

SOCIETY FOR HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Research



Search Tactics Poll



About the Poll

SHRM®/CareerJournal.com Search Tactics Poll

How do organizations recruit employees? How do job seekers find jobs? Are HR professionals advertising where job seekers are looking? In search of these answers, SHRM and CareerJournal.com, a free site from The Wall Street Journal, jointly conducted a poll.

About the Poll

The main objective of this poll was to determine if job seekers search for employment and HR professionals search for employees in similar ways. In January, 2001, a poll specific to HR professionals was faxed to randomly-selected SHRM members,

566 of which responded. A similar poll was sent via e-mail to a sample of job seekers, pulled from the *CareerJournal.com* Job Alert list, 439 of which responded. The typical visitor to CareerJournal.com is male, age 40, earning \$80,000 annually. Forty-two percent (42%) of CareerJournal.com's visitors are employed, satisfied and passively job hunting while 32% are employed and actively job hunting.

Using a scale from 1 to 5 (where one means "not at all effective" and 5 means "extremely effective"), poll respondents were asked to rate a series of search tactics.

Survey Results

Most Used Search Tactics

Respondents were asked to rate the search tactics on effectiveness or indicate if they do not use the search tactic. Table 1 and Charts 1 and 2 depict the percentages of respondents who indicated they use the search tactic by providing a rating for the search tactic. The most commonly used search tactic by job seekers was Internet job postings (96%), followed closely by personal contact/networking and newspaper ads (95% each).

Similar to the job seekers, HR professionals also rely on newspapers (96%), followed by personal contact/networking (95%), employee referrals (91%) and Internet job postings (88%) to get the word out about positions open at their organizations.

