



FRONTLINE

R E P O R T



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A Newsletter for PACE and Section Leaders

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IEEE-USA Employment Assistance Committee

CHAIRMAN

Richard L. Riddle
910-765-9702 (O)
r.riddle@ieee.org

REGION 1

Irving Weiner
617-784-5393 (O)
617-784-6394 (H)
i.weiner@ieee.org

REGION 2

Warren A. Wickes
216-656-2799 (O)
w.wickes@ieee.org

REGION 3

Richard L. Riddle
910-765-9702 (O)
r.riddle@ieee.org

REGION 4

Alan B. Showalter
219-665-2348 (H)
913-539-4296 (voice mail)

REGION 5

Gary Johnson
713-274-2289 (O)
gary.johnson@ieee.org

REGION 6

Paul A. Willis
818-354-1714 (O)

IEEE-USA

William R. Anderson
1828 L Street, NW, Ste. 1202
Washington, DC 20036-5104
202-785-0017 (O)
w.anderson@ieee.org

WORLD WIDE WEB

<http://www.ieee.org/usab>

FRONTLINE is a bi-monthly newsletter published by the IEEE-USA Employment Assistance Committee and is sent to US PACE and Section Leaders. The editorial objectives of FRONTLINE are to provide its readers in a timely and objective manner with information they may in turn pass on to their members about IEEE employment assistance services and programs and engineering employment trends.

Does JLS Really Help Members Find Jobs?

Can you believe it? We are approaching our second anniversary of the Job Listing System (has it only been two years?).

In this article, we will review our progress to-date and try to answer the question posed in the title. Please, help us to pass the word along to members and the employers of electrical, electronics and computer engineers.

Two years of JLS

Since its introduction in August 1994, the JLS has experienced exponential growth. We posted our 1000th job in July 1995 and our 2000th job only 6 months later.

And, since the JLS went up on the Web in March 1995, we have averaged almost 10,000 "hits" each month, making it the most frequently visited IEEE Web site.

So, we know the jobs are posted and IEEE members are looking at them — but are any of our members actually landing these jobs?

We don't know ... exactly. We have a statement at the beginning of each job file asking members to let us know if they get one of the jobs — but no one does. We do know that one of our Committee members got a JLS posted job.

So, earlier this year, we approached the problem from the other end and began

sending survey questionnaires out to employers posting on JLS. This was marginally successful. Because the questionnaires went out with the invoices for the ads, we were getting only preliminary data. However, disappointing in some areas, the results, in many ways, have been encouraging. The employers' responses can be summarized as follows:

- The quantity of resumes received was smaller than expected
- Overall, the quality of responses was good
- The price is very attractive
- Despite the low number of responses, more than 50% of companies have or expect to interview one or more respondents
- And, overwhelmingly, companies say they will use the system again and will recommend the service to others

One company summed it up:
Overall, I have been pleased with the response we have had to our listing. The quantity of responses has not been huge, but the quality of respondents has been good. Unlike a print ad, responses were slow to start but picked up after the first week. Your questionnaire arrived at my office much too early, hence my initial review was not good.

Another commented:
Next to the free listings, we got the most bang for the buck from your service. Yours also gave us better quality. I must admit that the
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IEEE-USA Salary Information On Web

Selected data from the 1995 IEEE-USA Salary and Fringe Benefits Survey is now available on the IEEE-USA Web site at <http://www.ieee.org/usab> under the "Career and Member Services" section. At this location you will find charts for:

- Income by years of experience
- Income by highest degree earned
- Income by age

- Income vs. job function
- Income vs. level of responsibility
- Income vs. years with present employer
- Income vs. ethnic background
- Income by Primary Area of Technical Competence
- Income by IEEE-US Region
- Comparison of IEEE salary data vs. Engr. Workforce Commission data. ♦

free services bring in resumes from desperate people shooting at anything. I expect that your service will only get better in time as more people from both sides use it.

Another company, in response to the question, "Were any respondents interviewed as a result of the ad?" not only checked "yes" but added the comment "and hired!"

And, finally, one recruiter said: I received about a dozen responses to the three placements we ran during October. I consider this an excellent response since they are all highly-qualified people with extensive education and experience.

And, another recruiter. I am extremely impressed with your service. Every listing has produced excellent results: fast response and top-quality applicants. Recently, I filled an extremely difficult position through the Job Listing Service, yielding better than a 5000% return on my investment.

