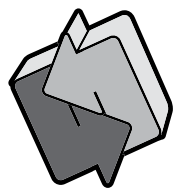


# HR and Search Engine Optimization

**Ten practical tips to improving  
the visibility and usability of your  
company's career section**

Prepared By



**LinkUp**

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**Before You Panic About Having 10 Tips - Don't worry!!**  
*These tips are in no specific order. Plus you do not have to do them all at once. Think of them like eating healthy: every bit helps.*

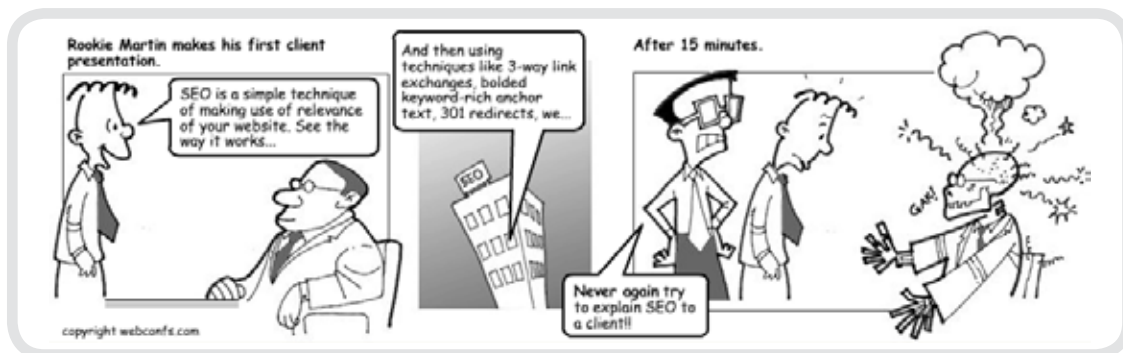
# Purpose of the whitepaper and what to expect

The purpose of this whitepaper is to help you improve your career section. Having analyzed thousands of company websites and all of their career sections, we have found certain trends that set the successful career sections apart from the rest – simple features and functions that all companies can implement without losing their brand integrity. When your career section is set up well, it reduces your administrative duties, helps maintain your recruitment message and delivers jobseekers.

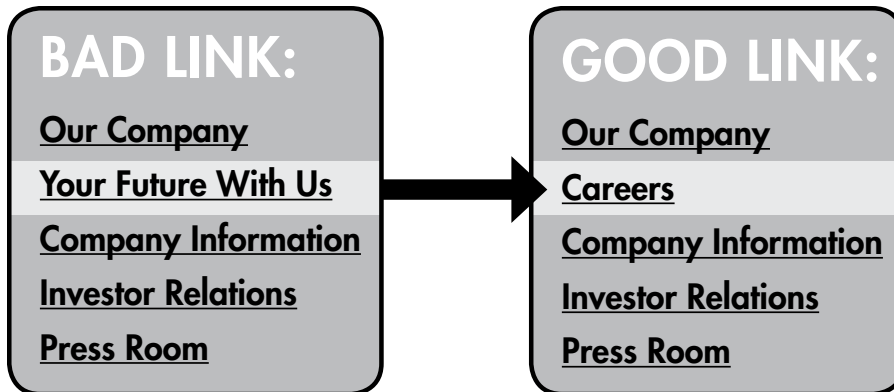
Here is what you can expect to learn from this whitepaper:

- **Why your jobs may not be on search engines and how to get them included**
- **The hurdles jobseekers face in finding your jobs and how to remove those hurdles**
- **What terms people are using and which ones are worth remembering**
- **The worst ways to present your jobs and what you should be doing**

**■** *This is all assuming that you have a career section and post your job openings on your site. If you are not doing that yet, put this down and take care of that first...*



# TIP #1: Label the section “Careers” and include it on your homepage



The best thing to always remember about improving the traffic to your career section is to make everything blatantly obvious. The fewer clicks it takes to get to your jobs, the faster jobseekers and search engines will find it. And the most obvious spot to put it is on your home page! Jobseekers get frustrated when they have to guess its location, and search engines sometimes just give up. Some companies include it in their “About Us” section, others put the link in “Contact Us”, and for whatever reason some sites only list it in their sitemap. Granted, ideal candidates have the dedication to find the section, but there is no need to make them work for it. As one of the most crucial parts to any growing business, the career section deserves a link on your homepage.