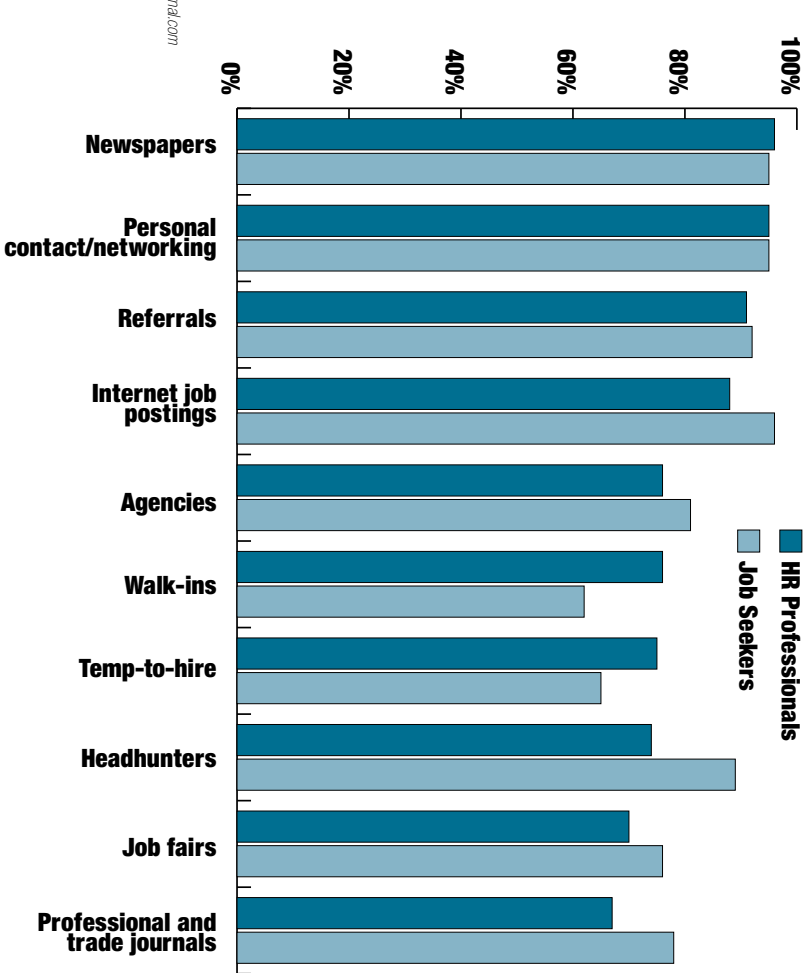
Table 1 – Search Tactics Used

	HR PROFESSIONALS		JOB SEEKERS	
	n	% Use	n	% Use
Internet job postings	559	88%	434	96%
Personal contact/networking	563	95%	434	95%
Ads in newspapers	559	96%	439	95%
Employee referrals/Employee referral program	563	91%	432	92%
On-line or website job applications	557	49%	439	90%
Headhunters	560	74%	433	89%
Employment agencies	559	76%	437	81%
Ads in professional and trade journals	559	67%	433	78%
Job fairs	561	70%	434	76%
Open houses	557	36%	434	69%
Internet advertisements (e.g., banners and links)	559	29%	437	68%
Job hotlines	554	30%	431	67%
Temp-to-hire (consultant, independent contractor, temporary agency)	562	75%	438	65%
Community organizations	558	55%	433	63%
Walk-ins	565	76%	437	62%
Radio/TV advertising	557	26%	428	54%
Places of worship	560	24%	432	48%
Ads in international newspapers	556	17%	434	43%
General public postings (supermarkets, movie theaters, etc.)	561	21%	437	42%
Minority job fairs	560	51%	431	42%

Source: SHRM®/CareerJournal.com Search Tactics Poll

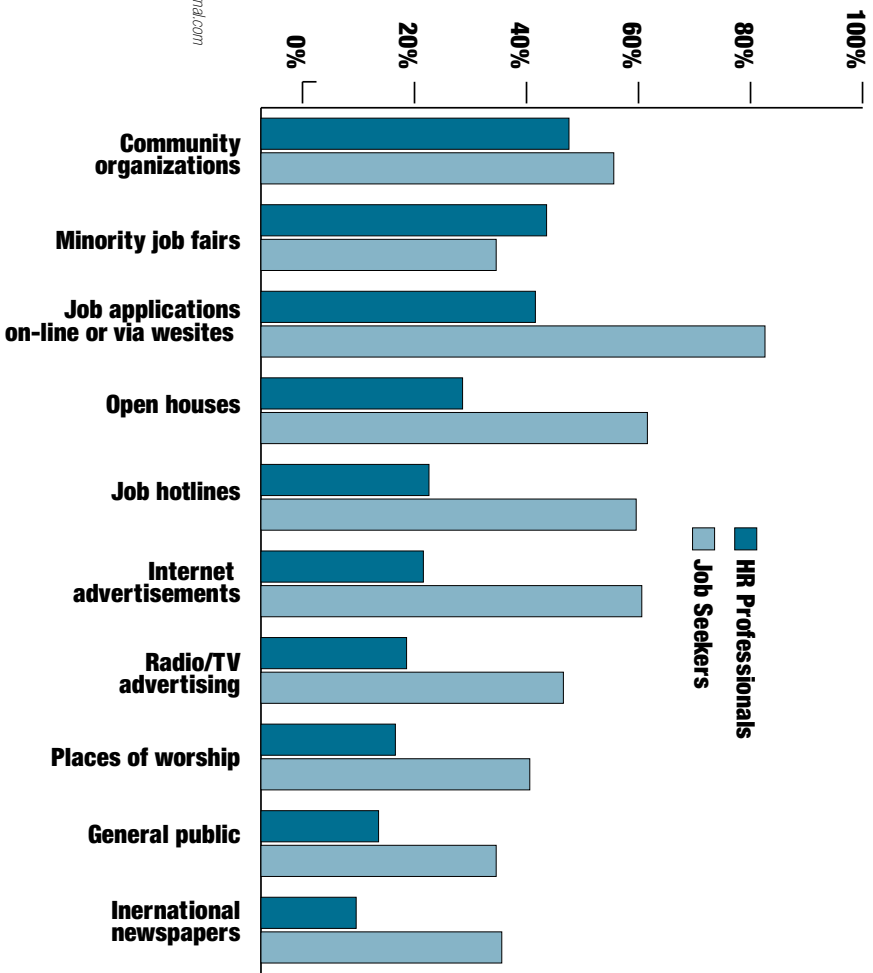


CHART 1
Percentage of Respondents Using Search Tactic



Source: SHRM®/CareerJournal.com Search Tactics Poll

CHART 2
Percentage of Respondents Using Search Tactic



Source: SHRM®/CareerJournal.com Search Tactics Poll

Effectiveness of Search Tactics

Respondents who use the search tactic were asked to rate each on its effectiveness. A scale of one to five, where one was “not at all effective” and five was “extremely effective” was used. Table 2 and Charts 3 and 4 depict the percentage of respondents rating the search tactics either four or five, which may be interpreted as “effective”.

