



# Job Listings That Convert

10 Tips to Get the  
Candidates You Want



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## INTRODUCTION

Many organizations use job boards to advertise their open positions. The reason is simple: [job boards are where most job seekers spend their time](#). You need to go where the audience is.

But the results employers get from job boards can vary.

Sometimes it's because employers post their jobs on the wrong sites. Other times, it's because the messaging in the job post itself doesn't attract the right talent.

After 17 years in the job board business, Mac's List has put together a list of best practices that can optimize the return on investment (ROI) you get on your job posts.

Here are 10 steps you can take to find better candidates by improving your online job postings.



## BEFORE YOU BEGIN

### Define how you'll measure success

If you want to optimize the ROI of your job listings, you first need to have a clear understanding of how you measure job post value.

For most employers the truest measure of value is whether you find and hire the perfect candidate. Unfortunately, no job board *by itself* can guarantee to deliver you the right fit. Too many factors go into the entire hiring process — personalities, salary limits, competition — to credit any job board with an actual hire.

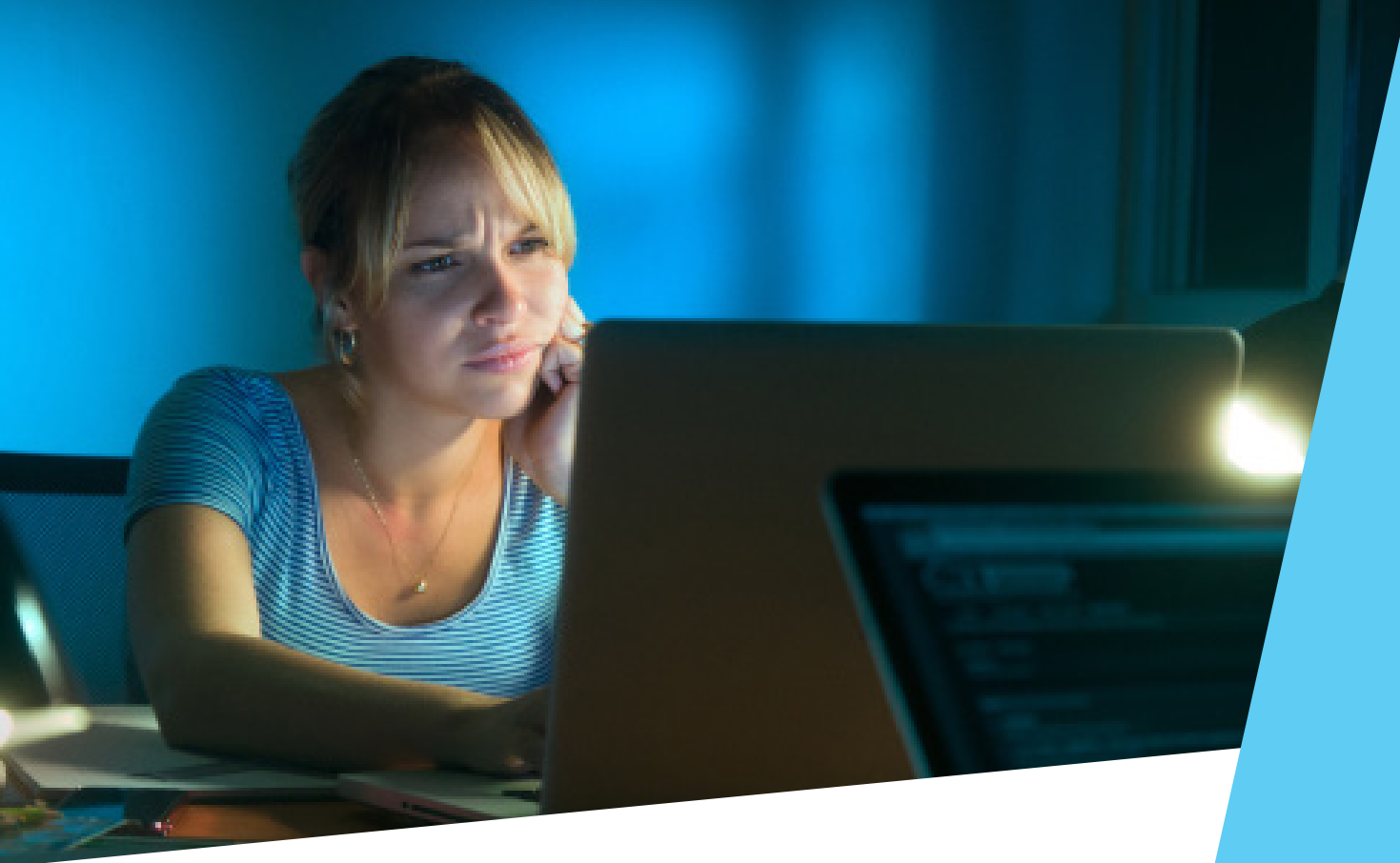
Instead, it's about whether your job listing delivered the most relevant candidates for you to review. You can measure this result in a couple of ways:

- **Quantity** - How many applications did you get?
- **Quality** - Did you get the right kind of candidates?
- **Diversity** - Did you reach a broad array of candidates?