Marketing probably is not going to like this advice – in all honesty marketing practices commonly clash with search engine optimization. Online, people search for “online camping equipment store,” but marketing would prefer call it “digital wilderness outfitter.” When promoting your career section use common terms. This is exactly what you need to keep in mind for your career section. If you label the link “Careers,” people will find it.

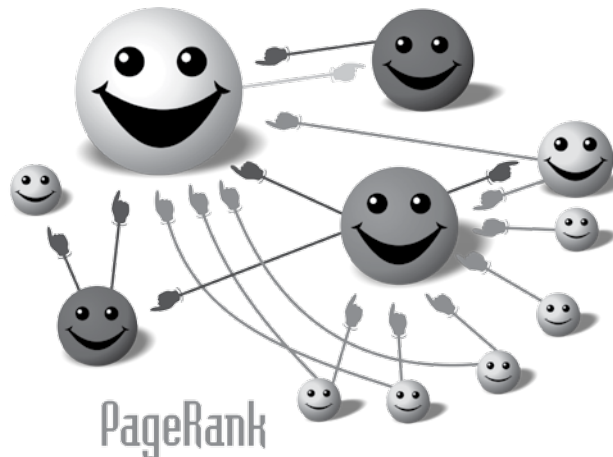
## TIP #2: Visitor should be able to skim all openings, and get to any specific job in 2 clicks

Many career sections require a form to be filled out before jobs can be viewed. Though jobseekers have little difficulty filling out simple forms, most search engines have no idea how to complete your form to get to your jobs. This is why a "Browse All Jobs" link is very important – so search engines can find your jobs!

Another frustration, felt by jobseekers and search engines, is when the form options do not accurately represent the job openings. For example, if a company only has openings in two states, yet the form on their career section lists all fifty states, the jobseeker is more likely to leave the site before guessing what state has job openings. Additionally, by providing a direct link to the listing of all job openings, you improve the PageRank of your site and all your jobs.

To quickly explain what PageRank is, think of your homepage as a big smiley face. The bigger the smiley, the higher the page shows up on search engines. Then each page your homepage links to is, say, 10% less important. Each page those pages link to is 10% less important, and so on. This is what PageRank means and why it is crucial that your pages are quick to access – both for your visitors and for search engines. Since PageRank is logarithmic, you want search engines to reach your jobs in as few jumps as possible. This is also why it should never take more than 2 clicks to reach a job.

30% of visitors who go to your website looking for your career section aren't randomly searching for a job that suits them, they're searching for a job **with your company**. By giving them options where all your pages can be skimmed, you're making it easier for your jobs to appear on search engines and for the company "players" to find a position on the team.



## TIP #3: Each job openings should have its own pages and be bookmarkable

One of the worst possible design mistakes for a career section is to have all of your jobs on the exact same page. Even in the situation where your designer charges you per page, the improved usability of your site makes jobseekers and search engines happier.

Think of it from the end user's perspective. Lumping all the jobs together on the same page gives the appearance that the listed positions are less important. There is an excellent reason why major job boards give each job its own page – and you should too!

Despite your hopes, barely 1 out of 100 jobseekers is only actively considering one job. This means that you want the jobseeker to be able to quickly return to your listing at their leisure. The more jobs they are considering and the more openings on your website, the less likely they are to be able to reproduce the steps they took to find your job in the first place. And with the increasingly popular tools like del.icio.us, savvy applicants are relying on bookmarks to remember your company. That is why it is absolutely essential that all your jobs have the ability to be bookmarked. **Here is a quick way for you to test this:**

1. Find a job on your website and bookmark it
2. Close your browser
3. Reopen your browser and open that job from your bookmarks
4. If the job loaded –fantastic!
5. If it did not, then talk to your web designers. If you are unable to bookmark your job, neither can your visitors or the search engines.

Approximately 20% of jobseekers have friends that are also job hunting – and they share relevant jobs with each other. Providing simple tools so your visitors can quickly tell friends and family about a career with your company gives you a free advertising tool. So even when the person on your site is not a good fit for your company, giving them a “Tell A Friend” feature helps you find someone who is.

