



BY DON TALEND

Several recruiters who specialize in the concrete industries whom I've talked to would tell you that the Internet is not your key to career success. Although all of the recruiters listed here have an online presence, their Web sites give you just a taste of the services they offer.

Unfortunately, several well-publicized Web sites have promised a technological career fast track in the past few years as they've tried to dominate the recruiting game. But longtime industry recruiters say that there's no substitute for networking, especially in a close-knit industry such as ours. They'd tell you that they do the networking for you.

I went into these conversations thinking that these recruiters would indicate resentment toward sites that try to be all things to all people (a.k.a. "mega sites"). Actually, these sites have made their jobs easier. They think the following concepts sum up their competitive advantages over mega sites:

▶ The Web isn't the total recruiting solution, but it can reveal industry-specific services.

Finding Greener Grass

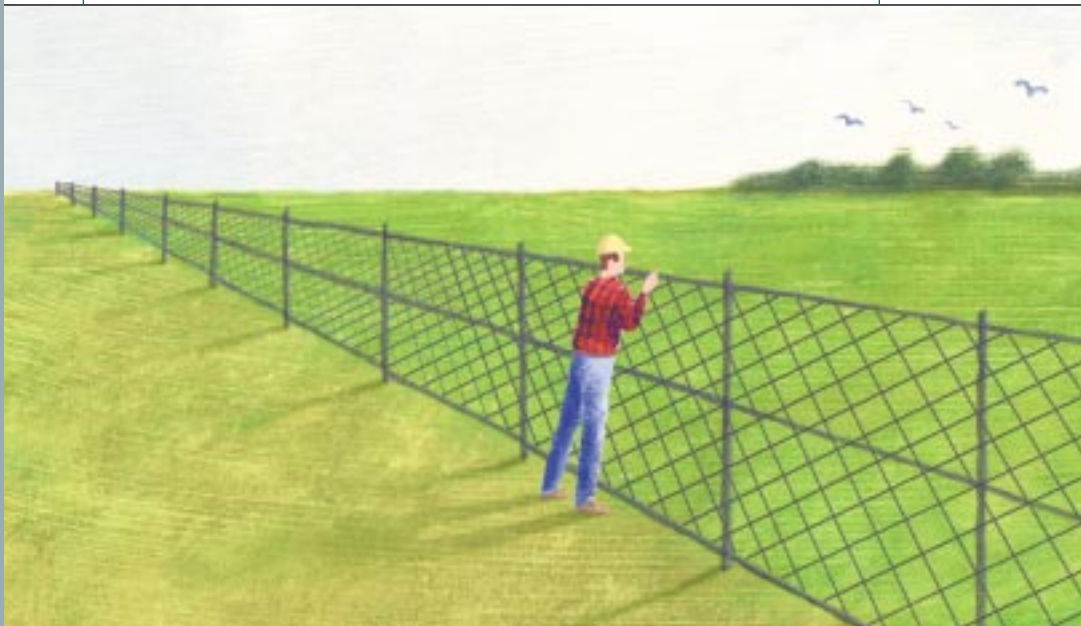
Casual looking is a turnoff. Mega sites are "for passive job seekers; they're dipping their toes in the water," says Rick Linstead of Carnegie Resources, Charlotte, N.C. "There are plenty of people who are not serious about making a change unless a position is five minutes from home and they'll get a \$10,000 raise." Michael Stauffer of United Employment Associates, Allentown, Pa., says that these sites may not save hiring managers much time during the recruiting process. If you go to a mega site and enter "plant manager" in an online search, "You'll be lucky if one or two of those have any precast experience," he says.

"We're getting people with specific experience in a specific industry. We're not going to push 100 résumés by you and get you three qualified people."

Don't call us, we'll call you. As unfair as it may seem, the producer who wants to get out of a bad situation isn't very marketable; recruiters are looking for producers in good situations who might want to hear about better ones.

"I have a number of individuals who we keep at arm's reach; they're very happy in their positions, and they excel at what they do," says Geb Bassett of Concrete Industry Associates Employment Agency, Grand Haven, Mich. "They're not interested in making a job change; however, we do develop a rapport with these individuals and maintain contact with them over time."

"The key to the industry is networking; everybody knows somebody," adds Linstead. "You place people in a company and they're satisfied, your name gets passed along, and you get a call: 'I'm a friend of a friend; I understand you helped him find



a job.” When Linstead does make cold calls, he looks up companies by SIC code. “I call up and ask for the plant superintendent. You find that most of them have been in the business 20-plus years, and most are pretty happy where they are, but they may know someone who has left recently or someone who is looking for a job.”

Confidentiality is king. “The key to the business is confidentiality,” says Linstead. “I don’t disclose people to clients until such point as they’re ready to do a phone interview. I discuss the candidate’s background and work history and give them a summary of who I’m working with.” The concrete production industry is trickier than most, he adds. Many times “You’re not aware of what the parent company is; one has to be very cautious of that, so I’ve got lists of all of the divisions and all of the names.” He adds that he’s also careful because many companies have reciprocal no-compete agreements.

Stauffer doesn’t call companies that candidates don’t want him to call. “We won’t release their names to anybody without their permission if that’s the way they’d like it—that’s the way we do probably 90% of our dealings,” he says. “We screen the position with the candidate and make sure he’s OK with it. There are no names; we even try to pull off any geographic location. On the Web site you get a synopsis of who the person is.”

So there’s much more to industry-specific recruiters than just their Web sites. Here are a few I’ve found:

■ Carnegie Resources. The 55-year-old firm specializes in the concrete block and paver industry. Candidates can apply for positions online and enter a database by filling out a comprehensive questionnaire.

www.carnegieresources.com/concrete.htm

■ Concrete Industry Associates Employment Agency. The more-than-25-year-old company’s stated mission is finding professionals who excel but

who are not actively seeking a change. www.concretejob.prodigybiz.com

■ ConcreteCareers.com. The firm, around since 1977, has recruiters who specialize in different areas of the industry such as ready-mix, precast, and even materials sales. It conducts searches for employers, and its “Available Talent” link describes anonymous candidates. www.concretecareers.com

■ United Employment Associates. This firm has been in business since 1973 and also has recruiting specialists, although its searches aren’t always confined to the industry. Its site lists available anonymous candidates and allows employers to submit available positions online. www.unitedemployment.com

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