

Job search innovations

By DEVONA WALKER / Sarasota Herald Tribune • 9 July 2007
<http://www.heraldtribune.com/article/20070709/BUSINESS/707090504/1448>

OSPREY — It was an Uzbekistani-born, recent Yale graduate who first made the video resume routine and infamous last year.

During a seven-minute video that accompanied an 11-page paper resume, Aleksey Vayner — self-proclaimed chief-executive-in-the-making and multi-athletic professional — ballroom danced, lifted nearly 500 pounds, delivered a 147 mph tennis serve and ultimately pummeled his bare knuckles through a pile of bricks.

He was trying to get a job in banking. He became in some people's view the biggest joke on Wall Street and a primary example of what not to do when looking for a job.

But the video resume — as a concept — emerged unscathed from the episode.

In some circles, it is considered “the next big thing,” in streamlining the job candidate screening process, reducing time and money for employers.

At the end of June, Careerbuilder.com started offering a video resume uplink service, opening up the new emerging trend in job searches and recruiting to the 1.5 million people that make up its mammoth database.

Jobster, Alumwire, CollegeGrad.com and the Vault all already have similar services.

“Video resumes is a concept that's been around. For us, we were waiting for the market to be right,” said Liz Harvey, Careerbuilder.com's consumer products director.

With increased broadband penetration, the emergence of YouTube and rising comfort level with the short-form video, Careerbuilder executives decided it was time to start offering video resume options.

According to Careerbuilder, the new medium already has been well received by hiring managers and job seekers alike.

More than half of 2,200 hiring managers interviewed by Careerbuilder showed interest in video resumes while a like percentage of 6,000 workers interviewed had the same reaction.

“I think it's going to be a great thing for both job seekers and candidates,” Harvey said.

The video interview

At least for employers, a parallel innovation — the video interview — also has gained steam.

The product pioneered by Osprey-based Interview USA is software that allows employers to categorize videos based on job openings and to filter information, automatically cross-referencing for secondary job functions.

It has an attachment function so that different hiring managers participating in the candidate selection process can compare notes virtually.

The videos, typically filmed at home using a desktop computer-based video camera, are more controlled mediums relative to the video resume.

Applicants respond to a list of questions predetermined by the business with whom they are interviewing.

Interview USA has a few competitors who have entered the game such as HireVue, Digital Video Interview and InterviewStream.

But the managers of Interview USA seem less threatened by competitors than relieved.

“That was the best thing that could have happened,” says Raj Doraisamy, the company's co-founder and chief executive officer, perched on

the edge of his seat.

Hiring managers and human resources executives have been reluctant to use the video interview until recently.

“When we first started, the reality is people were very resistant,” Doraisamy said. “It was a very slow start.”

Video cameras until recently were expensive, and the Internet had not yet evolved enough to make it entirely functional.

For the job seekers — many still struggling to condense their careers into a single, double-spaced page — a virtual interview sounded more like science fiction than a labor market necessity.

“Then YouTube comes and popularizes video. Careerbuilder moves into the fray, making it more mainstream,” Doraisamy said. “Now, we have a window that's open.”

While the video interview preceded the more widely used video resume, many say it is far more of a superior human resource alternative.

“Our system is architected in a way that even the larger companies have not started to think about. We are several generations ahead,” Doraisamy said.

Recently, Interview USA has taken on some weighty clientele, like the state unemployment office Michigan Works and the Los Angeles and Las Vegas school districts. The company also works for the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office.

Possible bias?

But this new technology — video resumes and, to a lesser extent, the video interview — already has major detractors.

“Some candidates would not appear well on video, and they would never do a video,” said Deb Keary, human resource director with the Society of Human Resource Management. “So those candidates are immediately put at a disadvantage.

“Legally, as soon as someone sees your face, they know your age, race, ethnicity. So if you don't get the job, you can say it was one of those things and file a suit. You should never know what someone looks like during the hiring process.”

Video resumes make it possible to screen out people based on ethnicity, age, gender or looks in the initial hiring process, before candidates can even get their foot in the door, Keary said.

She had fewer concerns about the video interview.

“At that point, they've already selected the people based on their resume,” Keary said. “So I suppose it would save a lot of money on travel. As long as it's not the first criteria, that you see what they look like, I think it's OK. But I still like the in-person touch.”

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission wrote in February that relying on new technology in job searches, such as video resumes, could lead to intentional race or color discrimination based on appearance or a disproportionate exclusion of minority applicants who may not have access to broadband-equipped computers or video cameras.

At CollegeGrad.com, President Brian Krueger originally offered a video resume option back in 2001 — around the same time that Interview USA first opened its doors — but then later stopped because of lack of interest

“Frankly it never took off,” Krueger said. “The adoption factor was not there. There were not enough video cams out. We were way ahead of our time.

“Now, the technology has advanced, and the use of Webcams are advanced. They are used in the IM (Instant Messaging) process, and that's essential for our target demographic, which is 18- to 25-year-olds.”

Krueger said that discrimination concerns are a red herring. He notes there has not been one

lawsuit over the use of video resumes. But he also recently introduced a new product that is essentially a video interview — the virtual career fair — primarily because of those concerns.

“The reality is if you are that afraid you shouldn't be interviewing people. But with the virtual career fair, where they are answering specific questions, it's actually much more legally defensible,” Krueger said. “We may train hiring managers on interviewing skills, but no one can control what happens when they walk into that room. They may ask five different questions to five different job applicants. That's what's really driving us to that area.”

The video resume raises additional concerns, primarily surrounding fairness, says Louis Maltby of the National Workrights Institute.

Paper resumes are entirely objective and more detailed while video resumes are entirely subjective: The content is typically candidates simply talking about themselves, Maltby said.

Former Interview USA employee Brian St. Laurent, who is now the global sales representative for competing video interview company HireVue, says the subjective nature of the video resume is one of the more notable selling points of the video interview.

Because the interview consists of a list of

questions that are asked of each applicant, employers are better assured the process will comply with equal employment opportunity laws.

In addition, it provides a more open process where internal audits can be conducted. Candidate pools for specific hiring managers can be reviewed and compared.

“If a manager has a predilection for 20-something-year-old blondes, it's going to show up pretty quick,” St. Laurent said.

The two parallel technologies and trends share the goal of helping businesses save time and money.

For larger businesses who spend thousands of dollars in airline expenses to interview candidates face to face, there's huge cost savings.

For job candidates looking to set themselves apart, it offers them an opportunity to illustrate their passion, enthusiasm and interest in a manner that is simply unequaled by the written word.

Ultimately, both technologies represent the inevitable — change.

“If you think about the entire HR process, all that stuff has been put on the Web and digitized,” St. Laurent said. “But when you get to the point of the interview, it flips back to the 19th century.”