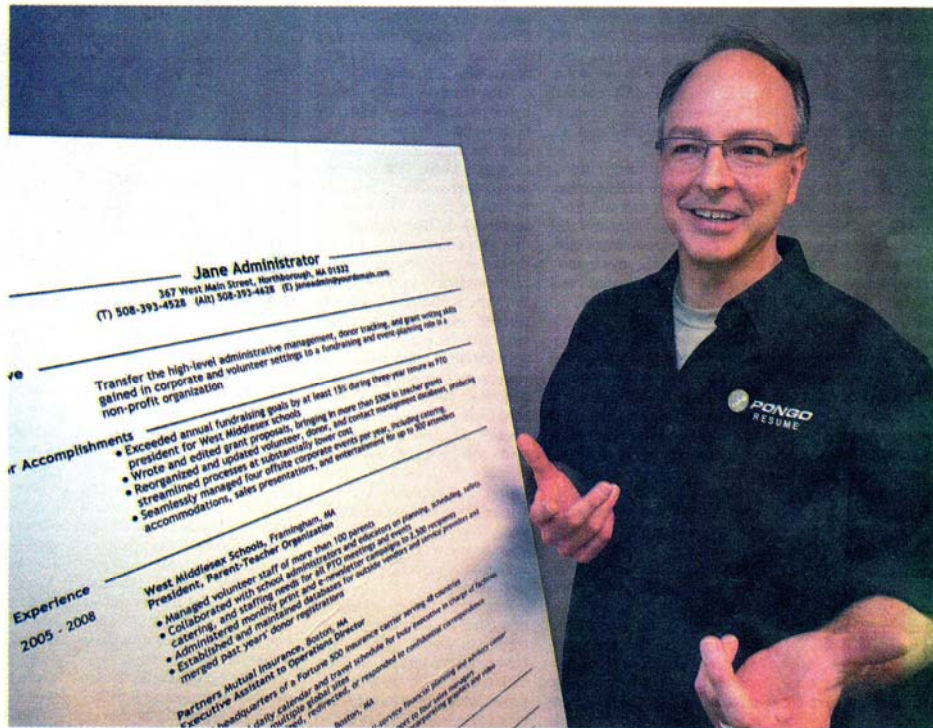


The METROWEST DAILY NEWS

MONDAY, MAY 12, 2008

METROWEST DAILY NEWS • MONDAY, MAY 12, 2008

METROWEST BUSINESS



DAILY NEWS PHOTOS BY ART ILLMAN

Michael Neece, chief strategy officer at Pongo Resume in Northborough, shows a sample resume. Below is a Pongo Web site page.

Northborough company builds, distributes and tracks resumes

PUT WORDS TO WORK

By Bob Tremblay
DAILY NEWS STAFF

Two guarantees in life, according to the pundits, are death and taxes. They could add a third - resumes. Anyone who has ever applied for a job has probably written a resume.

The task can not only be tedious; if not undertaken properly, it can sink a job search quicker than a two-ton anchor.

Job hunters can hire a company to write their resumes, but the cost can be excessive. They can also put their resumes on a search board, but if the resume reads like a laundry list, chances

SMALL BUSINESS

Work in Progress:

of success dwindle.

Assistance in these matters comes courtesy of Pongo Resume. The Northborough-based company provides online resources to help subscribers create a top-quality resume, distribute it and even keep track it for only \$9.95 a month.

The creative process is handled via Pongo's Resume Builder software - a Web-based application that produces a unique resume template for the individ-

ual user based on occupation, job status and career path. It then walks the user step by step through the resume-writing procedure.

Distribution is handled by Pongo's Resume Publisher resource. This provides users with a variety of output paths, including printing, e-mailing, downloading, faxing and Web-page creating.

Pongo also provides a cover-letter service. Its Letter Builder walks users step by step through the process of crafting personalized, professional cover and follow-up letters.

Pongo's automatic Tracker, meanwhile, records all resume and cover letter. PONGO, Page C2

PROFILE

PONGO RESUME

President and CEO: Rodney Capron

Employees: 45 Industry: Employment

Company background: Based in Northborough, Pongo Resume is a full-service online resume-building resource. Its Web site is www.pongoresume.com.



Northborough firm helps create resumes

PONGO. From CI
ter submission activity to help users stay organized. For example, it tracks which versions have been sent to which employers.

In addition, the company's Task Manager allows users to set schedule reminders, receive e-mail alerts, prioritize tasks and manage their job search online.