So, in answer to the question: "Are members getting jobs through the JLS?" — YES! Some are definitely getting jobs, but how many — we don't know, and probably never will.

But, to keep building on our successes, we need your help to get the word out to members. Please, continue to encourage all of your job seeking members to check out the JLS. And, notify the companies in your area that the JLS is THE place to find their next engineer.

Here are some tips for both employers and job-seekers to help them take advantage of the JLS.

Employers: How to get the most from your JLS ad

The primary reason why employers use the JLS is the audience. IEEE is the world's largest professional, technical organization and the only one that targets electrical, electronic and computer engineers — more than 300,000 of them. The JLS is, quite simply, THE best place to advertise electronically to this group.

And, priced as it is, the JLS gives the advertising company coverage across the entire nation (indeed the world) for less than \$100.00 for thirty days. This service is particularly useful for those companies or recruiters who have not made the investment required to establish an electronic presence. The JLS provides an

electronic recruiting capability for a small investment of time and money.

The key to getting good responses from job postings on the JLS is to provide specific, detailed job descriptions.

- Quote specific minimums for requirements such as experience. There is probably no way to eliminate student responses to a posting, but tailoring descriptions to actual requirements will tend to discourage of them.
- Set realistic salary ranges. Experienced engineers will tend to avoid jobs with wide salary ranges, not wanting to be caught at the bottom of that range.
- If citizenship is a requirement or a security clearance will be necessary, include a statement in the posting. The Internet is borderless. A company can expect to receive responses from anywhere in the world.

Unlike a print ad in a newspaper or periodical, where a company will frequently give general job descriptions in an effort to retain flexibility, a JLS description needs to be specific. Our experience show that usually when a company complains that they are not receiving inquiries from the types of engineers they want it's because the description is not realistic. Keep in mind that the people using an online service to search for jobs electronically are looking more seriously than those just glancing at a newspaper or magazine.

The JLS is a great tool for finding a computer literate engineer. However, in all honesty, it is not so good for finding a busy executive manager. These people do not tend to "surf the Net" — they have assistants to do that for them. Employers should not expect to find their top executives by advertising electronically.

We provide the JLS as a service to our members. However, we also recognize that the more employers post openings on our system, the better we can serve those members. For this reason, we are committed to meeting the needs of the employers as well.

Members: How to take advantage of JLS

For the member, the JLS provides, free of charge, hundreds of detailed descriptions for actual job openings. All they have to do is access the Internet.

And, it pays to start 'surfing the Net.' Our survey of unemployed members last year showed that those with Internet ac-

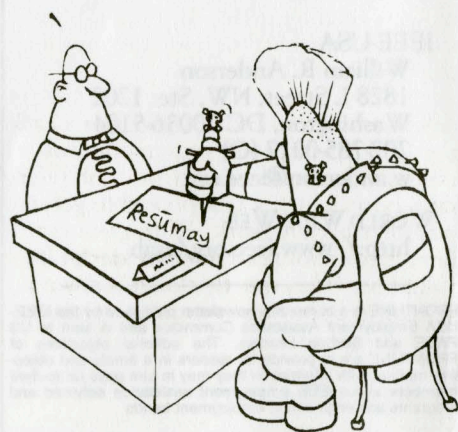
cess experienced 19 fewer weeks of unemployment than those without.

Using the listings in the JLS, members can take control of their job search. Rather than sending out dozens of resumes or posting with a referral service then waiting for the phone to ring, the JLS job-seeker takes the initiative and contacts the advertising company directly.

To get the most from the JLS, members should:

- Download the files to a personal computer. The job files are very large. Members, particularly those using a commercial online service such as America OnLine or CompuServe to access the listings, should first download the files to a simple word processing program. Then, offline, they can perform key-word searches or browse the job postings at their leisure.
- Respond quickly to postings. Companies advertising electronically expect quick responses. Use fax or email when possible.
- On the other hand, do not ignore jobs that have been posted for more than a month. On the JLS, any posting remaining on the system more than 30 days is there at the request of the hiring company — they are still looking.
- Tailor the response to the job. The detailed descriptions in the JLS provide the perfect opportunity for the job-seeker to give the company exactly what it is searching for.
- Highlight IEEE membership and the fact that you are responding to a JLS posting. The employer or recruiter advertising on the JLS is doing so because he specifically wants IEEE members and their skill sets.

For additional information, contact Bill Anderson and check out the IEEE-USA Web page at <http://www.ieee.org/usab>. ♦



In May, Arick A. Little posted a brief request for information on one of the IEEE newsgroups. How would you reply?