**FACT:** LinkUp's search engine is completely capable of handling career sections where all job information for all jobs is listed on one page. This tip is solely for the benefit of your site and your visitors.

To really be helpful to your applicants, each job webpage should stay on the site **at least** until the position is filled, even if no additional applicants are being accepted.

While you don't have to show the link to these webpages in your listings, leaving the page up ensures that your applicants are able to review all the details before any interview – and better informed applicants create more meaningful interviews.

## TIP #4: Your jobs should be in HTML – not PDF nor DOC nor AJK...

HTML is the universal language of webpages. All browsers can read it and search engines are built to search it. To make your listings as accessible as possible, they need to be provided in HTML – not a file that needs to be downloaded to be viewed. Granted, search engines like Google and Yahoo are increasing their support in reading non-HTML files, but for your visitors, it is just a headache. If your jobs are not in HTML, they cannot be bookmarked. So how do the non-technical-elite tell if they are in HTML or some other format?

When the internet was young, most webpages ended in .html or .htm. But with the ever-present programming languages that help companies deploy websites faster, it is not possible to rely on the address to tell if a page is HTML. There is an easy way to test if what you're seeing is a HTML file, right-click on the text – if you see "View Source" in the menu, it is HTML. If you are not able to find the "View Source" option, your site is probably not using HTML.

You might say "my jobs are PDFs but I tell people they can download a free program to read them" or "my listings are all Word documents because that's what I use and everyone has Microsoft Office." It is important to remember that what is easiest for you in the short-term might actually be costing you in the long run. Obviously, not everyone has Microsoft Office, and you probably do not enjoy having to download a program to read a file that someone sent you. Even more, if the visitor is on a public computer or an older model, they might not be able to install that program, so they cannot view your jobs at all! Artistically speaking, PDFs and Word documents have more design capabilities and typically look better than most webpages. If this is the case, then offer both the enhanced version and the HTML.

In the title, we mention AJK files. Don't know what kind of file an AJK is? Well, we don't either. In all likelihood it does not exist... yet. But it is quite frustrating to be sent a file and not know how to open it. The best reason to show your listings online in standard HTML is that everyone, i.e. search engines and visitors, can read it. Granted, it may take some time, either yours or your IT staff's to convert it from your company-native format to HTML, but that is a price worth paying for greater visibility and more applicants.

## TIP #5: To view your openings, registration should not be required

We all love metrics. Knowing who is looking at what is an incredibly important part of understanding your candidates and your traffic. That is why a lot of websites, including LinkUp, offer registration options so visitors can create accounts on a website. If you do offer registration, one crucial point is registration should be optional. If you are forcing people to register in order to view your jobs, you may be turning away passive jobseekers and blocking search engines. Also, when you force people to register, you are probably preventing people from bookmarking your jobs.

We are not saying that you should not offer registration on your site. Registration is a very important feature that many jobseekers look for and utilize. Once you are at the point where the jobseeker fills out an application, it makes perfect sense to require registration. Since it is useless to have search engines spider your application forms, there is no harm in keeping them out. Remember, you can always entice people to register by offering additional features and functionality.

Passive jobseekers like lurking around and not being seen. They are sometimes afraid that registering on a site will alert their current employer and create turmoil in their current job. With 60% of people actively employed considering themselves passive jobseekers, this is not a market segment you should alienate.

Think requiring registration will tell you who's visiting your site? Think again. There are plenty of resources on the web, like BugMeNot.com, that provide a thorough directory of usernames and passwords to websites, like the New York Times, so users are able to login without having to actually create an account and share their personal information. There's a good reason why "compulsory registration" has such an ugly feel to it.





## TIP #6: Each listing should tie directly into your applicant tracking system

Going back to the PageRank concept, the more pages that exist on your website, the greater visibility it will have. Unfortunately, this is all the SEO benefit that you would gain by having an ATS tied into your jobs.