Different job boards prioritize different performance metrics. Mac's List has always emphasized the quality of the job seekers we deliver to employers. We measure quality by the level of experienced, motivated, and qualified candidates who apply. In other words, the people you actually want to interview. Other sites, like Indeed, are all about volume. These boards deliver the most possible applications for every job posted.

There are pros and cons to each approach. The important thing is to know, ahead of time, what measure of value is most important to your organization.





### **TIP #1**

## **Use a clear job title**

Job titles matter within an organization. However, formal job titles aren't always the most descriptive measures of what the job is really about.

In fact, when employers use an esoteric, vague, or bureaucratic job title, it can lower total page views and applicant response rates.

Remember: when candidates browse job postings, they usually only see the job title. They have to click the link to get the details. If a job seeker doesn't understand the job title, they are likely to skip past your listing.

Use titles in your job posts that outsiders can easily understand. Either pick commonly known job titles or emphasize the responsibilities within the job.

You can always clarify the formal job title in the detailed job description.



## TIP #2

### Always include a salary range

The biggest barrier that keeps candidates from applying for a job is a lack of salary information.

Job seekers look for transparency when applying for jobs. Employers who don't post a salary are viewed with skepticism and distrust.

[A survey by CareerBuilder](#) found that 74 percent of job seekers expect a salary range to be included in a job description. As such, many candidates simply won't respond to ads that don't include wage information.

Jobsite, a UK-based career website, claims that [application rates drop 25-35 percent](#) when a job post doesn't include a salary range.

Many job seekers won't even see your job posts if you don't list a salary! Many job boards allow users to filter out jobs without a listed salary; [according to Smart Recruit Online](#), nearly 50% of all job seekers routinely select this option.

The data here is clear. If you want to attract more candidates, always include a salary range in the job post.



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**A wide salary range  
can drastically improve  
application rates.**

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### **TIP #3**

## **Promote your whole benefits package**

Sometimes, you simply can't compete for talent based on salary. If you're limited in the amount of money you can offer candidates (and we all are!) then you have to find other ways to attract the best employees.

One way you can do this is by playing up your other employee perks.

These perks include formal benefits like healthcare, retirement, and vacation time. They can also include other benefits like flex scheduling, remote work, summer Fridays, or even the the ability to bring your dog to the office.

Most candidates focus entirely on the dollar sign. So, whenever possible, try to attach a monetary value to your benefits package. This presents the disparate benefits as a cohesive compensation package that adds additional value to your job listing for potential applicants.







#### **TIP #4**

### **Emphasize the culture of your organization**

Increasingly, job seekers care about the [culture and values of prospective employers](#).

Professionals are looking for employment opportunities that jive with their own values, passions, and lifestyle needs. Don't be afraid to talk about your office culture and organizational values, as this can be a real magnet for the right kind of candidates.

This is a trend you see in hiring at many of the biggest employers in the country. There's a growing belief that finding talent is, at its heart, a marketing activity, rather than just a personnel process.

Think of your job listing as an opportunity to brand your organization and share its vision, mission, and culture. This is going to help you attract not only more candidates, but the kind of candidates who will best "fit" in your organization.





## TIP #5

### Post early in the week

Here's another simple tip that will increase your applicant pool: post your job early in the work week.

Job seeking used to be a weekend activity, focused around classified ads in the Sunday paper. With the advent of online job boards, job seekers are more likely to do their searching during the week and take time off on weekends.

According to research done by LinkedIn, Monday and Tuesday are the most popular days for candidates to view and apply to jobs.

To connect with the most possible candidates, you need to post your jobs when people are most engaged. Don't post your jobs on Friday evening. By Monday they'll be last week's news!

Instead, post jobs early in the work week. This schedule better aligns with how candidates look for jobs! You'll get the most possible views from engaged candidates.



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**According to LinkedIn,  
Monday and Tuesday  
are the best days to post.**

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## TIP #6

### Avoid gendered keywords

You would never write a job description that says “women need not apply.” But the truth is that unconscious gender bias has a way of sneaking into job descriptions. One way this plays out is in the words we use to describe jobs. The words you choose impact the types of people who will want to apply.

Many of the terms you’ll find in an average job description are gender-coded, meaning they evoke strongly masculine or feminine imagery.

For example, a job description seeking a “Sales Ninja” is going to resonate more with men. The same description that frames sales as “partnerships” will attract more women.

Most of the time gender coding is more subtle. Google “[gendered job description](#)” and you’ll find a whole list of gender-coded terms.

