

Search function job boards reviewed (part 4)

## The vacancy page on job boards

Jaap van de Putte, 2 use it | December 8 2008 | Editor: Sue Brokmann

This article is the fourth article in a series of 5 about our study on the search function of job boards.

In the last three articles we wrote about the different parts of the search function on job boards. This time we report about the page where a vacancy is presented. We call that the vacancy page, the vacancy detail page or the detail page.

Again we compared 9 job boards and assessed how well they complied to the checklist we developed.

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*Previous articles*

In the **first article** we presented the study. We evaluated the keyword search function of 9 job boards with a group of 30 students<sup>1</sup>:

- Monsterboard, [www.monsterboard.nl](http://www.monsterboard.nl)
- Nationale Vacaturebank, [www.nationalevacaturebank.nl](http://www.nationalevacaturebank.nl)
- Jobtrack, [www.jobtrack.nl](http://www.jobtrack.nl)
- Intermediair, [www.intermediair.nl](http://www.intermediair.nl)
- Stepstone, [www.stepstone.nl](http://www.stepstone.nl)
- Academic Transfer, [www.academictransfer.nl](http://www.academictransfer.nl)
- Werken bij de Overheid, [www.werkenbijdeoverheid.nl](http://www.werkenbijdeoverheid.nl)
- Jobs.ac.uk, [www.jobs.ac.uk](http://www.jobs.ac.uk)
- Indeed.com, [www.indeed.com](http://www.indeed.com)

The first article is available on: [www.2useit.nl/usabilityupdate/searching-a-job-online-part1.php](http://www.2useit.nl/usabilityupdate/searching-a-job-online-part1.php)

The **second article** describes the first part of an online search: the search interface. We concluded that most job boards have a pretty good interface and that improvements can be made and are easy to implement, for example enlarging the search box or adding Boolean search to the search function.

You can find the second article on [www.2useit.nl/usabilityupdate/searching-a-job-online-part2.php](http://www.2useit.nl/usabilityupdate/searching-a-job-online-part2.php) .

The **third article** tells you about the Search Engine Results Page (SERP). This is a page loaded with a lot of information and therefore a difficult page to make user-friendly. We collected 11 requirements that a SERP should satisfy to. The full article can be found on [www.2useit.nl/usabilityupdate/searching-a-job-online-part3.php](http://www.2useit.nl/usabilityupdate/searching-a-job-online-part3.php).

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1 from the Academy of Digital Communication of the Hogeschool Utrecht (School of Higher Education, the Netherlands)

## 1. Vacancy page or detail page

After clicking on a result in the SERP you find yourself on a page with the full vacancy description. We call that the vacancy page or detail page, for example the detail page from Monsterboard as shown below.



The screenshot shows a web page for a job vacancy on monsterboard.nl. The page features the company logo 'De Haan & Martojo' and the title 'Veranderproces-manager als afdelingshoofd (schaal 13)'. A sidebar on the left lists job details: Location (None), Branche (Techniek), Status (Fulltime, Vast dienstverband), Opleidingsniveau (HBO), and Carrièreniveau (Management). The main content area includes an 'Over de vacature' section and a 'De organisatie' section describing the company's dynamic nature and career opportunities. On the right, there are sections for 'Vacaturetools' (Solliciteer, Opslaan, Stuur door) and 'Bedrijfstoets' (Bekijk alle vacatures van dit bedrijf). At the bottom, there are navigation links for 'Terug naar de zoekresultaten' and 'Solliciteer met Account'.

vacancy detail page (www.monsterboard.nl)

From all the job boards we assessed Indeed.com is a special one. This board gathers all the vacancies from other job boards. In that way it is only a vacancy search engine: they do not own their vacancies. That makes the detail page for Indeed.com quite different from the other job boards. Clicking on a search engine result on Indeed.com takes you always to an other site. For this reason the detail page of Indeed.com is not evaluated.

### 1.1 The perfect detail page for job boards

It is quite difficult to describe the ideal detail page. There is a lot of information that employers put on it, but it is hard to say that certain information must be there. Is salary a prerequisite? Is it necessary for there to be an organisation description?