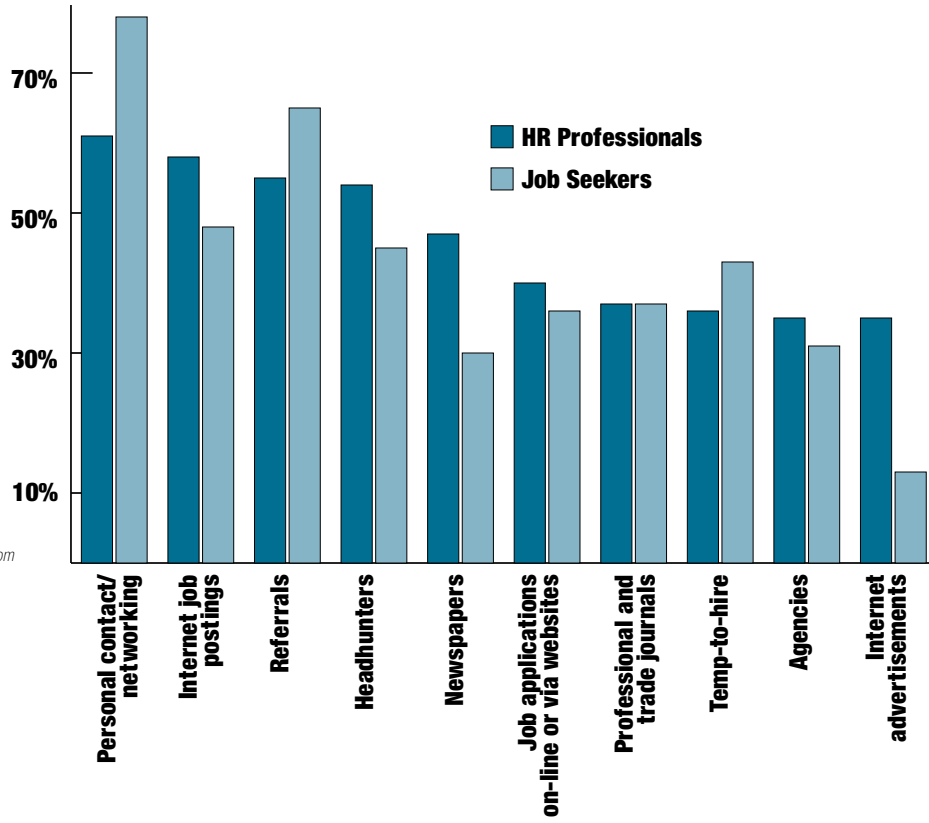
Sixty-one percent (61%) of HR professionals rated personal contact/networking effective, followed by Internet job postings (58%), employee referrals/employee referral program (55%), headhunters (54%) and newspaper ads (47%). The percentage of job seekers who rated personal contact/networking as effective was 78%, followed by referrals from employees (65%), responding to Internet job postings (48%), headhunters (45%) and temp-to-hire (43%).

Table 2 – Percentage of Respondents Who Stated Search Tactic is Effective

	HR PROFESSIONALS		JOB SEEKERS	
	n	% Effective*	n	% Effective*
Personal contact/networking	537	61%	414	78%
Internet job postings	493	58%	415	48%
Employee referrals/Employee referral program	515	55%	398	65%
Headhunters	413	54%	387	45%
Ads in newspapers	534	47%	416	30%
On-line or website job applications	273	40%	394	36%
Ads in professional and trade journals	373	37%	337	37%
Internet advertisements (e.g., banners and links)	162	35%	295	13%
Temp-to-hire (consultant, independent contractor, temporary agency)	419	36%	283	43%
Employment agencies	424	35%	352	31%
Job fairs	391	23%	331	23%
Job hotlines	166	22%	289	19%
Radio/TV advertising	143	21%	230	15%
Open houses	203	18%	300	12%
Minority job fairs	283	14%	181	19%
Community organizations	306	13%	273	26%
Ads in international newspapers	95	12%	188	19%
Walk-ins	428	11%	273	16%
General public postings (supermarkets, movie theaters, etc.)	118	9%	185	9%
Places of worship	135	6%	206	22%

