

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
WEB-BASED
EXPERT INFORMATION MANAGEMENT
SYSTEM

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Change Control Log

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Executive Summary

1.0 Web-based Expert Information Management System : Overview

This proposes an Internet service that will function as an Online brokerage for expert and highly specialized industry information. It aims to meet the global demand for a valuable human resource in the new economy- Industry Expertise, and its enhanced use when applied within the context of professional networking organizations having a high concentration of experts in Industry or academia. Based on a directory of accredited industry experts with extensive knowledge in their respective Areas of Specialization, it will provide the tools and infrastructure to enable registered Experts to sell their expertise to registered buyers in a secure environment.

A system for the management of Industry Expertise-- would be useful to the jobs and services marketplaces, professional networking communities, companies and agencies involved in Research projects/ technical re engineering, and entrepreneurs. It would also provide the basis for future growth in this direction. One of the perceptions driving the service concept is, that in the rapidly changing industrial environments of today, the existing HR modeling that is used to categorize an industry, job category, or candidate profile, does not adequately reflect and automate its increasing complexity or ability to showcase the candidate's expertise in a particular field.

It is important to note that this is not a job site. Buyers would be looking for information *from* or *on* experts, not offering jobs. The "experts" will typically be authorities in their respective fields, having reached this level through several years in academia and/or professional experience. By offering their services they will benefit through any contracts, interviews, or ad hoc works of analysis and consultation that they may be asked to provide. They may also choose to benefit (based on their opt-in preferences) from the publicity and professional recognition accorded to providers of information to high-profile agencies.

The Executive Summary presents rationale for the construction of a Web site that will work off an Experts database, and provide tools for specialized knowledge exchange -- e.g. an information exchange platform. Furthermore, it articulates a systematic method for improving the way specialized information is procured and distributed to ever-increasing points of demand. It also highlights the unique attributes and features in the system design, which will enable it to offer competitive benefits to the marketplace.

Each candidate profile will be associated with detailed information on their area(s) of specialization in one or more specific industry segments, with facilities for online information exchange between these industry experts and the buyers. This capability, combined with the use of cutting- edge channels of communication between prospective buyers and sellers of expertise, and extensive marketing to the many points of supply and demand for expert industry- specific information, will ensure the service a distinctive presence in the domain of web- based information brokerage.

2.0 Industry Analysis

"The next opportunity will be true e-headhunting, followed by online workforce optimization including such processes as skills inventorying, skills mapping and talent deployment, in real time, based on the needs of the organization" -- Source: iLogos Research

People are going through increasing changes to learn new skills that may have nothing to do with the core Industries they work in. With the ongoing challenge to redefine roles and responsibilities in the workplace to meet increasing competition, an interesting phenomenon has evolved. There is a dearth of professionals who have stayed with a business long enough to know it really well, followed the trends in it, can predict future trends in it, and can offer this knowledge to other professionals who move from one industrial environment to the other. The reality is that this type of expertise is needed more than ever to support technical re-engineering of traditional business processes in any given industry.

Industry Expertise has become a key asset in that can be exploited as the primary emphasis in building a good web-based service, and fill a critical need for an online knowledge exchange with a primary focus on Quality, Cost-effectiveness and Reliability. With proper development, such a knowledge exchange enterprise can evolve from brokering expertise, to creating more expertise. The vision of effectively channeling Industry Expertise to meet the challenge of shifting skill demands is embodied in a service that leverages the speed and efficiency of the internet.

3.0 Market Analysis

Specialized Information management had gained widespread recognition over the past decade because companies began to realize the value of extracting, synthesizing, and distributing it on a broad scale. The increasing speed with which companies deliver products and services to market, only compounds the importance of perpetual innovation in the process of information acquisition and exchange.

This service will derive its strong customer base, and prove its competitive value, from its collaboration between an Experts pool/ Information Exchange platform, to a pre-existing Networking community or Career site .

- Many professional forums and networking groups would benefit greatly from having an online Experts site attached to them, even if they were to offer just the minimum functionality, i.e. just have their members identify and classify their *Areas of Specialization into an Experts database*, and register preferences on how they want to channelize it.