The page will be part of discussions between the job boards and their clients, the recruiters. On a vacancy page the recruiter has the possibility to present himself, so they surely have their desires and probably their demands too. But for job seekers it is useful if the structure of the job descriptions is the same for it makes scanning the different vacancies easier.

There is a field of tension between the wishes of recruiters and those of job seekers. However, their goals converge: they all want the perfect match.

We came to a short list of requirements for an ideal detail page for a job board:

1. The layout of the detail page is consistent with the other pages of the site.
2. The layout of the detail pages is consistent.
3. The vacancy title and description starts on 300 pixels or less from the top of the site.
4. The job description is easy to scan.
5. There is a link to relevant jobs.

## 1.2 How well do the vacancy detail pages of job boards comply to the requirements?

We matched all the sites on the criteria above. The results are presented in the table below.

	layout consistent with site	detail pages consistent	content starts < 300px	easy scanning	links to relevant jobs	P-score
1. Jobs.ac.uk	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	80 %
2. Jobtrack	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	60 %
3. Nationale Vacaturebank	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	60 %
4. AcademicTransfer	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	40 %
5. Werken bij de Overheid	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	40 %
6. Intermediar	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	20 %
7. Stepstone	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	20 %
8. Monsterboard	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	20 %
<i>Indeed.com</i>	<i>not applicable</i>					

Jobs.ac.uk performed very well with 80%. Jobtrack and Nationale Vacaturebank have a pretty good score of 60%. The other job boards have a lower score. All the details are discussed in the following chapters.

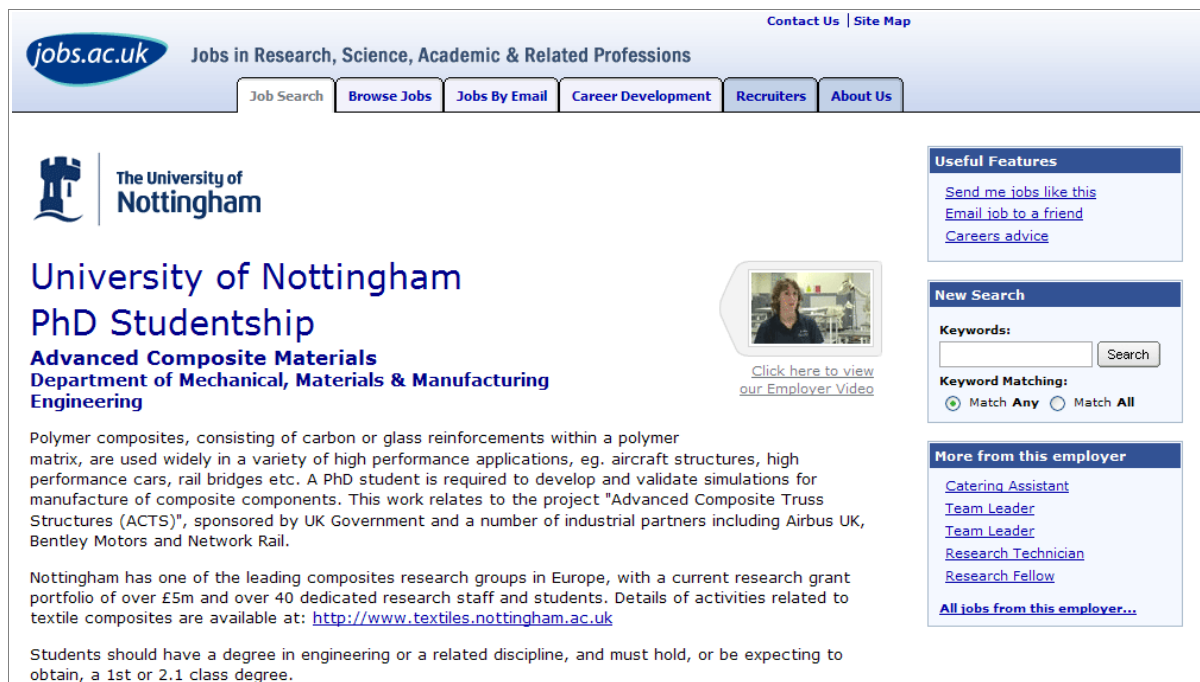
## 2. Detail page: Results in detail

### 2.1 The layout of the detail page is consistent with the site.

A common fact in usability is that a website has a consistent layout. When you browse through the site you perceive the pages as all belonging to one site.

