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Want to find a job? Nonprofit 'jobs' service seeks to revolutionize the search.

Hundreds of companies are teaming up with Monster founder Bill Warren to create the nonprofit 'jobs' job listing system. It aims to eliminate the middlemen for people who want to find a job.

By Gloria Goodale and Daniel B. Wood, Staff writers

It was considered good news when the national unemployment rate dropped by 0.4 percentage points to 9.4 percent in December.

But many employment experts suggest even better news for job seekers – and a development that might help drop that unemployment figure even further – is the announcement Tuesday that many of America's Fortune 500 companies have joined with Monster.com founder Bill Warren to revolutionize the way companies and needed employees find each other.

Mr. Warren, who founded Monster, one of the leading Internet career sites, in 1992, is now spearheading a nonprofit job listing system called .jobs that aims to eliminate the middlemen for job seekers and the high cost of job postings for companies.

Mr. Warren hopes the new job listing system will be a vital tool in lowering the national unemployment rate, not just through the ease it gives to both seekers and finders, but because the new idea will also vastly expand the number of jobs listed. The idea is attracting kudos from those who study the industry.

"If Warren and his company get some traction then it will transform the market for job seekers and employers," says Steve Langerud, director of professional opportunities at DePauw University in Indiana and a workplace consultant who has worked with over 15,000 people on organizational and career issues.

Time for a new model

"It will add nuance to the advertised job market, engage employers who simply did not participate, and, best of all, provide some tangible hope to job seekers who don't see themselves in other products."

Warren himself calls this an inevitable evolution. He observed the pay-for-placement model that he pioneered simply get too expensive. He says he knew it was time for a new model when there was talk at his old company of pushing the price of a single job listing to \$1,000. "The price for a company to actually post all its open jobs would be in the millions," he says. The typical cost today is nearly \$400, "which means that for most companies, only about ten percent of their open jobs actually get listed."

In the new model, companies can list their job openings without charge, he says. Companies can pay \$15,000 to join the nonprofit and receive additional services, such as tracking and integrated social media.

The company planned to launch Tuesday with some 40,000 categories to help job seekers and a membership of some 520 major corporations. For instance, a new engineering grad could type in "engineering.jobs," much as a new nursing grad could type in "healthcare.jobs" etc.

Middlemen's value affirmed

Some question whether job seekers and employers are best served by eliminating such middlemen as Monster.com or Careerbuilder.com or anyone of the 50,000 online recruiting sites now on the Web.

"Broadly speaking, job seekers and companies don't necessarily benefit by bypassing third-party recruiters," says Chuck Pappalardo, managing director of Trilogy Search, a retained executive recruitment firm based in the San Francisco Bay Area. For candidates, he says by email, the most critical issue is access to knowledge – understanding required qualifications and company culture in order to engage the hiring manager.

"For the company, the critical issue is qualifying the right person for the right job. Getting access to hundreds or even thousands of resumes can in fact exacerbate the primary issue for the hiring company, and that is appropriately evaluating the candidates," says Pappalardo.

Warren responds that the benefit for the job seeker in his new system is the assurance that these are not second-hand postings or even scams, they are legitimate jobs updated daily.

Others observing the roll-out of this new, online recruiting model, offer a different criticism. They say the creation of a new, top-level domain name owned by a single company – even if nonprofit – raises serious questions for the future of the Internet.

'A serious departure'

It would be as if all of the dotcoms, for instance, were owned by a single company, says Gautam Godhwani, founder and CEO at SimplyHired.com, the largest job search engine. It is a serious departure from the free market principles on which the Internet is based, he adds.

“We would like to see all domains within .jobs be available for registration as an open market offering,” he says. “This has historically been the case with other top level domains, and has been a significant factor in the Internet flourishing and becoming a pervasive, open medium.”

Indeed, Warren has spent nearly two years wrangling with a coalition of groups opposed to his new idea.

Steven Rothberg, one of the owners of CollegeRecruiter.com and a member of the coalition, says this is far more than online recruiters whining about the competition.

Rothberg points out that ICANN, the international governing body for domain names, created the .jobs domain five years ago with the promise that it would be carefully monitored.

“All of that may now be changing,” he says if this new model prevails.



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