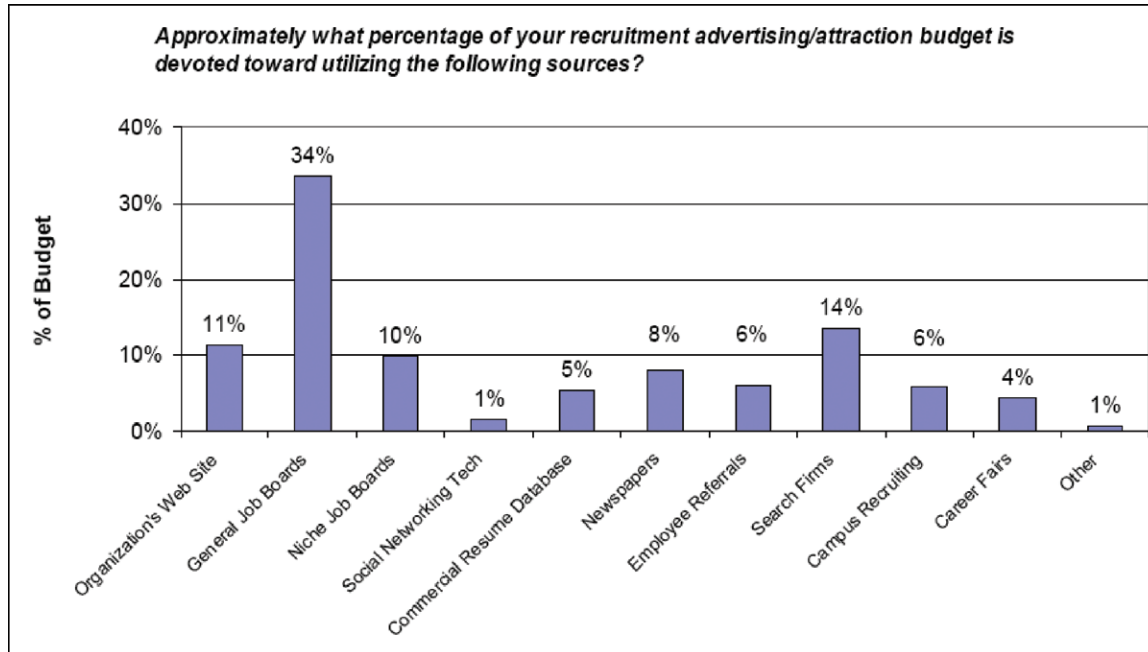


## 10 Tips to Improve your Online Job Postings

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There is no doubt that most organizations expend a majority of their recruiting budgets on postings with the major job boards. In fact, a recent survey sponsored by Direct Employers showed that the investment made on general job boards is significantly higher than any other sourcing mechanism (see table below). Despite the high investment level, the survey also found that general job boards ranked 7<sup>th</sup> on the source value index.



The job boards are set up for active candidates who are pursuing opportunities typically by industry, location, keyword, or area of expertise. Unfortunately, due to clutter, poorly written ad copy, and inaccurate placement, most job seekers will never see your posting. Upon casual review of postings on Monster, CareerBuilder and HotJobs, it's obvious why so many organizations are not getting the results they expect. Many issues are quick fixes, while others require a little more time. Below are ten tips to improve your use of major job boards and maximize your return on investment.

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## 1. Rewrite your Postings

The way your job posting looks, reads, and “sells” the position will make or break whether candidates apply. Think about it. Candidates can be wowed by your company collateral and career site. Then, they click on the posting and it is a boring list of requirements and mandatories – no different from their current position. If the posting is not compelling, you will lose candidates. Plain and simple.

Most postings are written like a requisition. In fact, most are simply uploaded from the ATS in requisition format. You want your ad to be the best on the site and you want your posting to read like the best representation of the position. Below is an actual posting from one of the major job boards and a good example of what *not* to do:

*Project Engineer/Field Engineer*

*Experience 3-5 years – Heavy highway, roadway, and site construction background. State DOT experience helpful. Full Medical benefits, Dental, 401(k), generous vacation allowance, salary commensurate w/experience.*

That was an actual posting.

### **When you rewrite your postings, consider the following:**

- What is the company/department/location culture?
- What is unique about this position?
- What is the career path or advancement opportunity in this area?
- What interesting or new technologies might the candidate work with in this area?
- If you had the candidate on the phone, what would you say to get them interested in the position?