A detail page is part of a site. So the layout must be consistent with the other pages of the site. In the example below you see the detail page of jobs.ac.uk. The menu on this page is the same as on the other pages of the site, the header is the same and the look and feel of the boxes on the right are similar. When you reach this page you still have the feeling that you are on jobs.ac.uk.

In most cases this means that the header is comparable, that colours are similar on all pages, that a main menu is the same and – if there is a universal search – that it is available on this page too (see Stijlgids Overheid<sup>1</sup>). Slight deviations are no problem as long as the general experience keeps intact.



The screenshot shows a job detail page on the jobs.ac.uk website. The header includes the jobs.ac.uk logo and navigation links like 'Job Search', 'Browse Jobs', 'Jobs By Email', 'Career Development', 'Recruiters', and 'About Us'. The main content area features the University of Nottingham logo and the job title 'University of Nottingham PhD Studentship' under the 'Advanced Composite Materials' department. A video thumbnail is present with a 'Click here to view our Employer Video' link. The job description text discusses polymer composites and the project 'Advanced Composite Truss Structures (ACTS)'. A 'Useful Features' sidebar on the right offers links for 'Send me jobs like this', 'Email job to a friend', and 'Careers advice'. Below that is a 'New Search' section with a keyword search box and 'Match Any'/'Match All' options. A 'More from this employer' section lists roles like 'Catering Assistant', 'Team Leader', 'Research Technician', and 'Research Fellow'.

Detail page on jobs.ac.uk

Some job boards admit their recruiters to familiarize the detail page to their wishes. But changing the header or the menu or other basic elements of the lay-out of the page will result in a loss of feeling where you are.

1 <http://stijlgids.overheid.nl/stijlgids/inhoud/#zoek>

For example the detail page of AcademicTransfer (see below)



The screenshot shows the detail page for a job at Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam. The header includes the university's logo and name. Below the header is a navigation menu with buttons for 'Vacaturebank', 'Organisaties', 'Carrièredossier', 'Loopbaan', 'Linkportal', 'Informatie', and 'Internationaal'. The main content area has a breadcrumb trail: '← Terug | Home Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam : Vacatures'. The job title is 'Cursuscoördinator (0,8 fte)' in Rotterdam (Zuid-Holland), 32 hours per week. The job description is titled 'Functiebeschrijving' and describes the role of a course coordinator, including responsibilities like developing and coordinating post-academic and certificate courses, and managing administrative tasks like offers and budgets.

Detail page on AcademicTransfer.nl

On this page the header has changed to the corporate elements of the client, in this case the Erasmus University of Rotterdam. Some visitors will think: what site am I on now? It is better if the header would have still be the header of AcademicTransfer.

Half of the 8 sites have a consistent layout in their detail page.

## 2.2 The layout of the detail pages is consistent.

As the layout of the detail page must be consistent with the other web pages so should the detail pages be consistent in structure and layout. The job seeker can find the job title, the job description, the salary, et cetera, all on the same place on the page.

Although it seems trivial that these pages are consistent, job boards find themselves torn between enticing job seekers and the needs of recruiters. Recruiters want their stamp on their job description, because they will use every opportunity for branding. Job seekers need comparability of job descriptions to scan them easily.

Let us image a job seeker surfing through the site. It is of great convenience for him of he can find the salary or the job location or the apply-for-this-job button all on the same place.

How well do job boards comply to this prerequisite for an optimal detail page? Job boards have divided it equally: four have consistent layouts of their detail pages, four have not.

As stated before in the previous articles we believe that for the long term everyone is served with

following the wishes of job seekers. If they like the site, they will boost the site, they will empower it. The site will get a lot of visitors. This, we assume, will lead to more applications and will, at the end, satisfy recruiters. We think it would be wise for recruiters to keep this long term advance in mind.