Please send information in this field to alittle@tower.nersc.gov. I am considering a future career in this field. Thanks.

A seasoned professional's response

Electrical engineers were in great demand to fill the needs of the 1970's. Unfortunately, this is the 1990's, and they've all been laid off. Many of those "middle level management" people that have been laid off from corporations have been engineers, a large portion of them electricals. Therefore, enrollments in college electrical engineering programs have dropped a great deal. Most industrial research and development programs have been greatly reduced or eliminated altogether, so the demand for engineers with advanced degrees has disappeared as well.

Though engineering is notoriously cyclical in its employment requirements, these jobs are unlikely to return. A great deal of industrial design work is being done overseas or has been automated, thus eliminating the need for engineers. There is at present a great deal of activity in computer software design as well as a strong demand for computer system administrators. But both of these categories are likely to dry up in a few years: outsourcing and automation will eliminate the jobs of software engineers and computer administrators.

Therefore, from a career standpoint, electrical engineering is on par with astronomy: it's very interesting, and you hear a lot about it, but you are unlikely to find a job doing it.

Unnecessary historical note: It took the IEEE, the erstwhile proprietors of this newsgroup, something like seven years to finally get an inkling that something might be wrong out there. When it finally dawned on them, IEEE quietly instituted a membership dues discount for those members who are unemployed.

Another historical note: A few years back the IEEE spent prodigious amounts of money to institute an electronic job referral service, which was supposed to get its members back to work. With great fanfare, they announced how wonderful it would be. They quietly closed it down a year or so later: there weren't any jobs to refer people to.

However: if you are trying to decide on a course of study, ignore all of the above.

You cannot successfully chase the job market from college—by the time you graduate, things will have changed, and in a totally unpredictable manner. So take what you feel like taking, and ignore the job-demand predictions of those who give them—their record is pretty dismal. Go to college for an education, not job training. That means you should learn to argue, design and think. Learn everything you can about the world and everyone in it. When you get out, you can do all the job training you'll need.

Mark Kinsler, PhD, Elec. Engineering

An engineering student's response

Claude Gomez, Chairman of the Student Branch at the University of Texas in Arlington, responded to some of Kinsler's statements (appearing in italics).

Gomez: There are people that do not have career management skills and therefore get burned. This is the 90's and to think that you will only ever have one job is a naive dream of the 50's. Along with this new era has come a new more wordly aware professional who is ready to move to new challenges, new projects or jobs. We are not content to work on the same thing for 40 or 50 years until we retire.

A great deal of ... work is being done overseas or has been automated, thus eliminating the need for engineers.

Who designed and built this new automated equipment? Accountants? Hogwash!!! Engineers did it — a lot of them!!

...computer software design ... computer system administrators... both of these are likely to dry up in a few years...

Every time a new generation of hardware comes along it is accompanied by a new generation of software. Example: within the next few months Intel should start producing the 686 to replace the pentium. The 786 is already halfway through its design stage and only Intel knows what they have up their sleeve for the 886. That means that all the software will either have to be upgraded or replaced, i.e.: there is a lot of work out there for the software engineers.

It also means Motorola, AMD, National Semiconductor, TI, etc., are also working madly to keep their competitive edge. Their customers and vendors are also creating new designs. And of course it is all being done by engineers!

...outsourcing and automation will eliminate the jobs of software engineers and computer administrators.

OK, I see the point, big companies realized that by subcontracting they could realize a measurable increase in profit margins. The questions is then: outsourcing to whom? accountants ???

Therefore, from a career standpoint, electrical engineering is on par with astronomy: it's very interesting, and you hear a lot about it, but you are unlikely to find a job doing it. The engineering demand is so high that the United States Congress is dueling over the issue of immigration to alleviate the domestic engineering demand.

You cannot successfully chase the job market from college...

If you read *Spectrum* (the IEEE flagship publication) along with *Potentials* (an IEEE magazine for engineering students) you will get a fair idea of what is evolving in the engineering field. Reading trade journals or engineering related publications is always a healthy thing to do. The point is that if you choose to be Mr. Head-Stuck-in-the-Sand your engineering career will be a failure (or any other career for that matter).

So take what you feel like taking... I would THINK about what I like during my second year of school so that I could tailor my electives towards that area. What a surprise!! I must also manage my engineering schooling!