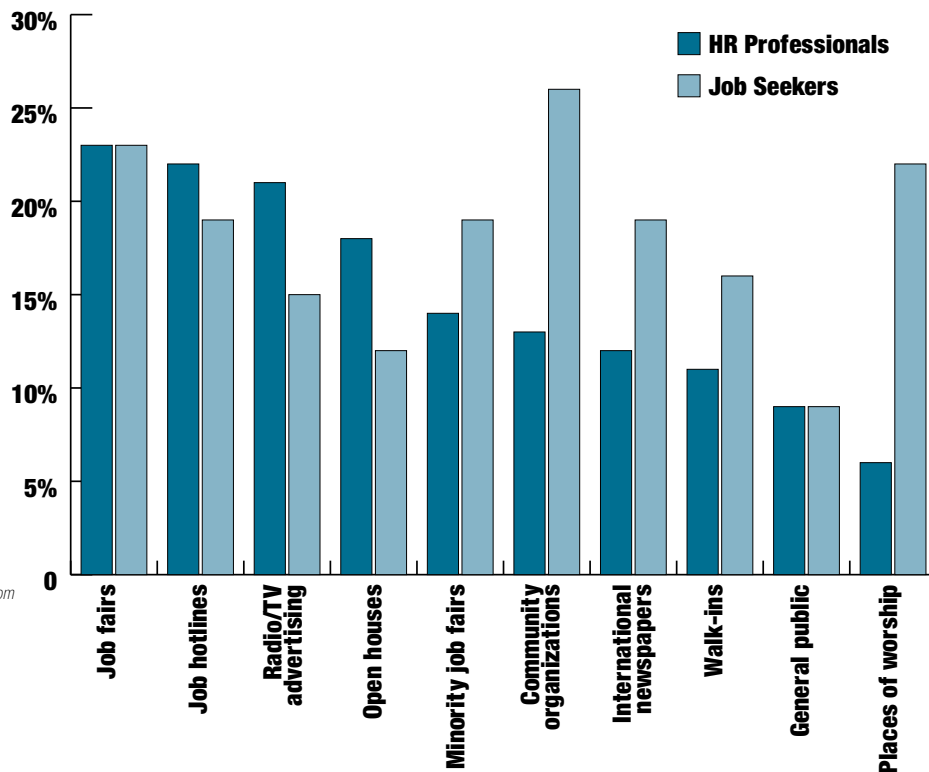
Source: SHRM®/CareerJournal.com Search Tactics Poll
 *Percentage of respondents rating the search tactic as effective (a rating of 4 or 5).

CHART 3
Percentage of Respondents Who Stated Search Tactic is Effective



Source: SHRM®/CareerJournal.com Search Tactics Poll

CHART 4
Percentage of Respondents Who Stated Search Tactic is Effective



Source: SHRM®/CareerJournal.com Search Tactics Poll

Similar to Table 2 and Charts 3 and 4, results of these ratings, in the form of means, are shown in Table 3. Means may reflect a more accurate picture of respondents' intentions as the means include negative ratings (a rating of 1 or 2) and neutral ratings (a rating of 3) as well as positive ratings (a rating of 4 or 5 – as shown previously). HR professionals rated personal contact/networking as the most effective search tactic (mean rating of 3.70), followed by Internet job postings (3.62), employee referrals/employee referral program (3.51), headhunters (3.47) and newspaper ads (3.34). Job seekers also rated the same search tactics as the most effective (except in the case of newspaper ads). The highest rated search tactic for job seekers was personal contact/networking (mean rating of 4.07), followed by referrals from employees (3.77), headhunters (3.21), responding to Internet job postings (3.20) and temp-to-hire (3.12).

