

As unemployment rises, so may use of video resumes

Job seekers may go to YouTube, and hiring pros are giving video serious thought

By Patrick Thibodeau

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Job cuts next year are expected to surpass 1 million, outplacement consulting firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas Inc. said today, but rising unemployment will also bring about its own boom in the use of social networking and tools such as video resumes.

Challenger, a Chicago-based firm that tracks job cut announcements, said 156,000 tech-sector job cuts were announced through November, or about 15% of the just over a million announced reductions this year. That's in contrast to the period of the dot.com bust, when tech job cuts accounted for 36% of the overall total of job cuts in 2001 and 32% in 2002, the firm said.

As layoffs continue, job seekers will increase their use of Web 2.0 tools to network and to stand out in a crowd. "YouTube could become the sandwich board of the new millennium," Challenger said.

On YouTube, a search for "video resume" brings up less than 2,000 results; a search on "resume" alone returns 26,000 results but includes anything using the word "resume." Video resumes may still be too new and different for most. Management Recruiters International Inc. in Philadelphia did an online poll of visitors to its Web site last spring, and out of the 500 Web site responses, 4% said they had used video in their job search.

But video is getting serious consideration from recruiting professionals, such as Kip Hollister, CEO of Boston-based recruiting firm Hollister Inc. Hollister said she may use it to market some of her clients.

"One has to be very careful using this as a tool, because the first impression is a lasting impression," Hollister said. "If one is going to do this, you really need to do it right. And if you do it with low quality, that will, in essence, leave a cheap impression of video resumes," she said.

Hollister's clients range from programmers with skills in .Net and Java, to business analysts and chief technology officers. Ideal candidates for video may be those seeking management jobs who may interact with marketing and other departments. Video might enable potential candidates to demonstrate their communication skills and charisma, she said.

But sending a video link to a large company may not help.

"The average recruiter at a big company is recruiting for 20 different positions simultaneously," said Michael Neece, chief strategy officer at Pongo Software LLC,

which operates PongoResume, an online resume service. Those recruiters, "are trying to screen as rapidly as they can" and may spend no more than 10 to 20 seconds looking at a resume.

Neece also said some employers may see video as a legally risky way to screen applicants because a video may give information unrelated to an applicant's qualifications, such as race, size and disability.

Della Giles, director of BlueSteps.com, the career management service of the Association of Executive Search Consultants in New York, said resumes will become more graphically rich and may include snippets of video as part of an overall presentation. BlueSteps is now working with VisualVC Inc. in Reston, Va., which combines multimedia elements, including video, in a resume, she said. The association represents search firms that recruit executives.

"The resume should be more than just a simple kind of paper document" that "gives you the essentials, but it doesn't necessarily tell you a lot about the broader aspects of an individual," Giles said.