Since the site's launch in 2004, Pongo has amassed 4.5 million users in 200 countries. The company generates more than 100,000 resumes per month and receives more than 500,000 visitors per month.

Pongo is the brainchild of its four founders – Rodney Capron, president and CEO, of Northborough; Dan Balter, chief creative officer, of Wayland; Dan Miller, chairman of the board of directors, of Florida; and Michael Neece, chief strategy officer, of Hopkinton.

Before their Pongo association, Neece and Balter had been involved in the employment market for more than a decade.

"What we had witnessed was a gradual decline in the quality of resumes over time, and the quality of your resume has a direct result on how successful your job search is," says Neece. "If you have a lousy resume, you're going to have a hard time because you're not going to be getting interviews."

Job seekers commit a common mistake, according to Neece, by simply listing their jobs in chronological order. "That's just a history lesson," he says. "They're not communicating all the talents

they have. You're leaving it up to the reader to make some assumptions, and the reader will assume that if it's not in there, you don't have those abilities."

The specific language of a resume also needs to be taken into account, according to Neece. "For example, it's not effective to start a sentence with 'I was responsible for,'" he says. "Start your sentences with an action verb – 'I designed it.' 'I procured it.' 'I managed.' 'I led.' 'I coordinated.' That communicates action to the reader."

To ameliorate this situation, Pongo's founders brainstormed. "We got together and said, 'Let's see if we can build a product that brings the resume-writing expertise to the masses at an extremely low cost to the user.' Our goal was to make a little bit of profit on each user and do it in high volume, compared to a resume-writing service that will charge you, if you're a student with no job experience, \$100, or, if you happen to be a senior manager in New York City, \$850. Most people don't have those kind of resources to just get a piece of paper written for them."

"We started out by gathering intelligence from resume writing and imbedding it in software so that people got tips and advice as they went along to create their resume."

To supplement its services, Pongo launched an online learning center last week so subscribers have more resources to assist their job search. The company also has a blog that posts

discussions about issues facing people in today's job market.

For the record, the company's moniker isn't a tribute to one of the dogs in "101 Dalmatians." "We wanted a name that was easy to remember and a little bit funky," says Neece. "Yahoo, Google – they don't tell you what they do, but they're memorable. We want our brand to be as memorable as those two."

While other companies provide online resume-writing resources, Pongo is the only one with a support staff available by phone, according to Neece. "We have real live support and that's a big differentiator for us," he says. "If somebody is having trouble – they're not quite sure how to use the software – they can dial the phone and speak to a real person. We have six and soon-to-be eight certified resume writers on staff who can help people."

"With other companies, if you want to get support, you have to go to their Web site and make a submission on an online form. There's no phone number and some don't even tell you where they are. Why are they hiding? We don't understand it."

In addition to being accessible, Pongo has "either the best software or we're up there with the leaders in terms of functionality," says Neece.

Pongo also has an advantage over other job search boards, according to Neece. "They say they have a resume builder," he says. "What they really have is a resume digester. You have to have your resume done in able to post



DAILY NEWS PHOTO BY ART ILLMAN

Michael Neece is one of the founders and the chief strategy officer of Pongo Resume in Northborough.

it. Our services are about helping you get your resume created and making it better."

For the future, Pongo will be adding more services to assist in these quests. It should be noted that, after the first month, subscribers can cancel their fee at any time. They can also resume their search later if the circumstances necessitate it and all their information will remain intact.

Pongo's game plan has produced boffo results. Revenues grow from 60 to 100 percent annually and are already up 53 percent this year from last year, according to Neece.

"We've gotten better at improving the services we provide," he says in explaining the growth.

"We've also been adding more value at the same price and getting better at marketing our services online and off. This year we're investing heavily in getting our name in other media – such as newspapers, radio and television."

Interestingly, Pongo's success may not be tied to economic trends. "When the economy is good, people are changing jobs. They see opportunities," he says. "When the economy is not so good, they're looking for a new job for different reasons. We started when the economy was pretty good and we're growing when the economy is not very good."

A more telling statistic relative

to Pongo's success is that on average 34 million people change jobs in the United States every year.

Also, the industry composition of Pongo's membership matches the industry composition in the United States, adds Neece.

Finally, even though the U.S. unemployment rate recently dropped from 5.1 percent to 5 percent, so far in 2008, more people are working part time than at any point in the last 10 years, according to the U.S. Bureau of labor statistics.

So the job searches continue as does the resume writing.

(Bob Tremblay can be reached at btremblay@cnc.com or 508-626-4409.)