### 2.3 The vacancy title and description starts on 300 pixels or less from the top of the site.

In recent years screens have become bigger and bigger. But there is also a big increase in the use of laptops and of internet access on mobile phones. Recently the mini laptops – with small screens and limited resolutions - have become popular. A screen resolution of 1650 pixels (width) to 1024 pixels (height) or higher is quite common for detached screens, but laptops screens and mobile devices have a lot smaller resolution. Screen statistics show that the majority of screens is 1024 to 768 pixels or higher and there is a minority of less than 10 % that uses 800-600 resolution or lower.

In our study we defined a height of 768 pixels as standard. To be able to read a significant part of the job description we stated that the relevant content must start above the 300 pixels. This means that 468 pixels remain as the visible area where users can be stimulated to read the full job description. All this is of course an assumption that can be discussed, but we had to draw a line.

Jobs.ac.uk starts his job title on 234 pixels (see image below). That is a very good score. Above the fold (that is the point where you have to scroll) there is 534 pixels space for directly visible information.



Contents starts on 234 pixels from the top (www.jobs.ac.uk)

As we compare this with Intermediair, there is a great difference. On Intermediair the information starts on 420 pixels from the top. But that is only the job title. More information starts even at 580 pixels. If you want to read more than the title you only have the information available on a small strip of 188 pixels.

The screenshot shows the Intermediair.nl website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links like 'Home', 'Zoek', 'RSS', etc. Below that is the site logo and a search bar. The main content area is divided into several sections: 'Zoek direct vacatures' (Search direct vacancies), 'Oriëntatie' (Orientation), 'Sollicitatie' (Application), and 'Ontwik' (Development). The job listing for 'Ben jij Senior Usability Expert, be MetrixLab - De Meern' is visible. Two vertical arrows on the right side of the screenshot indicate the vertical distance from the top of the page to the start of the job title (420 px) and to the start of the job description (580 px).

Content after the the job title starts at 580 px (www.intermediair.nl)

It is clear that is better for job seekers if there is sufficient job information available above the fold. Scrolling is never a bad thing, but you have to entice the job seeker to start scrolling. Starting your content at the maximum of 300 pixels gives you the space to tempt them.

## 2.4 The description is easy to scan.

When you reach a vacancy detail page you want to read the main characteristics of the job in 2 seconds or even less: it must be clear in a glimpse. This requires a tightly structured introduction where you can directly see if it is of any interest for you. We want job seekers to be encouraged to search for jobs till they have found their job, not till they are tired or frustrated.

A lot of job descriptions start with the recruiter description. We don't think they started their search to find the recruiter, they were looking for a job.

## Web Publisher

We are the main UK government agency for funding research and training in engineering and the physical sciences, investing over £740 million a year in a broad range of subjects from mathematics to materials science and from information technology to structural engineering.

**First paragraph is about the employer, not about the job ([www.intermediair.nl](http://www.intermediair.nl))**

A text needs an attractive layout, so scanning is easy and it inviting to read. In the job description below the text has no headings or visible paragraphs.

### Job description

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#### Research Project

Development of Antisocial Behavior, Empathy, and Parent-Child Relationships During Adolescence

#### Project Description

The PhD projects will be conducted within the Research Centre of Adolescent Development (Program leader: Prof. Dr. W. Meeus) and are part of the DARE project (Development of Antisocial Behavior, Parent-Child Relationships, and Empathy During Adolescence) of Dr. S. Branje, funded by a VIDI grant from the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO). The DARE project focuses on the developmental associations between development of empathy, parent-child relationships, and antisocial behavior during adolescence. Adolescence is a period of important developmental changes in individual functioning and parent-child relationships. Adolescent antisocial behavior tends to increase until middle adolescence and both adolescent empathy and parent-adolescent relationship quality reveal a temporary decrease from early to middle adolescence. The overall aim of the project is to examine the longitudinal associations between these variables during adolescence. The focus is on the intraindividual processes in these changes, or how these changes unfold in individual adolescents and parent-child dyads over time, using a dynamic systems approach. This approach suggests that behavioral variability is indicative of the adaptability of behavior and that developmental changes are marked by a substantial temporary increase in intradyadic variability in behavior (i.e., moment-to-moment fluctuations in interactional behavior). By applying a dynamic systems approach, the DARE project will focus on intradyadic variability in parent-adolescent interaction behavior, examining normative changes in this interaction behavior as well as interindividual differences in the nature of these developmental transitions.

