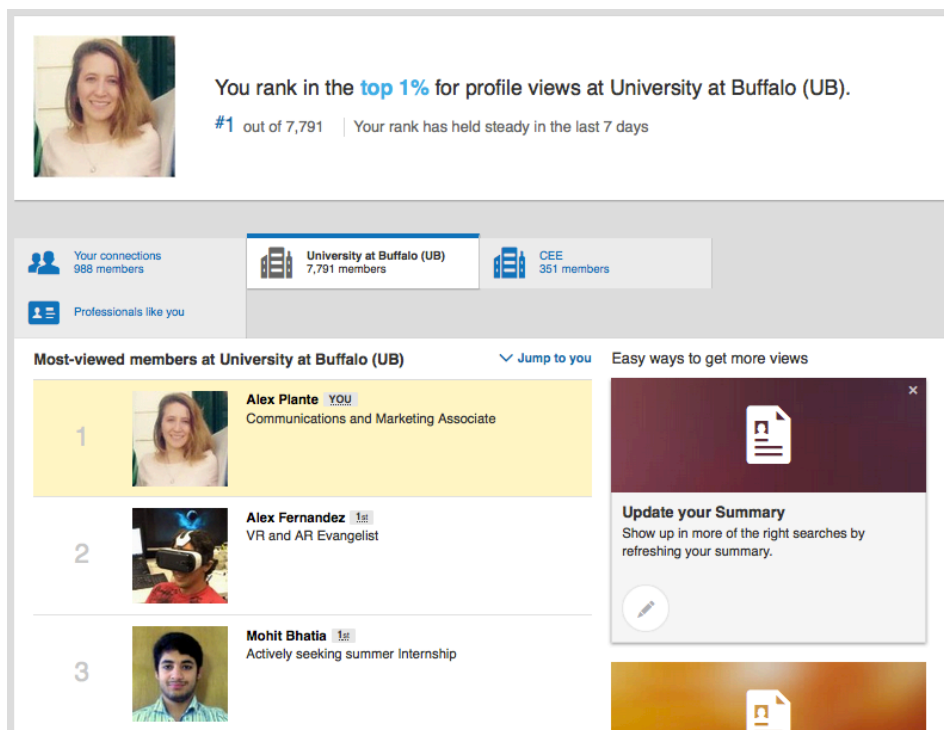
The specific algorithm of LinkedIn weighs different factors such as number of connections to the position recruiter, number of years of experience (seniority), education level, number of matching keywords, and overall profile strength (LinkedIn, 2015).



With the introduction of word processing software, seen above in the section “top skills,” it becomes statistically advantageous to have more words or complete more of one's profile to increase the likelihood of elevation in one's comparative ranking and appearance or relevance via search filters and within given applicant pools.



LinkedIn introduced a “How You Rank” feature in 2014 that utilized status anxiety to motivate individuals to completely fill out their profiles. More complete profiles equates to a larger generation of profit through targeted advertising in the human resources business. By appealing to users competitive sides, the tool allows users to visibly see how they rank in comparison to their fellow alumni, other company employees, and their overall LinkedIn connections (within their different networks) (Griswald, 2014).



Premium accounts on LinkedIn offer listing prominence in search results and to have the ability to be a *featured applicant* for specific job postings. However, it unclear whether this increased visibility offered by a “premium” paid account on LinkedIn translates into actual interviews and job offers.

The Changing Role of Recruiters and Staffing Agencies

Social Media Sites: LinkedIn is the number one social media site used by 87% of recruiters. LinkedIn Recruiter Lite software serves as a candidate search and talent acquisition tool that offers more robust filters to conduct searches, greater access to candidate profiles, the ability to post job positions (for an additional fee), the ability to track and organize connections and candidates, create project folders, indicate statuses, and set reminders (LinkedIn, 2015).

The Modern Recruiters Decision-making Process

The annual recruiting industry report entitled the Recruiter Nation Survey (2015) looks at industry trends in recruitment. 2015 results of that survey indicate that

1. Recruiters believe to be important:

88% “cultural fit”

87% previous experience

Education, gender diversity, and racial diversity are also seen as important factors to recruiters across the board.