There are tremendous benefits to the jobseeker when your jobs are all connected to a method for receiving applications. Jobseekers find career sections offering online applications to be more trustworthy. They are also more willing to send an application, seeing the company as more likely to be listing real jobs that are actively open as opposed to jobs without application tie-ins, where the jobseeker wonders if the company is still actively seeking applicants.

If you do not utilize an ATS, perhaps it is time to consider one. There are dozens of capable vendors out there, with solutions for every size company and every size budget. They are typically fast to implement, easy to use, and tie into most existing solutions. And by having your own, you will also reduce any reliance on using application systems that other job boards force you to use.

### What is an Applicant Tracking System?

Also called a Candidate Management System, an ATS is a software application designed to help an organization recruit employees more efficiently. An ATS can be used to post job openings on a corporate website or job board, screen resumes, and generate interview requests to potential candidates by email. Other features may include individual applicant tracking, requisition tracking, automated resume ranking, customized input forms, pre-screening questions and response tracking, and multilingual capabilities. It is estimated that roughly 50% of all mid-sized companies and almost all large corporations use some type of applicant tracking system.

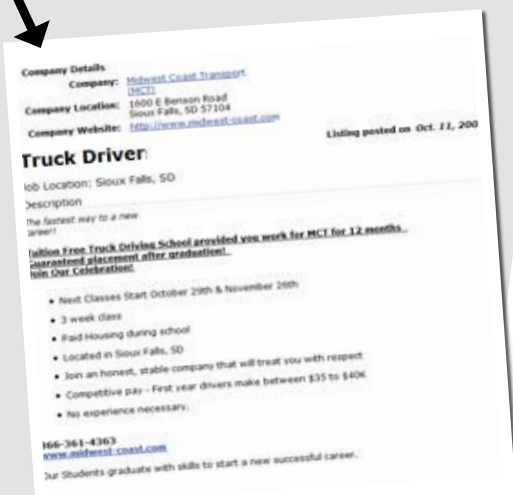
# TIP #7: Each webpage should be print-friendly

Make sure that it is easy to print out your job openings. There are huge benefits to this, both to jobseekers and to search engines. When your website prints out cleanly, and does not get chopped up nor distorted, it is an excellent sign that your code is well written and search engine friendly. Search engines love big blocks of text and hate when it is choppy and poorly aligned. Your printed page will give good insight into how the search engine sees your website.

Jobseekers frequently print off the listings that they're interested in, and bring them along to interviews. By putting a bit of one-time effort into the print-version of your website, you can ensure that jobseekers are able to cleanly see all the information on your opening in a very reader-friendly fashion.

Think of this as a good chance to "be green." There is no advantage for the printout to be cluttered with big graphics or lots of blocks that are irrelevant to the actual page. It is very frustrating to print a page, expecting 1 page, and getting 6 because the designers did not test it on a printer. If your layout does look less than ideal, have your web staff investigate "print css" and start saving those trees.

This opening printed nicely on 1 page.



This printed across 3 pages and some text didn't print.



## TIP #8: The order of your information and what you're including on each page matters

The goal of the job opening page is to share what information the jobseeker will find valuable and bury (in size and in position) information that they will find less useful. By staying focused on putting everything where it logically makes sense for the jobseeker and mimicking the layouts that other companies use to list their jobs, your job becomes more search engine and jobseeker friendly.

### Position Title

Description:

Duties:

Requirements:

Opening Information:

Location Information:

Contact Information:

There is little reason for your job posting to be more complex than this. By keeping it clearly sorted, you allow search engines to give your phrases their proper level of importance, and speed up the jobseeker's ability to analyze your opening. Clearly labeling sections reduces guesswork and cuts back on the number of questions you'll be asked about an opening. Note the lack of company information on this simple example. When the person wants to learn about your company, they'll visit the "About Us" section. On the job's page their primary interest is to discover if they're right for the job and if the job is right for them.