**One long text is not inviting for easy skimming ([www.academictransfer.nl](http://www.academictransfer.nl))**

There is not one job board that provides job descriptions equipped for scanning.

Probably the real problem is not the poor writing of the job boards, but the fact that recruiters have a free hand in writing and structuring their own content. Not only this leads to a lack of consistency in the job descriptions, but it also makes it hard for job boards to control the quality of the vacancy page.

There is a way to cope with that. Some boards show a summary at the left or the right of the job description (see below a screenshot of Monsterboard). This is a great step forwards in making the content accessible.

**Samenvatting**

**Bedrijf**  
Owens Illinois

**Locatie**  
Perrysburg, OH 43551

**Branche**  
Cosmetica en persoonlijke verzorging

**Status**

- Fulltime
- Vast dienstverband

**Relevante werkervaring**  
7 tot 10 jaar

**Opleidingsniveau**  
MBA / WO

**Carrièreniveau**  
Midcareer (ervaren)

**Salaris**  
Competitive

## Glass Science Leader - Glass Science Leader

**Over de vacature**

### Opportunity is O-I

- *Are you looking for an opportunity to develop, build, and lead a R&D team for a company that desires to change the way the world makes glass?*
- *Do you desire to work with a world leader that is committed to industry leadership through innovation?*

Owens-Illinois, Inc. (O-I) is the largest manufacturer of glass containers in the world, with leading positions in Europe, North America, Asia Pacific and Latin America. Its innovative packaging products are found in households and businesses and its customers manufacture and market many of the best-known consumer-products around the globe.

With operations on five continents, O-I is the world's leading manufacturer of glass packaging products. Each day at O-I, nearly 30,000 employees worldwide are united in a common goal - to be the best in their particular disciplines and to make a personal contribution to the success of the Company as a whole. The ingenuity, determination and work ethic of O-I people has been core strength and a major component of our success for over one hundred years.

We are seeking an ambitious, qualified **Glass Research Scientist** to build and lead a team and function that will propel O-I into the future of glass making.

**Summary at the left provides for scanning (www.monsterboard.nl)**

But we think that job boards have more possibilities to improve the readability and scan-factor of their job descriptions.

## 2.5 There are links to relevant jobs.

In most cases when a job seeker ends up with a vacancy, it is not the job he was dreaming of. So from that point they will start looking for more jobs. They can click on the back button to return to the Search Engine Results Page. But when you provide relevant jobs on the vacancy detail page there is just one click less to go.

Some sites offer the possibility to browse through the results, for example [www.werkenbijdeoverheid.nl](http://www.werkenbijdeoverheid.nl).

**Senior Webadviseur**

Sociale Verzekeringsbank (Amstelveen)

**Vacaturenummer:** 51/2008

[Zoekresultaat](#)
[Volgende vacature](#)

**Link to next vacancy ("Volgende vacature")**

Intermediar offers top vacancies on the left. These were not the jobs from the search action, these are paid ads and therefore totally not relevant for the job seeker.

**More from this employer**

- [Post-Doctoral Research Associate](#)
- [PhD studentship](#)
- [Research Associate](#)
- [Research Assistant \(Full or Part-Time\)](#)
- [Postdoctoral Research Associate](#)
- [All jobs from this employer...](#)

Jobs.ac.uk provides more jobs from this employer in a box. For people who are especially interested in this employer, this is a nice feature.

Werkenbijdeoverheid.nl shows "Recente vacatures" (recent vacancies), but are people looking for all the recent vacancies?

What we do expect are the top 5 vacancies from the SERP. It seems so logical. Yet there is not one job board that offers them.

### 3. Conclusions

Again there is a world to win for the job boards. Some recommendations are fairly easy to implement, for example to start the relevant content on less than 300 pixels from the top of the page. But improving the job descriptions will require consultation with the recruiters. Adding a list of relevant vacancies might look easy, but will also be a part of the discussion.

We must keep in mind that at the end everybody is served with a vacancy detail page that offers optimal performance to the job seeker. For happy job seekers will find their way to the vacancies and from there to the jobs. And that is what recruiters want: finding the right person for their empty workplace.

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#### Next article

In the next article we will put all our conclusions together. Which job boards are the best? You will see that soon.

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