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Internet Sites Emerge to Serve A Wave of Older Job Seekers

By KRIS MAHER

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Six weeks ago, Art Koff launched an online career site called HYPERLINK "<http://retiredbrains.com/>" [RetiredBrains.com](http://retiredbrains.com/)¹. By trying to connect job seekers and hiring companies via job postings and electronic résumés, the site is similar to hundreds of other job boards already on the Internet -- with one exception: It is geared toward older workers and employers eager to hire them.

"There were very few venues for seniors to find work, and there were very few venues for employers who wanted to hire seniors to find them," Mr. Koff says. The 71-year-old entrepreneur had a long career in recruitment advertising and then as a consultant before he ventured into the world of online job boards.

A handful of Internet sites have sprung up recently with hopes of catering to the growing population of older American workers. A population tidal wave of 76 million baby boomers born between 1946 and 1964 is fast approaching the traditional retirement age of 65. Between 70% and 80% of them say they expect to work after retiring for such reasons as financial necessity and personal satisfaction, according to Sara Rix, senior policy adviser at AARP.

Unlike RetiredBrains, many other sites for older workers so far offer only career information and other content rather than direct access to job openings. But a few have bigger ambitions.

HYPERLINK "<http://thephoenixlink.com/>" [ThePhoenixLink.com](http://thephoenixlink.com/)², for example, which is to launch officially this week, aims to connect older job seekers with recruiters who can place them into mid-to-senior-level management positions. In addition to splitting recruiting fees, the site plans to earn fees by acting as a staffing agency and directly placing candidates into short-term contract positions.

"There's far too many people that I know that are out there on Tuesday cutting the grass because they made the mistake of getting a day older than they were the day before," says Bill Vick, a partner in the site, who is 65 years old. "Our mission is to take those individuals and help them become interim managers."

Some say the sites could have difficulty drawing employers: Many older job seekers feel slighted by hiring attitudes bordering on age discrimination. Like other job boards, a few new sites require companies to pay for access.

"I really believe that they're destined for failure, because I know that people are not going to pay for them," says Eric Summers, president and founder of HYPERLINK "<http://seniorjobbank.org/>" [SeniorJobBank.org](http://seniorjobbank.org/)³, a nonprofit job board online since 1998. Shortly after Mr. Summers founded the nonprofit in 1975, he tried to charge nominal fees to employers, but listed job openings "went to zilch," he says. He adds that traffic on the Internet site, which is free to both employers and job seekers, doubled in the past year.

Luke Visconti, a partner and co-founder of a commercial site called HYPERLINK "<http://boomercareer.com/>" [BoomerCareer.com](http://boomercareer.com/)⁴, says he has been frustrated by companies' disinclination to advertise or to pay to post jobs to a senior audience. He launched BoomerCareer.com about a year ago. The site has attracted 10,000 seniors as members. "Unfortunately, BoomerCareer has not met with financial success," he says. "It's almost impossible to get advertising dollars for it."

He isn't giving up. Mr. Visconti, who also publishes DiversityInc., a bimonthly magazine that focuses on diversity issues and has a companion online site with 14,000 job postings, believes employers' attitudes about hiring seniors will shift just as they have over hiring more diversity candidates. He believes a sustained economic recovery could create more openings that will be harder to fill as the aging population begins to retire.

Workers like David M. Sander say sites geared toward seniors have a key advantage for them: "I would make a logical assumption that if a company were posting a job opening on one of those sites, they would have no concern about whether the person was older or younger."

The 56-year-old director of nutrition for CICOA, an Indianapolis nonprofit that serves aging and homebound people, says he has checked job postings on BoomerCareer.com for a year. He hasn't found a good fit yet, but not worrying about age bias, he says, "makes the job search less of a roller coaster."

Write to Kris Maher at HYPERLINK "<mailto:kris.maher@wsj.com>" kris.maher@wsj.com⁵

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Hyperlinks in this Article:

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- (2) HYPERLINK "http://thephoenixlink.com/" <http://ThePhoenixLink.com>
- (3) HYPERLINK "http://seniorjobbank.org/" <http://SeniorJobBank.org>
- (4) HYPERLINK "http://boomercareer.com/" <http://BoomerCareer.com>
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