There are books that could be written on this tip alone, but here are some short pointers for you to follow to improve your listings:

- Even if you only have one office, you should list the position location on the page. It is risky and frustrating to have a potential jobseeker guess where they might be working.
- Order the information in a way that is logical for the jobseeker. Put the title first and largest, the description second, the requirements third, and the application information fourth. Since that is the order they would look for information, it makes sense for you to list that way. Also, using the job's title in the title tag makes it easier for the jobseeker to track the job.
- Clearly separate the description, the duties, the requirements, etc. You will filter out more unsuitable applicants by clearly separating the sections as opposed to making them guess, and possibly missing the fields that would rule them out.
- Do not clutter the page with irrelevant information. Each job's page should be solely dedicated to that job. If the candidate needs other information (such as directions), they will know enough to find that elsewhere on your site.
- Put all your internal information in its own section, do not intermix it with other sections (such as the frequent "let's put it at the end of the job title"). A well organized page helps the search engines know what is important, it makes more sense to the jobseeker and yet it still provides you with all the right information in a consistent place for your internal needs.

# TIP #9: Frames are your worst enemy

Frames, a way of splitting the browser window into several independent parts, came into being in the 90's. It was briefly popular, but even as early as 1996 people started screaming what a horrible idea it was and how greatly frames could hurt a website when used as a primary method of navigation.

Search engines give up when it comes to frames and typically just ignore the site. They simply cannot send a visitor to your site in the way you meant them to see it, with the navigation pane and the content pane. The search engine would probably just send the visitor to the content pane and since they lose your navigation, they will probably leave your site altogether.

Hoping your site will work on that sleek new iPhone? If you are using frames, think again. Mobile browsers don't work with frames.

Frames also render bookmarks useless, how's that for frustrating? And try printing out a website that uses frames; its not pretty.

How do you know if your site is using frames? Since it is not always visually obvious, we were not able to find a 2-step method to show you if your site uses frames. Instead, we made one. Simply copy the URL from one of your jobs and paste it into the form at <http://framecheck.linkup.com>. Within seconds, our system will tell you whether your website uses frames. If you are not, consider this tip done! If you are using frames, now would be a good time to start talking with the people responsible for your website and planning how to remove the dependency on frames. By getting rid of those frames, the search engines and jobseekers will certainly thank you.

One of these sites is using a frame, the other isn't.  
With so many reasons against using frames, why would you?



**FACT:** If you're looking for some material to prepare you for that meeting, search for "who framed the web" and "jakob nielsen frames" and you'll find two exceptional articles that more thoroughly explain the drawbacks of using this outdated technology.

## TIP #10: All job information should be in text – no graphics

Either for speed of development or lack of knowledge, sometimes websites use a graphic of text rather than the actual text. Search engines and screen readers cannot understand words in a picture. Say you want a pretty font to list the job title, by using a graphic to represent that title instead of text, you greatly diminish the likelihood of a search engine finding that position and sharing it with potential jobseekers.

Sometimes it can be hard to recognize if your website is designed with graphics to represent the text. Fortunately, there is a fast way to find out. For any text in question, which will stand out by having a non-matching font or otherwise not match, right-click on it. If in the menu you see options that say “Save Image,” then it is time to get that fixed and start showing your valuable keywords to the search engines!

Text:

**Personal Banker**

Graphic:

**Personal Banker**

The lower “Personal Banker” shows a graphic taken from a website, while the upper one is text shown by a browser. Though the lower one is more cosmetically appealing, it is never read by search engines and therefore is never shared with jobseekers. So it comes down to what is more important - aesthetics or traffic?

## Bonus TIP: Use popular terms

This is where the marketing stuff comes into play again – fortunately there are tons of resources at your disposal to help you find the best of both worlds.

By using popular terms, you’ll have phrases that people will be looking for and understand. Despite “Junior Associate Of Contact Relations” sounding quite glamorous, people understand “Executive Assistant” and are far more likely to search for that title.

Despite the negative cliché that buzzwords typically

carry with them, in titles and descriptions – this is the perfect time to use them. Popular phrases, semi-popular phrases and niche phrases are great to use and what the cutting-edge performers are searching for. Want a great way to see terms necessary and under used by industry? Go to **[www.linkup.com/jobcloud](http://www.linkup.com/jobcloud)** and view 100s of keywords across dozens of categories.



