

Video adds heft, hurdles to resumes



By ANICK JESDANUN, AP Internet Writer

Tue May 1, 4:22 PM ET

Fallon Rechnitz set her video-capable digital camera on a stack of books. She then hit the record button and spoke for about 30 seconds, instantly producing a video resume she plans to send to potential employers.

Rechnitz is at the forefront in the hunt for employment. Video-resume services are only starting to emerge on the Internet, and the 22-year-old Arizona State senior believes the visuals can give her a leg up after graduating this month.

"I feel like my personality is what really seals the deal and if they can see my personality I'd get a better chance of getting the job," said Rechnitz, who is applying for news positions with television stations in Arizona.

The job search has come a long way since the days of printing resumes on high-quality, linen paper and stuffing them in matching envelopes. Employers typically accept electronic versions of traditional resumes these days — many now require them — while incorporating their own research of applicants' social-networking personal profiles.

"You lose a little bit of formality. You as a candidate lose some of the distinction you might have had from a resume that looked good and matched well," said Brad Karsh, author of "Confessions of a Recruiting Director."

So to stand out, some job seekers are now turning to online services such as WorkBlast.com and ResumeBook.tv, or posting their clips on a video-sharing site like Google Inc.'s YouTube. No longer limited to mailing video on tape or a CD, they are e-mailing links to employers directly or adding them to traditional resumes.

Kevin Epps, 49, said he was getting interviews for more senior positions after posting his video resume late last year. (None turned into job offers, but in a twist the Las Vegas company that produced the video, Harrington Reed Inc., wound up hiring him.)

Some video resumes, like Rechnitz's, show a candidate speaking directly to a camera, while others are mock interviews. Some blend in visuals of related work or extracurriculars such as playing the piano.

Many employers welcome the chance to see a candidate before committing to an interview. Laurine Sargent said she wished she had video clips accompany the roughly 60 applications she received for a recent opening at her Phoenix-based real-estate firm.

"After a while (resumes) would become hypnotic," she said. "Everybody today knows to say the right things they know employers are looking for."

She said she invited a dozen candidates for interviews and might have cut that in half had she seen their presentation skills ahead of them.

Others, however, remain skeptical, worried about the time it would take to view all the video and the potential for discrimination based on race, age and other factors that wouldn't be apparent strictly from a traditional resume.

"Employers have told me for years that they will throw a resume in the trash if it has a picture attached or included," said Shirley Rasberry, the career-services director at Texas Christian University's business school. "They want to be sure there is no chance of being accused of any kind of discrimination. So a video resume would have the same effect."

Job seekers also open themselves to looking stupid, and not just by choosing weird or inappropriate e-mail addresses.

"It's almost like handing a job candidate a loaded gun," said Scott Erker, a senior vice president at the human-resources consulting firm Development Dimensions International. "You can be quite casual when in fact you want to make sure you're tops in professionalism."

He said many video resumes come across as auditions for "American Idol." Because the concept is relatively new, he said, applicants don't have good role models and turn to what they see on television for inspiration.

Job seeker Aleksey Vayner was widely mocked last year when his seven-minute video resume was widely circulated online. It shows footage in which he claims to lift 495 pounds in weights, serve a tennis ball at 140 mph, ski as a national qualifier and break a stack of seven bricks with his hands. He was seeking a job in investment banking.

Patricia O'Keefe, assistant career director at the University of Denver, said neither employers nor students have brought up video resumes, and the university hasn't been pushing them. She favors waiting until employers resolve any issues related to

discrimination.

Tyler Redford, chief executive of ResumeBook, acknowledged that employers and career centers have been skeptical, and fewer than a third of its users have posted a video resume, even though it is a core feature.

But Redford and other supporters believe discrimination could occur at the interview stage even without video resumes, so that alone should not deter job seekers.

As for concerns about the time it takes to view all the video, "it's a matter of where you work it into the process," Redford said. Employers could save time overall, he said, by reviewing video before asking the finalists to travel for interviews.

Even if an employer never sees it, producing a video resume could help a job candidate prepare for the interview and boost self-confidence, said Tim Apolito, a University of Dayton instructor who has been helping criminal justice students prepare video resumes long before YouTube and the online services came around.

Some advocates believe video resumes may make sense in certain fields like broadcasting, marketing and theater — the ones where job seekers are already asked to send in portfolios of past work. Unlike a portfolio, though, a video resume merely shows how one performs in front of a camera.

"A resume is really a marketing piece but not necessarily showing the scope of your work," said Julia Overton-Healy, director of Mansfield University's career center.

Nick Murphy, operations manager with WorkBlast LLC, said video resumes aren't meant to replace other job-search tools, nor are they limited to professions in which employers deal directly with the public.

"Even people who are hiring software coders, (they) are going to sit in a cubicle somewhere," he said. "It's an opportunity to learn a great deal about people and their personality and their potential with the company."

On the Net:

<http://www.workblast.com/9293828209.html>

Copyright © 2007 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. The information contained in the AP News report may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed without the prior written authority of The Associated Press.