

How to design the recruitment area of your website

Top tips from the professionals

There is more to a successful recruitment site than just the jobs available. The design is just as critical. Now is a good time to evaluate your site - you may find it needs a spring clean, if not a full makeover. As Andrew Pierson, of network recruitment says: "Some of the best recruitment areas are highly effective due to their simplicity. In essence, if the design reflects the needs and expectations of candidates, your website can quickly become a very powerful and efficient recruitment tool."

Reflecting the needs of candidates

Andrew Pierson continues: "Your careers section needs to reflect the fact that candidates want to be able to quickly identify any suitable roles you may have, understand whether they have the required skills and apply for vacancies effortlessly. Remember to consider who your target audience is. This may well differ from your customer audience and the recruitment area needs to reflect this. A good example of this is www.maplinjobs.co.uk. Acting as a means of centralising applications from multiple attraction methods (including media advertising) your vacancy section also needs to have a memorable URL. Whether situated seamlessly within the existing structure of your website or as a separate site, a dedicated URL ensures even more candidates will visit your website in search for current vacancies. Candidates should immediately be provided with the option to search for vacancies that match their specific criteria. Unfortunately all too often companies get this wrong by reflecting the company structure and not the search logic of candidates. Therefore minimising the level of exposure certain vacancies receive and the consequent number of applications. In order to fully capitalise on the number of job seekers visiting your site, candidate registration and job alert functionality needs to be clearly visible. Allowing candidates to register their details not only helps build a pool of potential talent but dramatically reduces sourcing costs for future vacancies."

James Saunders, MD of 4MAT believes: "Whilst a strong brand presence will attract interest from potential future employees, it is recommended that an employer's brand should be further developed as a sub-

brand of the overall business' branding. This generally means creating a separate careers website which, whilst linked to the main web site, has branding, design, functionality and above all, content which is focused towards candidate attraction, illustrating what that organization can offer their employees." Dr. Harry Brignull, User Experience Consultant, at Madgex agrees about the importance of branding: "Every recruitment site should have its own identity, i.e. be branded and have a distinctive, memorable look that job seekers will remember, giving them something on which to hang their perceptions of credibility and trust. This is exactly why the Madgex platform uses a templating engine that separates the visual design and content from the system business logic. This means we can create a new template as easily as creating an html page."

David Johnston, Business Development Manager at Hotlizard suggests that it can sometimes be advantageous to create tailored sites for the different users visiting your site. He says: "For those recruiting across the spectrum - from graduate hire to executive hire for example - a tailored website for each sector or level which reflects the needs and expectations of the candidate is a much stronger proposition. Executive level recruitment inevitably needs to have a very different tone and feel to graduate recruitment, and the content is inevitably going to be very different. If you try to meet the needs of both on one site the end result can be a cluttered and confused message."

It is important to channel people into the right part of the site, with content relevant to that user, Johnston explains, A good example of a site that does this well is TNT Jobs who have UK, Australian and NZ sites, with content relevant to each market. Johnston suggests that the results can be immediate - with some of their client's microsites becoming number 1 on google within hours of going live. He continues: "Microsites that reflect their branding for key clients like Asda and Siemens etc, are really effective at pulling candidates through, and as a result they have seen their traffic increase tenfold. When recruiters get this right, it opens opportunities to generate serious revenue"

James Saunders says: "Recruitment website design uses very different techniques to any other form of website design.

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Andrew Pierson
network recruitment

Understanding the candidate audience, the purpose of their visit and what they may wish to use the site for is absolutely paramount and the website should be designed around these factors. "Calls to action" should be prominent and clear so that candidates may submit their CV, search for jobs, view information and case studies, or quickly and simply execute whatever other action they wish to perform. In the design process "usability" is as important, if not more so, than design. An aesthetically pleasing, well branded website with poor usability will fail in its purpose to attract applications from the right kind of candidates which, in 4MAT's opinion, summarises where a lot of companies are going wrong.

The example below shows a corporate recruitment website design which has been built with best practice and candidate usability in mind. There is still considerable potential for variation on this structure, without limiting creativity, whilst still experiencing the benefits below.



This "portal" style design is highly effective in converting web site users into registered candidates for the following reasons:

1. Candidates are familiar with this type of design. Usability is enhanced if candidates have a previous knowledge of website usage.
2. It presents all the key candidate "calls to action" on one page, without having to use a tiered navigation structure.
3. Each key area is clearly segmented. Calls to action are both visual (in the use of graphical buttons), as well as textual (latest jobs, links).
4. Using the left hand side navigation candidates can quickly drill down into

more detailed information that is specifically relevant to their skills and experience.

5. The most common and most important function – the job search – is presented in a prominent position on the page.

6. The design makes the best use of space and is therefore optimised for the most common monitor screen resolution (1024x768).