A statistical comparison of the means was conducted to determine if there were significant differences in the perceptions of these two groups. As shown in Table 3, HR professionals rated the following search tactics as significantly more effective than job seekers: Internet job postings, headhunters, ads in newspapers, on-line or website job applications, Internet advertisements and employment agencies. Job seekers rated personal contact/networking, employee referrals/employee referral program and places of worship as significantly more effective search tactics than HR professionals.

Table 3 – Mean Effectiveness of Search Tactics

	HR PROFESSIONALS		JOB SEEKERS	
	n	Mean [†]	n	Mean [†]
Personal contact/networking	537	3.70*	414	4.07*
Internet job postings	493	3.62*	415	3.20*
Employee referrals/Employee referral program	515	3.51*	398	3.77*
Headhunters	413	3.47*	387	3.21*
Ads in newspapers	534	3.34*	416	2.83*
On-line or website job applications	273	3.21*	394	2.93*
Ads in professional and trade journals	373	3.17	337	3.05
Internet advertisements (e.g., banners and links)	162	3.04*	295	2.15*
Temp-to-hire (consultant, independent contractor, temporary agency)	419	3.03	283	3.12
Employment agencies	424	3.03*	352	2.78*
Job fairs	391	2.76	331	2.70
Job hotlines	166	2.64	289	2.46
Radio/TV advertising	143	2.57	230	2.28
Minority job fairs	283	2.55	181	2.49
Community organizations	306	2.51	273	2.68
Open houses	203	2.33	300	2.19
Walk-ins	428	2.14	273	2.19
Ads in international newspapers	95	2.13	188	2.31
Places of worship	135	2.04*	206	2.50*
General public postings (supermarkets, movie theaters, etc.)	118	2.00	185	1.95

[†]Mean ratings based on a scale where 1 is "not at all effective" and 5 is "extremely effective".
^{*}Statistically significant based on t-test results of p ≤ .01.
Source: SHRM®/CareerJournal.com Search Tactics Poll

Conclusion

When employers recruit individuals for employment, they are essentially creating a pool of candidates from which to select qualified candidates who are the best fit for the position. In the recent labor shortage, recruitment has become a top issue for HR professionals. The results of this poll show that overall HR professionals are looking for recruits in the same places as job seekers are looking for employment.

Although HR professionals and job seekers use similar tactics, almost one half (9 out of 20) of the tactics were rated at significantly different levels of effectiveness. HR professionals found Internet postings, headhunters, newspaper ads, on-line applications, Internet advertising and employment agencies to be significantly more effective recruitment tools than job seekers did. Job seekers found the informal methods of personal contact/networking, employee referrals and places of worship significantly more effective than HR professionals did. It may be that HR professionals find methods that are more quantifiable to be more effective, or, because they are more quantifiable, HR is able to determine the effectiveness of the method. Conversely, job seekers may find informal methods to be more effective because they get feedback from these methods that helps to bolster their confidence and give them a positive outlook.

It would be unwise to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of particular tactics from this exploratory poll. However, it may be interesting to consider why these two perspectives exist. HR is continually trying to measure its effectiveness and

consequently uses tactics that historically show results. With the Internet for example, an organization can count the number of “hits” a posting receives or the number of applications it receives in response. Job seekers, by virtue of the fact that they are looking for a job, may seek feedback that is qualitative rather than quantitative. In other words, job seekers want to know that their skills and qualifications are valued and may be of interest to others. Through informal methods, job seekers may get this feedback and consider the method effective regardless of whether or not they actually receive a job offer.

Several conclusions are clear from this poll. Both employers and job seekers continue to use a variety of methods in their search for candidates and jobs. However, a larger percentage of job seekers use most tactics compared to the percentages of HR professionals using the tactics. Although this in itself is not at all surprising given that the personal stakes for job seekers are likely to be higher than for organizations, some of the gaps were quite interesting.

For example, 49% of HR professionals used on-line applications where as 90% of job seekers used this tactic. Similarly, Internet advertising was by 29% of the HR professionals but 68% of job seekers. Job hotlines were used by 30% of HR professionals but by 67% of job seekers.

What is particularly interesting is that in each of these three examples, HR professionals found the tactic to be more effective, significantly so in the first two. It may be that HR professionals should reconsider the mix of tactics that they use in terms of frequency of use for each tactic.