Go to college for education, not job training. If training means "technical" training like TV repairman, then this statement is correct. At this point, my "training" includes several emulation/design software packages. Learning these tools now will give me an edge in using my employer's tools. College is part of your job training—it's the foundation of your career.

One last thing. What kind of a doctor would you go to? One that finished school 20 years ago, and never picked up a book again or one that every year goes off to a training seminar to learn some new technique or treatment procedure?

Engineering is such a dynamic and exciting field that we MUST learn something new every year. Whether it be a computer language or a new tool, we MUST remain current to have a successful career. The days of getting your degree and coasting on your knowledge have been gone for a long time. I sit in class daily with working engineers who are coming back to learn new things or get a Masters or PhD degree. The rule is: NEVER STOP LEARNING or your career will also stop growing. ♦

Straight Talk: The Other Side of the Same Coin

by Richard L. Riddle

Some of our members continue to be caught in force reductions and are removed from active employment while others are being hired by companies who predict continued economic growth and prosperity. We are told that the average technical professional can expect to change employers every three years regardless of how hard they work in maintaining and advancing their technical proficiency. Employers tell us that they can't find qualified US candidates so they must recruit foreign nationals. Are we looking at both sides of the age old "supply and demand" coin? What can we do to get the two sides together?

The IEEE-USA Employment Assistance Committee (EAC) developed its National Job Listing Service in an attempt to bridge the gap. In other articles in this issue of *FRONTLINE* you will read more about the IEEE-USA Job Listing Service (JLS).

In spite of the success enjoyed by the JLS, in many parts of the US our members are having a difficult time finding employment, particularly in the areas continued downsizing. Many of you are aware of the meetings Joel B. Snyder, Chair of USAB has been having with major industry leaders in an effort to reach some common ground on the issue of legal immigration of foreign technical professionals. You are also aware that due to the pressure by industrial lobbies on the US Congress, no additional restrictions will be placed on the immigration of foreign technical professionals recruited by these industries.

In an effort to offer a beneficial solution to this problem of supply and demand,

the EAC proposed that a letter be signed by the Chairman of the IEEE-United States Activities Board and sent by the EAC to several hundred major industries who employ technical professionals. The letter would tell these companies about our Job Listing Service and ask them to use it prior to seeking foreign technical professionals to fill their job openings. If the employer is truly attempting to find technical talent for a job, what better way to demonstrate his intent than to list the job with an organization that has the largest audience of technical professionals in the US.

I am happy to report that Chairman Snyder supports this proposal and hope-

The last *FRONTLINE*?

It's one of those good news - bad news situations. The bad news is that this may very well be our last edition of the *FRONTLINE* Report. We began this newsletter about two years ago to better communicate our services to volunteers and members. It accomplished that purpose very well.

IEEE-USA is reviewing all of its communication vehicles in an attempt to streamline services. And, little newsletters like this one will probably be incorporated into an expanded *IEEEUSA Perspectives*. The good news - we get our message directly to the member and you have fewer newsletters to read.

So, keep an eye on *Perspectives* and the IEEE-USA Web. You may not find us in this format anymore, but we'll still be around. And, thanks for listening and passing our messages along to members.

fully by the time you read this article, the letter will be in the mail. If after these employers list their jobs with IEEE-USA and can not find qualified candidates to fill these positions then I suggest that the members of IEEE and the electrical engineering profession have a more serious problem than supply and demand. ♦

Introducing the IEEE-USA National Job-Listing Service

The Information Superhighway ...The Road to Your Next Job!

IEEE United States Activities has developed an electronic job-listing service that gives members free information on job openings across the nation.

To access current job listings, send an e-mail message to any of these Internet addresses (no subject line or text message is needed; files will automatically return to your e-mail address):

Regions 1-6: info.ieeeusa.jobs.r/insert IEEE
region number: 01-06]@ieee.org
Massachusetts: ...jobs.mass@ieee.org
California: ...jobs.cal@ieee.org
Non-U.S.: ...jobs.other@ieee.org

World Wide Web:

<<http://www.ieee.org/jobs.html>>



THE INSTITUTE OF ELECTRICAL
AND ELECTRONICS ENGINEERS, INC.

IEEE UNITED STATES ACTIVITIES

1828 L Street, N.W., Suite 1202
Washington, DC 20036-5104, U.S.A.

IEEE-USA

1828 L Street, NW
Suite 1202
Washington, DC 20036-5104

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06419220 018A
DAVID B RICHMOND
2921 SO SIDNEY COURT
DENVER

131166

CO 80231