2. Recruiters believe to be unimportant:

57% academic GPA

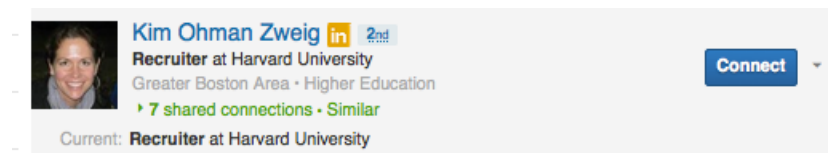
63% cover letter

3. On social media recruiters are most likely to notice:

1. Length of job tenure throughout past and present positions

August 2014 – Present (1 year 5 months) | Buffalo, NY

- ### 2. Mutual connections: this may suggest that one should seek out connects on LinkedIn despite advice of Forbes 2015 article “Having 500+ LinkedIn Contacts Means Nothing.” Social connections are key to the job search process. Research indicates that both strong and weak ties can be valuable during the search. In one study, weak ties were found to be connected to increased usage of the available search functions, thus generating more job leads for the user. However, it was found that strong-ties generated the highest number of job interviews and job offers for the individual (Garg & Telang, 2012).



3. Commitment to Profession organizations.

Companies



Media Education Fou...
Media Production
✓ Following



Brunswick Topsham ...
Renewables & Environment
✓ Following



The Forgiveness Proj...
Nonprofit Organization Management
✓ Following



CEE
Utilities
✓ Following



University at Buffalo ...
Higher Education
✓ Following



Housing Partnership ...
Nonprofit Organization Management
✓ Following



NOLS - National Out...
Higher Education
✓ Following



Prison Reform Trust
Nonprofit Organization Management
✓ Following

Schools

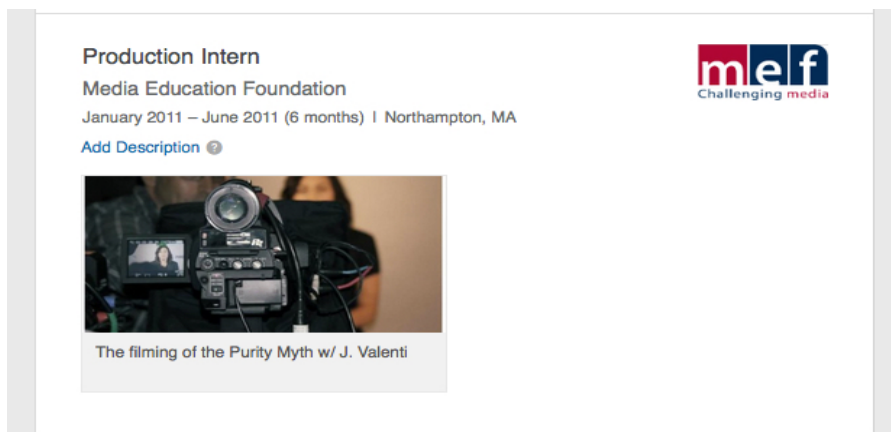


University at Buffalo
Buffalo/Niagara, New York Area
✓ Following



University of Massac...
Springfield, Massachusetts Area
✓ Following

4. Examples of written or design work, utilizing the multimedia capabilities of the platform. There is a move towards more visual elements in general, from the inclusion of profile pictures on social media sites, to the posting of multimedia images and videos on social media profiles, to a move away from the audio-only phone medium to the video medium for candidate interviews.



In the new age of visual elements, it is important to note that the Recruiter Nation Survey (2015) found that recruiters specifically view spelling and grammar errors as unacceptable in the age of spellcheck, and the usage of a “selfie” type photograph as ones profile picture.



Impersonal versus Personal

With a marked increase in access, magnitude, and competition, there are simultaneously impersonal and personal aspects to the modern job search process.

Communication

“For the first decade of the 21st century, the dominance of databases over narratives as a new logic of information order was exactly what distinguished digital platforms from other types of communication media (Dijck, 2013).” Sites such as Indeed and Monster.com have helped to fuel this increase in quantity over connection, epitomizing the idea of “the impersonal job hunt.” Job boards are characterized by their faceless nature created through the absence of narrative, with little candidate context or personal information available beyond the resume and cover letter.

A result of the large and rapid increase in applicant pool size has led to a widespread trend towards impersonal communication, with a seeming lack of integrity and break down in communication and response from recruiters as a whole. It is now accepted practice that job seekers will not receive communication back from a majority of organizations in which they have submitted their resume or job postings applied to through online job boards. The increased applicant pool sizes, generated by the level of access afforded by job board platforms, have made the message “no phone calls please” commonplace. The request for no personal contact, works to further contribute to the impersonal nature of the job search, and for the job seeker, places emphasis on quantity of application submissions over personal connections. Moving candidates through the different hiring stages, reviewing resumes, scheduling interviews, and performing phone screens are seen by recruiters as the top challenges to hiring efficiency (Jobvite, 2015).