What distinguishes such sites, is also what strategies are employed to attract a large number of qualified experts to register with it. *When built around a networking group or career site, it would be a resource available to user groups from the start, and costs for Marketing it will be drastically reduced.*

3.1 Target Markets

This Service is designed to benefit a wide array of buyers within the industrial sector. Expert information is always required and used today in many walks of life. Some examples of typical markets and user groups for this service are provided --

- Government Agencies and Management Consulting firms
- Companies with Outsourced Research Project requirements
- The Media: newspapers, Focus groups, etc.
- CEOs/ Business Development Executives/ Entrepreneurs seeking to explore new markets
- Trade and import-export companies searching for international industry expertise
- Students
- Networking forums and communities

CEOs: seeking advice on how to best approach new markets. This service would provide them with an objective point of view that may be hard to find within certain industries. Top managers can talk strategy with leaders in other industries to gain unique perspectives that are otherwise not available on the web.

RESEARCH: It would function as a service for any company with a need for researching markets or products, by providing a secure alternative to their in-house R&D, or Information Research facilities for performing these tasks. In case of Research project efforts that are being outsourced, it would be an invaluable resource for locating Experts from the database to contribute to these projects at various levels.

Small Business owners/ Aspiring entrepreneurs: with limited budgets, cannot afford to hire consultants to assist in the molding of new product ideas. Now, with the help of this service they too can have access to the same resources as Fortune 500 companies. E.g. They could find potential board members to collaborate with on their business plans.

STUDENTS: prefer the Internet to more traditional means of gathering information such as libraries. Because the web is a relatively unregulated medium, there are some very important issues to consider. Students must be able to evaluate credibility of their source before using it in any assignment, and this service provides them with reliable and accurate information in a particular field.

Emergency Management Operations: Groups can quickly locate experts to offer consultation toward crisis resolution and similar efforts.

4.0 Market Competition

Numerous flavors and thematic variations of this service already exist, ranging from online Directories for CPAs/ Management Consultants, to the more evolved "Ask-an-Expert" sites. Sites like EXP.com have reached the top bracket of usage charts. Whereas many Expert Sites started out by offering a comprehensive listing of industry categories consisting of both general non-technical and technical groups, there are also sites that concentrate on Technical Expertise (for example, Expercify.com).

Other Experts sites: AskMe.com, expertcentral.com, Yahoo! Experts

Top Employment Sites

Week ending 2/17/01

Rank	Site	% Audience Reached	Unique Users (000)
1.	monster.com	2.7%	2,575
2.	jobsonline.com	2.2%	2,087
3.	hotjobs.com	1.6%	1,492
4.	careerbuilder.com	0.7%	629
5.	headhunter.net	0.6%	549
6.	flipdog.com	0.3%	307
7.	joboptions.com	0.3%	282
8.	jobs.com	0.3%	253
9.	exp.com	0.2%	228
10.	net-temps.com	0.2%	228

Source: PC Data Online

[CyberAtlas Traffic Patterns](#)

This service is conceived to focus on the following key areas:

- This is not intended to be a purely "job-based", commercial service. It will be an organized classification of high-level experts, some of who may just be seeking greater professional exposure or occasionally use it to connect with other experts, and others who may want to remain confidential. [The minimum functionality of allowing a member to identify, categorize and store his/her area of specialization/ expertise in a more detailed and segmented format, is itself a very useful feature-- especially to any community having a large concentration of experts.](#)
- Although not all of the above features will generate revenue, the site will be designed to accommodate commercial exchanges. As the experts' databases grow, and as the service gets marketed selectively to organizations needing that expertise, its immense commercial use will manifest. It will also be able to offer some unique features like a state-of-the-art **Information/ Work Exchange platform**, that can be used by partner services.
- Whereas a "stand-alone" Experts site (like major Experts sites found today) may need a bigger investment to make it competitive, when attached as a peripheral service to a networking community already having a concentration of experts in industry and academia, an "Experts" site [takes on a new and enhanced dimension](#). It has the potential to be far more useful by virtue of its better positioning within the framework of these professional and academic networking groups. A centralized experts site can be used by all these communities, and their affiliated networking forums. *[The 2000 version of the this plan has been revised to incorporate several unique and competitive features to distinguish it from regular "experts sites"]*
- It will be a more sophisticated version of the current online knowledge brokers, because it recognizes a specific global need for a resource that many others have not paid exclusive attention to --*Industry Expertise*. One of the major effects of this is to offer an exchange between traditional and non-traditional industries at both ends of the spectrum, aimed at closing the digital divide-- it

will provide a referential source for professionals who are involved in this endeavor. It will draw out "hidden" expertise - not just in diverse social interactions but also geographical dimensions

