

Flexible Job Search Database



Sara Sutton Fell
CEO & Founder
FlexJobs

CEOCFO: Ms. Fell, what is the idea behind FlexJobs?

Ms. Fell: FlexJobs service is to help people find freelance, telecommuting jobs, or jobs with telecommuting option, part time, or flexible schedule jobs that are professional and legitimate. These types of flexible jobs can be harder to find on general job boards, and so we offer a faster, easier, and safer way to access these types of highly desirable job opportunities.

CEOCFO: What do you understand about the process that perhaps others do not?

Ms. Fell: 99% of job boards derive their revenue from employers and/or advertising. We flip flop that model completely. Our primary client has been the job seeker. If you ask most job seekers, in general the job searching experience is really difficult and stressful. Specifically in the telecommuting niche, on most other job boards and services, there are scams, “too good to be true” business opportunities, and ads disguised as job postings mixed in with the legitimate jobs. It can be a very frustrating, cumbersome, time consuming, and with scammers, it can be dangerous as well. We have an incredibly clean database. Every single job on FlexJobs is hand-screened for legitimacy, professionalism, and some type of work flexibility. This benefits the job seekers immensely in terms of time savings and they can ideally find a good job for them, apply faster and get the job faster. On the flip side for employers, if they are looking for freelancers are remote workers, or people who value flexible alternatives, they can tap into a new pool of candidates who are really interested in and value these types of jobs and the companies that offer them.

CEOCFO: How do you weed out the jobs that are scams?

Ms. Fell: Over time we have come up with a multi-part strategy. There are definitely some of the more obvious signs that a job posting could be suspicious, for example it is written as more as a marketing piece to try to get anyone and everyone to apply. There are a great deal of explanation points, no skills required and things like that where the goal of the ad is really just trying to funnel people in there, as opposed to finding the “right” candidates. Most legitimate employers at this point, especially with the economy being with the way it has been of the past 8 years, they have no problem getting candidates – they actually get too many and would rather have fewer but more quality. Other red flags in suspicious job postings are poor grammar, anonymous job postings (no company name), and when the email address to apply is a generic email host (Gmail or Yahoo) not associated with a company domain email address.

CEOCFO: Do you find that most professionals seeking jobs are aware of the hazards?

Ms. Fell: I think there are far more sophisticated job scams than the mass majority of job seekers believe. I do believe it is worth job seekers being very careful. We did a survey recently and the mass majority of job seekers have come across scams, yet most of them feel that they would never fall for them. However, in the data provided by the FBI and other leading sources where these scams were reported, thousands of people fall for scams every single year.

CEOCFO: Do you find a trend from employers wanting more serious, qualified and US based staffing?

Ms. Fell: Absolutely. There are many reasons why employers hire more within their comfort zone. One of the reasons telecommuting is so hard for many employers to grasp is because the employees are actually not sitting in their office. If they are going to hire telecommuters, in a way, “on-shore” their job, that is often more comfortable than offshoring. It seems more comfortable, controllable, and there are fewer legal and tax issues that make it more simple as well, as well as other logistics like language, culture, time zone, etc. It is growing.

CEOCFO: What is the business model?

Ms. Fell: We are a low cost subscription for job seekers. They sign up for access for our hand-screened database. It is free to post on FlexJobs for companies, however we have options to upgrade their postings for increased visibility.

CEOCFO: *What are the barriers to entry for serious competitors or people who think they can replicate what FlexJobs has done?*

Ms. Fell: Like many industries, to be established in the job space, it can take a while to earn trust from employers and job seekers alike. To get trust and new employers to adopt and use your service is very difficult. It is a tough sales process. On the flip side, with job seekers, what we do is fairly intensive. I am not aware of too many job boards that hand screen every single job and company on their site.

CEOCFO: *What are you able to provide in help for job seekers that is meaningful and not just platitudes and generalities? How do you use that added value to make a difference?*

Ms. Fell: We look at the experience for job seekers and how to truly make it better. We answer to them. Our competition is 99% free, so if we are going to have a paid service for job seekers, we have to make sure that our value and usefulness is really earning it. We have to work hard to have quality experience and I think we do have that with supplemental skill tests, a robust member savings program, and our blog is top quality. We work hard to have offers that can help support the overall experience of the job seeker.

CEOCFO: *Do many people come to you initially when they are ready to start a job search or is it more after they have looked on their own?*

Ms. Fell: Based on surveys, it is a mix. We hear all kinds of stories. Because we offer jobs in different career industries, over 50 entry level to executive level jobs and freelance to full time, our spectrum of audience is really broad and at different stages of their job search.

"If someone is looking to either hire for or to find a job that offers some kind of work flexibility and is line with their career, FlexJobs is the best resource for it."- Sara Sutton Fell

CEOCFO: *What have you learned over time and what has changed in your approach so that it is a better offering today than it was two or three years ago?*

Ms. Fell: We work with many more employers directly, so many of the jobs on our site are coming very cleanly to the user. When I started the company, we launched as a website that focused specifically on telecommuting jobs and that was for strategic reasons. Part of my overall plan to be able to expand to include other types of work flexibility, such as freelance and part-time jobs, which we were able to do several years ago. My belief and experience is that people want work flexibility for many different reasons. It is not just work moms or parents. There are the millennials who want work flexibility. There is the older generation of retirees who are looking to supplement or continue their career but in a somewhat reduced manner. There are people who live in rural areas. There are people with health issues or taking care of loved ones with health issues. There are many different reasons. We want to be able to serve a broader audience wanting work flexibility for any kind of reason.

CEOCFO: *Why choose FlexJobs?*

Ms. Fell: FlexJobs is one of a kind. If someone is looking to either hire for or to find a job that offers some kind of work flexibility and is line with their career, FlexJobs is the best resource for it. We are a leader and a high level of integrity in what we do. We are really trying to make the experience better for job seekers and for hiring managers and recruiters.

Interview conducted by: Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor, CEOCFO Magazine

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