7. This design is “search engine friendly”. It maximizes the potential for search engine robots to cache and index all the pages on the web site, including the actual jobs themselves.

The careers section of a website generally requires a complete re-think to facilitate a significant increase in performance. A highly-targeted, highly-usable, well optimised, content- and feature-rich website portal, done according to business requirements, will deliver prospective quality employees to the business, and can ultimately reduce recruitment costs.”

Terry Baker, Chief Revenue Officer at Adicio, Inc. advises that your design and navigation be clean so users can easily navigate their way around your site. He believes: “A user should always be just 2-3 clicks away from their desired destination. Keep in mind that users come to a site typically for 3 reasons, either to purchase, research or manage accounts, products or information. The goal is to create a user friendly navigation that clearly demonstrates action buttons and call-to-action items. Users should be able to utilize search to quickly locate what they are looking for. Informative, well designed media kits are key to delivering your message and illustrating your value proposition. Landing pages should be visually compelling to draw consumers into your site. Content should be relevant and interactive – depending on your market space, videos can be a huge plus. VNU Media’s Intermediar.nl, Roularta Media Group’s Vlan.be and CanWest Interactive’s Working.com are examples of sites that get it right, but you should also take a look at The Wall Street Journal’s Careers section, NWJobs.com from The Seattle Times Company and HeraldNet.com from The Daily Herald Co.”

Applications

SiteVisibility are specialists in SEO for recruitment sites and job boards. They say: “A great recruitment site ultimately has one purpose; to get people to apply to the jobs

they’ve listed. Anything that helps to achieve this goal should be considered. Is it easy to apply? Or is there a complicated application form that requires the latest version of word which the applicant might not have on their own PC? Even worse, if it requires them to spend hours cutting and pasting their CV to fit. Do you communicate why it’s different to work for you rather than a competitor, and we aren’t talking about vague generalisations here. Saying you’re committed to being a great place to work isn’t enough; use video, audio and content from your staff to provide social proof. It’ll help you get better qualified applications from your current visitors and is likely to attract even more.” Avoid requesting candidates to download applications or submit information by email and allow them to apply immediately online, advises Andrew Pierson. He says: “This will not only help improve the response rate but also the quality of information received too. Role specific application questions gather information in relation to the specific vacancy supporting CV’s and facilitating the selection process by identifying quality candidates quickly. Explanations of the application process can be beneficial at both the beginning and the end of the application process but beware of using links within the first stages of your application as this may divert candidates away from submitting their details. Many companies still do not understand that the process does not end when the application is made – especially from a candidate’s perspective. Adopting the right technology to help manage candidates through the selection process is not only essential to efficiently manage applications but acknowledgement of applications and feedback throughout the process is vital for companies who wish to deliver a quality candidate experience from start to finish.”

Features to have and to avoid

SiteVisibility says a Must Have is to make sure a corporate site is SEO-ed properly. They say: “Lots of well optimized corporate sites neglect their recruitment area, it may be because it’s not seen as a money making area of the site, but for most search agencies, including the recruitment areas of the sites should be a fairly small undertaking. So if you know your marketing department has been working on search be sure to ask if they can help. Think about RSS feeds, though RSS hasn’t quite become the game changing technology many may have originally thought, it’s gaining more and more traction. If you

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think about it, Facebook’s News Feed is an aggregator of feeds allowing people to see your vacancies without visiting your site – it has the potential to be really powerful. Something to avoid – If you’ve not got any vacancies at the moment that shouldn’t mean your recruitment area is a single page saying come back soon. If you tend to have certain job type within your companies build permanent content around them, it’ll help your site compete against job boards in search results and give potential applicants a real understanding of what your company is like. Remember Search Engines can’t type – if the only way to get to your vacancies is by searching for a keyword there’s no way for Google or others to access that page. Make sure there is a clickable link too, this not only helps search engines but also great for users.”

Plenty here then, to provide a checklist for recruiters when evaluating their websites, and ensure they really are working as effectively as possible. Andrew Pierson summarises for us: “The best recruitment areas need not only to reflect the business but the needs and wants of the candidates. Making it simple for candidates to identify or register for suitable vacancies ensures that they receive a positive and professional image of the company, reduces the need to conduct advertising or pay placement fees and introduces a streamlined and efficient recruitment process for all candidates regardless of source. Candidates should be able to search for and view suitable vacancies quickly, understand the requirements of the role and the benefits of working for the company immediately and apply for vacancies effortlessly. Many companies fail to consider who they are targeting. By adopting best practise companies can portray themselves as a more innovative and forward thinking business to work for, attract potential candidates free of charge, centralise multiple attraction methods and deliver a positive candidate experience to each and every candidate.”

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