

How Did You Get This Number? Privacy, the Net, and Your Job Search

By Tracy A. Bumpus, CPRW, JCTC

The life of an email is astounding. Get a good joke going and it can easily spread to millions of people within 24 hours. Virus hacks take advantage of this phenomenon to use email as a main carrier of their insidious work. Job seekers tend to forget this phenomenon when they are going about an Internet-based job search and are amazed when they get calls and email out of the blue.

Rule #1 in any Internet communications—NOTHING IS PRIVATE

That said, what can you do to preserve your privacy? There are several things that can be done to keep your personal information as private as possible without sabotaging the effects of your job search efforts.

Make your résumé confidential—we do not recommend that you NOT include your name, but you can keep your other contact information fairly private. Here's how:

1. Set up a separate voice mail and email account just for the purposes of your job search. A great, free way to do this is to use Onebox.com (<http://www.onebox.com>). Set up a voice mail stop and an email account specifically for your job search. Use this phone number and email on your résumé and in all job search activities. When the job search is over and you are happily ensconced in your new job, cancel the account. Remember to check your voice mail on a daily, if not more frequent, basis so you will not miss opportunities.
2. Do NOT include your street address on your documents. Employers do not need your street address during the interview process except to send a "thank-you-we-have-your-résumé-on-file" postcard (and most don't even bother to do that anymore). DO include the city and state in which you live. Recruiters need to know where you are so they can take time zones into consideration when attempting to reach you and in consideration for a relocation. Eliminating your street address also protects your family. In today's crazy world, you never know who will be a stalker. If you feel strongly that you need a mailing address on the résumé, get a Post Office box or a mailbox at the local MailBoxes, Etc. or similar establishment.

By keeping your home phone number, your home address, and your permanent email address OFF your résumé, you are doing the most you can to preserve your privacy. Whenever you email your résumé to a person, whether it is a recruiter, an employer, a friend, or whoever—you are giving up some of your privacy. There is no guarantee that your résumé will stop at the addressee's computer.

Privacy on job boards

If you list your résumé in one database on the Internet, other job boards WILL download it to their databases as a common practice. Your résumé will be open fodder to millions by listing it on the Internet. This can be a good thing—it's networking to the power of 10. It can also be a pain in the neck

when you continue to receive calls 8 months after finding a new job. Using a temporary voicemail and email will help alleviate this problem.

Be sure to cancel or delete your résumé from the job boards to which you posted when you accept a new offer. Do not trust the job boards to do it for you.

Keeping your current employer from knowing your intentions

What can you do to keep your current employer from finding your résumé on the Internet? Not a great deal. You can eliminate the name of your current employer from your résumé to keep your employer from turning your résumé up on a keyword search using the company name. For example, if you work for IBM, replace the name of the company with something like "global leader in information technology products and services based in Research Triangle Park". Unfortunately, this also eliminates recruiters from competing companies who are searching for the cream of the crop from their competitors' ranks (headhunting).

Instead, take the risk and keep the name of your current employer in there. If someone from HR turns up at your desk and asks what your intentions are, you can always say you were just fishing to see what would happen.

In summary, have a preventive mindset toward protecting your privacy when going about your job search. Keep your home contact info and your office contact info out of the game altogether by using a separate contact method that is specifically for the job search. Know the risks when you upload your résumé to the job boards and be prepared for the reality of spam, calls, and junk mail that will result. Be pleasantly surprised if you get an inquiring call from an employer rather than angry that your résumé was forwarded by someone you don't know. Take advantage of the great power of networking that the Internet offers and be ready to handle the volume of response. The Internet is a powerful means of communication and can be a great way to network into a new job if you handle it correctly!

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