For an incredibly complete list of commonly used titles, go to **[www.occupationalinfo.org](http://www.occupationalinfo.org)**

# HR-XML technology

Don't you just love getting something extra? Like when the waitress accidentally leaves two dinner mints and everyone else just got one? In the spirit of that, we wanted to shed some light on a fantastic technology that is really going to change the way the HR industry works. The technology is HR-XML, and it has the potential to make everyone's job a whole lot easier. (This is completely unsolicited and unpaid for, we just think it is really cool!)

Taken from their website...

The mission of the HR-XML Consortium is to spare employers and vendors the risk and expense of having to negotiate and agree upon data interchange mechanisms on an ad-hoc basis. By developing and publishing open data exchange standards based on Extensible Markup Language ("XML"), the Consortium provides the means for any company to transact with other companies without having to establish, engineer, and implement many separate interchange mechanisms.

Despite the dryness of that explanation, there is one incredible bit that would revolutionize our industry – "interchange mechanisms on an ad-hoc basis." In plain English, that means a standard format for all HR information so all systems can talk to each other. No more having to copy-and-paste data from your ATS onto a job board just to post a listing – you just upload your opening and the job board would immediately know the title, the category, the description, and the hiring timeline.

Imagine getting a resume that would be uploaded into your system and all the fields would be 100% accurate. Ditching the headache of "Oh, there's the education information, I'll just retype that into our database since their Word resume isn't easy to copy" would be a dream, wouldn't it? That's what HR-XML data offers. A concrete uniform format, without any licensing fees, where all systems could inter-connect and reduce the burden of retyping the same information over and over. Told you it was cool.

Learn more at [www.hr-xml.org](http://www.hr-xml.org) or [hr.xml.org](http://hr.xml.org)



# About LinkUp

LinkUp is a leading job search engine that adds value and exposure to jobs found on company websites. We help active and passive jobseekers find the jobs on your website by aggregating thousands of jobs from small, mid-sized, and large companies. With LinkUp, you will gain maximum exposure to jobseekers while maintaining control of your recruitment message.

Learn more about us at [www.linkup.com](http://www.linkup.com)



# Glossary of useful terms and abbreviations

## **AJAX / Web 2.0**

Newer technologies, pioneered by Google, that is essentially a “bells and whistles” approach. Though certainly not required in your website, they do tend to improve the end-user’s experience.

## **Blogs / RSS / Feeds**

Webjournals (weblogs) have become the modern form of journalism. Using feeds, sometimes referred to as RSS, people are able to be instantly notified when webpages, typically blogs, have been updated.

## **HTML – HyperText Markup Language**

(XHTML is the same thing, just with a Year-2000 feel) The language that webpages are in. If you think of a webpage as a house, then HTML is the wood.

## **Javascript / CSS / Flash / GIF / PNG/ JPG**

The technologies and formats that make webpages pretty and useful. If you think of a webpage as a house, then these are the paint on the walls and decorations.

## **PHP / ASP/ .NET / ColdFusion / Java / Ruby On Rails**

Programming languages that help to automatically generate content, like HTML. These are to webpages as the factory line was to producing cars. Having your website written in one of these languages (some are free, some aren’t) is almost essential when you have more than 5 pages.

## **PPC / PPA – Pay Per Click / Pay Per Action**

Methods of being charged for website advertising. PPC means paying whenever someone clicks your ad, PPA is when they click your ad and perform an action – like buying your product. Because PPAs have a higher return on investment, they typically cost substantially more than PPCs.

## **SEO – Search Engine Optimization**

Techniques and strategies used to improve the ranking of websites in search engines. A billion-dollar industry is built around this concept.

## **SERP – Search Engine Results Page**

Simply the results that are displayed after a search is performed.

Social Networking / Social Bookmarking

Websites, like delicious.com and digg.com, that visitors use to store bookmarks and recommended websites to each other.

## **Web Standards Compliance**

(or using words like “Valid” or “Standard” or “WAI” or “Section 508”) Sets of guidelines, setup either by independent groups or government agencies, that websites should follow. Originally seen as non-critical, recent events<sup>1</sup> have shown this to be increasingly important. By having your webpages valid (or WAI Accessible or Section 508 compliant), you’re ensuring that your content is handicap accessible, search engine friendly, and works on all browsers & operating systems.

<sup>1</sup> A large retailer was recently sued for not having a handicap accessible website.