[70% of job descriptions have gendered keywords](#) which subtly dissuade good candidates from applying. The impact isn’t just with gender demographics - it can also depress application rates for other minority groups.

[One study showed](#) that gender-neutral job descriptions generated 42% more applications. Interestingly, there was an increase in applications from both women *and* men.

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## Tools to find gendered keywords:

- **Gender Decoder**
  - **Textio**
- 





## TIP #7

### Focus on the important requirements

Job descriptions are often a wish list of requirements that your ideal candidate *might* have.

Most recruiters are thrilled if they find a candidate with 75% of the qualifications. But job seekers don't know this! Instead, many superbly qualified candidates get scared off because they don't meet *all* the qualifications.

Listing too many requirements particularly impacts female candidates. [Research at HP](#) showed that men will apply for a job if they meet 60 percent of the requirements, while women only apply if they meet 90-100 percent. That means you're losing a lot of amazing female candidates.

You don't need to lower the qualifications posted in your job description. But you should *prioritize* your requirements. Think critically about what the true mandatory, must-have requirements are, and label them as such. Other qualifications can be listed as "preferred" or "bonus."





## **TIP #8** **Give clear application instructions**

Make it easy for people to submit the application materials you want! This seems basic, but you wouldn't believe how often we see organizations mess up their application instructions.

Sometimes it's as simple as having a typo in the email address or URL where candidates are to send their applications. Other times, I've seen employers provide three or four different application processes - only one of which they actually use to screen candidates.

The other thing you need to be crystal clear on is what you expect in terms of application materials. If you really want a cover letter, writing sample, or references, make sure you say so! Many job seekers will only include a cover letter if they are explicitly prompted to do so.

## TIP #9

### Communicate with applicants

The number one complaint we hear from job seekers relates to bad communication from employers. When candidates never hear back from employers it generates a lot of resentment and distrust.

Remember: job seekers are looking for transparency and value-alignment with employers. How you treat candidates in the hiring process is one way that you can project your values.

Even a little communication goes a long way towards this goal. Set up an auto-responder to confirm that you have received a candidate's application. Let people know when they've been eliminated from the process.

The upshot is that you aren't burning bridges with job seekers or associating any unnecessarily negative experiences with your brand. You're more likely to have people apply to future jobs with your organization - jobs for which they may be better suited - if you treat them right the first time.

Plus, it's possible that the people who apply for your job openings are also your customers or potential customers. Don't ruin these relationships because of a lack of simple follow-through.



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**Boost apply rates by  
promising a response to  
all applicants in your post.**

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## **TIP #10**

### **Track your sources**

Whether you're posting on a single site or on multiple job boards, you need to know whether you're getting the results you want.

You can't know if a job posting is working for you unless you're tracking performance. That's why it is so important to know the source for your applicants, the people you interview and the candidate you hire.

Many organizations have an applicant tracking system that can gather this information. If you don't have an ATS, the easy way to track performance is simply asking candidates where they found the job. This is an imperfect measure, but it will give you at least some data to review.

If you find that most of your really good candidates are coming from the same job sites, that's a sign that you're getting good value.





## RECAP

### Follow these best practices

If you do these nine things, you're making the most of your investment in a job post and are more likely to find the right candidate for your open jobs.

1. Use a title that people will understand
2. Include a salary range
3. Talk about your other benefits
4. Share your company culture and brand
5. Post early in the week
6. Avoid gendered keywords
7. Prioritize your job requirements
8. Give detailed application instructions
9. Communicate with applicants
10. Track your candidate sources

If you have any additional questions about optimizing your job posts, feel free to [contact Mac's List](#) at any time. We're here to help you succeed in finding the right candidate for your business!





## About Mac Prichard

Mac Prichard, founder and publisher of [Mac's List](#), has been connecting people to rewarding work for decades. As a transplant to Portland, Oregon in the early 1990s, Mac learned the secrets to finding work in a competitive market. He has since become a recognized expert on job hunting and career management. Mac writes for [Mac's List](#), hosts a weekly podcast, [Find Your Dream Job](#), and is the author of [Land Your Dream Job in Portland \(and Beyond\)](#) and [Land Your Dream Job Anywhere](#).

## About Mac's List

Since 2001, Mac's List has been Oregon's premier job search resource, an online community connecting thousands of passionate and talented people to meaningful work opportunities in the Pacific Northwest. A registered [B Corporation](#), Mac's List is an organization with a social mission: to give people the tools and knowledge they need to conduct effective job searches. We do this through our [job board](#), a [blog](#), a [podcast](#), and [on-line courses](#) all dedicated to the nuts and bolts of job hunting and career management.

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Contact us anytime

[mac@macslist.org](mailto:mac@macslist.org)  
[www.macslist.org](http://www.macslist.org)

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