Only 20% of recruiters plan to further invest in job posting boards in 2016, indicating a trend away from the ultra “impersonal resume era” characterized by Monster and Indeed.com, faceless hundreds of resumes with no additional data oriented software to help recruiters navigate through their new large data sets.

Social media sites recent involvement or foray into the job-hunting process has sought to reverse the impersonal trend of the job board, by introducing the appearance of a seemingly more personalized job hunt, complete with profile pictures and multi-media interfaces. LinkedIn’s interface overhaul between 2003 and 2012 shifts users away from the original spatially oriented interface back towards an interface centered on connectivity and narrative (Dijck, 2013).

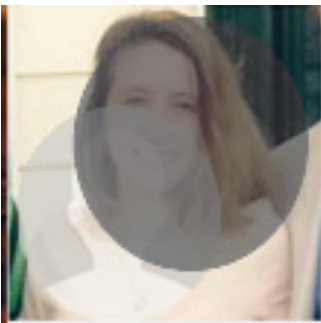
In addition, the introduction of the video interview, whether through Skype or specific video interviewing software like Sparkfire, are regenerating a more personal feel back into the modern job hunt, by including both visual and audio elements, while still preserving the remote nature of the process. However, video software is also able to introduce features such as one-way interviewing in which the prospective candidate films answers to predetermined questions without personal contact with the recruiting party, creating an unequal sense of personalization in the recruiters favor.

New integrative technologies and platforms are now available, and are being used by LinkedIn, and in coordination with other platforms and programs, helping to reverse the trend of poor communication, by allowing recruiters to generate automatic-replies to applicants. Jobvite software for example, allows job seekers to log onto a user profile that has tracking capabilities, affording them status updates of: new, in process, not selected, or closed. Integrative software is working to help recruiters effectively manage large response pools, and offer communication between recruiters and all respondents. However, it is important to note that much of the

communication generated from integrated recruiter software comes in the form of an impersonal, automatically generated response.

Jobvite			
Applications			
1 - 11 of 11			
Company	Title	Status	Date
 CMI, INC.	Marketing Communications Associate	Closed	11/05/2015
 HubSpot	Jr Associate Customer Demand Manager	Not Selected	10/12/2015
 peerTransfer	Marketing Associate	Closed	10/07/2015
 insight	Communications Specialist at Globoforce	Not Selected	10/06/2015
 Spotify	Data Curator	Closed	10/04/2015
 Pulse	Client Success Specialist- Client Marketing	Closed	10/02/2015
 wayfair	B2B Marketing E-Mail Associate	Closed	10/02/2015
 EDF	Program Assistant, Corporate Partnerships Program	Closed	09/30/2015
 wayfair	B2B Market Research Associate	Not Selected	09/30/2015
 OXFAM America	Coordinator- Communications and Engagement	Not Selected	09/21/2015
 HubSpot	Brand Content Producer	Not Selected	09/12/2015

The Photograph



With fewer and fewer resources being designated to online job boards, there is indication of a movement away from what could be characterized as the “impersonal resume era,” to a more public and integrative era that relies heavily on the use of social media. LinkedIn Premium boasts a feature that allows the candidate to enlarge their profile photograph in order to “visually enhance your profile (LinkedIn, 2015).”

There is also increasing emphasis on posting the “right” profile picture, and ideas about what ones profile picture communicates about oneself to potential employers.

This new trend will offer greater access to information about individual candidates, beginning with their picture. The inclusion of a profile picture, when applying on LinkedIn.com, has multiple ethical and cultural implications. The requirement to include a picture along with ones resumes is already a common and established practice in South Korea. The country is also known as the “Plastic Surgery Capital of the World,” and the practice of including a picture of oneself on ones resume is credited as one of the main driving forces behind that trend. It is cited as one of the main reasons why large numbers of individuals are seeking out body and facial modification procedures (Marx, 2015). The recent introduction of the photograph into the American job search process may similarly contribute to a narrowly defined sense of acceptable physical appearance, and the importance of adhering to those standards in order to secure gainful employment. Altering ones physical appearance through surgical procedure could, as seen in South Korea, transform from a culturally generated “want,” into a culturally generated “need” (Marx, 2015).

