Posting a Job Profile Online? Keep It Polished

Presentation Can Be Critical in Getting Sought Out by Managers and Recruiters

By Sarah E. Needleman

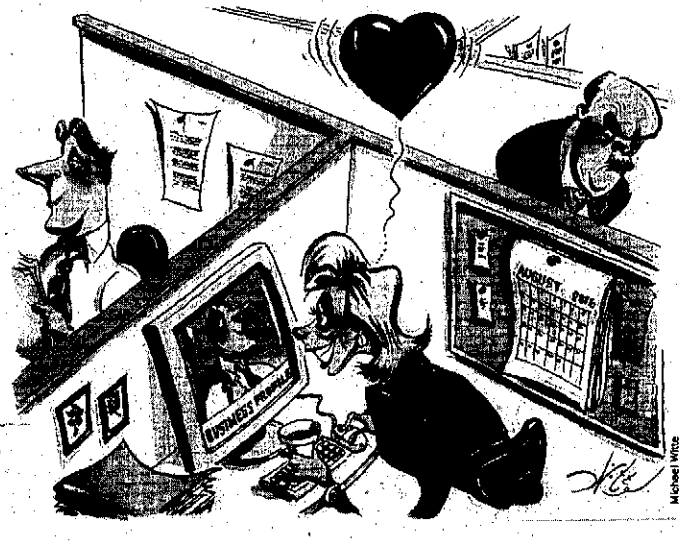
HAVEN'T POSTED A MYSPACE or other Web page? You may yet be pulled into online profiles—at work. A growing number of employers are encouraging or requiring professionals to post brief biographies on corporate intranet sites as well as companies' consumer-directed Web sites.

Companies use the profiles to let employees throughout the organization know about their colleagues' expertise and backgrounds. On public sites, they are typically intended to let customers, the media and others know a bit about key employees. Recruiters have been known to scan these pages. Whether it is for your employer's site or a networking forum, your profile could affect your career. Here are some tips for writing one:

■ **Fill it with details.** The more information you enter, the more likely a person seeking someone with your background will find you, says Anne Berkowitz, chief executive officer at SelectMinds, a technology firm in New York that runs online profile pages for about 50 U.S. businesses. If you list only your job title or department, someone searching for a professional with your particular expertise or experience may not find you, she says.

Luis Duran, 28, posted a profile on International Business Machines Corp.'s intranet shortly after joining the Armonk, N.Y.-based information-technology company in May as a consultant in its Fairfax, Va., office. Soon after, he says a manager sought him out to help on a project. She was looking for a junior-level consultant in his area, with experience at a government agency and in business-process redesign, says Mr. Duran. His profile described all those criteria, he says.

■ **Avoid touchy subjects.** These include politics, religion or other hot-button topics.



Michael Witte

tors to post profiles on its Web site, so clients and colleagues can learn more about them, she says. Ms. Kullen, who edits them for the firm, says she's flagged several that describe the author's church- and synagogue-related activities, such as fund-raising work. "It can be your favorite thing to do, but if it's going to turn off 50% of readers, you shouldn't put it in your profile," she says. It's OK to list hobbies because that's one way you might bond with someone who reads your profile, adds Ms. Kullen. Just don't cite those likely to make a poor impression, such as playing beer pong.

■ **Look the part.** Many profile formats have an option for posting photos, says business psychologist Wendy Alfus-Rothman, president of Wenroth Consulting, do, then you need to also," she says. "You want to show that you understand the rules and that you play by them."

Dress in professional attire for your photo, even if your typical work style is casual, adds Dr. Alfus-Rothman. One client posted a photo of himself on a company intranet and a business-networking site with a jacket hanging over his shoulder, razor stubble and a smirk. "He got more offers for dates than he did for business prospects," she says. After replacing that photo with a more professional-looking one, he began connecting more with others about career opportunities, she says.

■ **Make it search friendly.** Make sure your profile contains the key words a person trying to find someone with your

tions on those words. "Manager" and "supervisor" are often used interchangeably, so if both words describe your career, find room for each. Just make sure the language flows, says Ms. Benedict.

Profiles typically limit the amount of text you can enter, so it's important to choose your words wisely, Ms. Benedict says. She recommends avoiding unneeded descriptors, such as "results oriented" or "dynamic"-they are unlikely to be used in a search.

■ **Use abbreviations.** Most people plug in abbreviations when searching profile databases, says Ms. Benedict. A hiring manager is more likely to enter "MBA" than type out "master's in business administration." Likewise, avoid spelling out numbers, she says. "You want to write '8' years of experience versus 'eight,' " she suggests.

■ **Say it with numbers.** Describe how your work has contributed to the bottom line at your current and past employers, says Supriti Bhandary, head of talent engagement and development for the Americas for Wipro Technologies, a technology-services company in East Brunswick, N.J., a unit of Wipro Ltd. in Bangalore. "You want to show that you increased sales by a certain percent, instead of just saying you were responsible for generating sales," she says. "Numbers jump out at people and help them conceptualize your accomplishments."

■ **Proofread.** Give your profile the same attention as you would your resume by thoroughly checking for mistakes, says Victor Palumbo, a managing partner in Chicago at Lucas Group, an Atlanta-based executive-search and staffing firm. "A typo is a red-flag indicator that you haven't thought things through very well. It just shows a lack of attention to detail and, in certain industries or fields, that's critical."