## 2. Brand your Postings

Your posting is a reflection of your organization. How it looks says a lot about you to a candidate. Take advantage of branding opportunities with the job boards. At the very least, include your logo. Most of the major job boards offer branding templates as an add-on to your posting. These templates will allow your posting to truly reflect your company brand and employment branding message unique to your organization. In many cases, you will want to use an external vendor to assist with your employment branding efforts, and the investment is well worth it. Your posting should be memorable, consistent with your career site and candidate outreach communication messaging, and above all—engaging. Differentiation is critical in a competitive labor market, and extending your brand to your online postings and marketing is a must for effective competition.

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### **3. Consider Search Relevance**

When a job seeker performs a search on any one of the career boards, most often postings are returned by search relevancy, and then by posting date. On Monster, 62% of job seekers who search by keyword only use one keyword to search for positions. Most often, the keyword in your job title is weighted heaviest and, if it is an accurate match to the search term, will appear higher than postings that do not include that keyword in the title. Pretty simple, right? I just performed a search for “manger” on monster. That’s m-a-n-g-e-r, as in, “*Away in a...*”. I received over 1,200 postings back in my search. A candidate searching for “Manager” will never see these. I received 95 back for “Cust. Svc”. You get the idea. People search in actual words, not abbreviations or misspellings. Perform an audit of your postings – you may be surprised what you find (and what candidates don’t).

### **4. Titles Matter**

The title of your posting amongst hundreds of others is the first thing candidates see after they perform a search. Consider what your title says about your job posting. Is it meaningful to the candidate? Search relevance aside, is it compelling? Turning a title from: “Customer Service Rep I” to “Great Customer Service Opportunity. Advancement!” may mean the difference between a candidate clicking on your posting or scrolling right past you. A word of caution: don’t be overly dramatic or unprofessional with your titles. Candidates will see through it. Always maintain the image of your company and employment brand.

### **5. Content Control**

Job boards have afforded us the space we always wanted but could never afford in our newspaper ads. We have so much room – we could go on and on! But don’t. Just because you can, doesn’t mean you should. Control the content and only include the most compelling, important information about your company and the position. Don’t expect to tell the candidate every single detail. Nobody is going to read a big block of text. Break it up. Use bullets, paragraphs, and easy-to-navigate information. Usability studies show that people scan content online – they don’t read it thoroughly, so consider this when writing and formatting your postings.

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## **6. The Missing Link**

Use the job boards to drive traffic to the Careers section of your site—which is ultimately where you want them anyway. Many postings are not taking advantage of links. You can link to various pages inside your career site or corporate site, even link to your own company video or a YouTube video. Link to testimonials of people in that role currently in your organization, or to articles and awards about why your company is better than its competitors. Don't forget the links. You can even embed them into your template. Don't leave it up to the candidate to google you.

## **7. Application Method**

Speaking of links, the most important link may be to your online job application. If you are currently relying on the job board's application mechanism to feed you the candidates, you may wish to reconsider. This considerably limits candidate application rates and increases drop-off. Candidates are forced to slog through a laborious application process through the job board, when they really just want to connect with you directly – not to mention you could give other companies access to your candidates. You may have to pay more, but invest in the custom “apply online” link with every job board partner site. Many industry experts abide by the three-click rule. If it takes more than 3 clicks to perform an action (like apply for your job), you lose people. Make it easy by linking them right to the application page for your posting on your website.

## **8. Look at your Reports**

How can you tell if online advertising is effective? Inherently built in to all the money we spend online are automatic reporting features. Job boards can determine incredibly detailed information about your postings. You just have to know what to ask for and know how to use it. Information such as how many times your posting came up in a search, how many times somebody clicked on it, what links within your posting were clicked on, how many people clicked “apply”, what the most popular searches are per category and/or location, how your numbers compare to average and best of class, etc. You can compare this data with your career site usability reports, ATS data and source of hire reports, and fine tune your strategy to ensure that you're maximizing these relationships.

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## **9. Review your Strategy**

If you aren't already doing so at least yearly (quarterly is better), make sure you review your strategy with all online vendors. Review all the reports mentioned above and analyze them. NAS consults with many clients on this issue, and our findings at the quarterly review stage often cause us to shift strategy and dollars – sometimes significantly. This step should never be dismissed.

## **10. Diversify**

Job boards are an important part of any online recruiting strategy – but they are not the end-all solution. With new solutions and vendors emerging every day, it is important to evaluate and diversify. Consider solutions such as social networking tools, search engine optimization, search engine marketing, networking, blogging, campus tools, niche boards, and talent networks. Avoid long-term agreements with select vendors in this ever-changing and fluid medium, and don't be afraid to try something new. You never know – it just might work!

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