Deceit

The impersonal nature of the online job search has lead to a great degree of speculation over deceit within candidate applications. The potential for deceit is there, as recruiters do not personally know the candidates history and previous experiences, and do not have the time or resources to do complete background and source checks beyond the standard request for three references. Deception is the tactics that are used by candidates as a means by which to accomplish certain goals (Guilory & Hancock, 2012). Self-enhancing forms of deception are common, especially when the environment requires the individual to seek out positive self-

presentation. Self-enhancing lies are part of a larger modern-day branding campaign of the individual, an effort to manage how the self is conveyed publicly (Guilory & Hancock, 2012). Dijk (2013) proposes that the LinkedIn interface specifically caters to a need for professional self-promotion.

Deceitful or false information is often seen as a widespread problem. For example, a candidate's resume includes fudged dates of a job they were fired from, a candidate chooses not to disclose a large failed project, or a candidate makes exaggerated claims, including a skill or claim of experience that has little true merit. Findings of a 2012 study by Guilory & Hancock, found that the public nature and access of the general public to one's LinkedIn profile page affect the kinds of deception used, but not the overall frequency of deception. In comparison to traditional print resumes, online resumes on LinkedIn were less deceptive about prior work experience and responsibilities, but were more deceptive about their interests and hobbies.

The Future of Now

Competition

Increases in the sizes of applicant pools also increase competition, especially in tight job markets. Sites such as LinkedIn, provide more transparency than ever before on one's competition for any given position. The competition is now often visible, with sites like LinkedIn providing numbers and demographic information to not only the recruitment side, but also candidates about other candidates, and the applicant pool as a whole.

The increased competition comes at a time when self-esteem within the individual is most susceptible to change, which occurs during times of transition due to changes in perceptions of competence from new task and new reference groups (social comparison), changes in hierarchy of aspiration in domains due to environmental changes.

In a highly visible, comparison-oriented position, social media sites (SMS) have been notorious as general social platforms for fostering highly visible social comparison. Roadblocks in the form of social comparison are found to inhibit one from a positive self-evaluation (Harter, 1993).

Investment

It is projected that social media recruiting is the number one area in which recruiters plan to increase investment in 2016, with less investment in job boards and SEO technologies (Jobvite, 2015). Looking into the future, we may see overall communication of recruiters-to-applicants improve as social media platforms, such as LinkedIn, begin to integrate data mining and organizational software that allows recruiters to better effectively manage their applicant loads.

In conjunction with an increase in social media, there is an increased investment in all things visual. Multimedia materials on social media profiles are actively shifting the job search culture. The new culture is moving away from the audio-only phone medium, to a video medium, seen in the use of the video-interview for first round candidate interviews. The gaining popularity of Skype has fueled the creation of additional recruiter target software, such as SparkHire, which offers video interviewing technology such as atomized one-way interview templates that work to streamline the first-round candidate vetting process.

Old Fashioned Relationships versus New Online Connections

Despite recent emphasis put on these new emerging technologies and the importance of online platforms and profiles, 78% of recruiters still find their best quality candidates through referrals, indicating that personal relationships still reign supreme (Jobvite, 2015). Searching for a job through relatives and friends has been found to be a more effective search method in comparison to other methods (Kuhn, 2014).

Social connections formed online do not hold the same weight, meaning, and value as face-to-face interpersonal relationships developed outside of the realm of remote communication mediums. Social and professional networks, and intern-to-hire programs came in as second and third most popular means by which to obtain high quality candidates (Jobvite, 2015).

Conclusion

Job searching has truly evolved throughout human history. The job search process is a dynamic landscape that is rapidly changing to adapt and embrace the new technologies posed by the digital age. This digital age is characterized by new technologies, more data, and a cultural shift towards increased visibility, which is creating sweeping changes across the job search process.

Current research indicates that this ongoing evolution will continue, tending away from online job boards to social media sites. In a new era where emerging technologies employ algorithms and weighted profile features to rank and organize candidates, it is important to take the time to educate oneself on the basis of these weighting systems. Despite online technology seemingly being the future, it still lags far behind old-fashioned, face-to-face interpersonal relationships and direct referrals. Thus with implications for both recruiters and job seekers, the job search process is a dynamic and rapidly progressing process that merits attention.

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