- The database design will provide a more meticulous classification of Industry categories than what we find now in online career-related marketplaces -- a departure from broad categories used by others, such as "Manufacturing"-- to finer, more realistic divisions (e.g., "Paper Manufacture"). Such a re-arrangement of industry categories would be an important step in recognizing that there are now "old" and "new" industries, and that the experts of the "familiar, traditional" 20th century industries can be a solid knowledge base and resource to the 21st century industries. This concept is based on the vision of a commercial service that can also act as a constructive social force.

5.0 Marketing Strategy

The projected size of the market for this type of service is very large, and as outlined previously, many points of demand can be identified for it in the corporate and academic world. However, the success of the venture hinges on how effectively the product is marketed.

The plan is to market the service as a peripheral but important resource through a pre-existing network/ community. To attract buyer groups, it will also be advertised through the usual channels prevalent today for an online service (e.g., banner ads, targeted marketing campaign lists), with special attention paid to traditional media. Additionally, strategic business partnerships will be sought with established major job and services marketplaces.

In general, the strategy for attracting and retaining experts would involve the following offers or incentives:

- Networking resources offered through the site
- Wider professional exposure - possibly International
[choice-based and subject to privacy regulations]
- Board positions in start-ups, not to mention possible equity positions for their roles

Note: Experts in certain Industries already have these resources offered to them through various prestigious organizations. However, there are many industries that do not have organizations and resources.

6.0 Partnerships

- An established online job site or placement agency could use the enhanced logic contained in the service, without changing any of its current structure, or expending its own resources for technical implementation. For example, having a channel for users to register and store portfolio information to demonstrate their area(s) of specialization.
- Expert Intermediaries: As described in an earlier section, these third-party Agents would coordinate (as required)-- the Expert selection process, locate buyers of expertise based on an Expert's preferences, locate channels for the Expert to contribute to, coordinate exchanges between buyers and sellers, perform quality assurance checks on the information being exchanged, and coordinate payment transactions. These Agents would be working through a service partnership with the Experts site.
- Partnerships with technology companies providing communications infrastructure, will be sought.

7.0 Case Studies & Illustrative Examples

- **Career Changes:** Consider a CIO who first worked for a Telecommunications company in their financial department, and then moved to an Aerospace company- he/she may not be an "industry expert" in either the Telecommunications or the Aerospace industries. He/ she would then need the services of an Aerospace industry expert to get a head- start on the new environment he/ she just entered. If an IT professional were involved in a career change into Health Care Insurance , he/she would be able to get insights from experts in this industry.
- If an American company wanted to open shop in India (or vice versa) each would need input from an Expert in that industry, to predict future trends in it, and provide an accurate analysis of the present climate.
- **Research Opportunities:** A Post-Doc in Chemical Engineering would enter detailed information on academic qualifications, publications/ books written, affiliated organizations (E.g. American Institute of Chemical Engineers), Area of Specialization (E.g: Paper Manufacturing) Note: "industry" here has a more specialized reference than commonly found on job sites, or "Ask-Me" type sites. Plus, how he/she would prefer to utilize this expertise (E.g. provide consultation for research projects) and would be able to locate such opportunities by having their profile forwarded to suitable project openings.

8.0 System Design and Technical Considerations

- The site design for this service will share some basic features with that of a work exchange platform. With an integration of overlapping features between these different types of exchange platforms, the overall system will cost less for development. By sharing the infrastructure and databases the operating costs will be reduced. This strategy would offer a high return on investment if the site were to be operated by a company offering a network of career- related services.

"Dissatisfaction with the numerous online career offerings for job seekers and corporate recruiters will lead to the rise of "career networks," sites that aggregate training, assessment, and placement service", according to Forrester Research. Forrester's report "The Career Networks" also predicts that career networks will capture 55 percent of the \$7.1 billion online recruitment market by 2005

- In Expert sites, the task of quality assurance for information exchange, is a tough and nebulous area. There are questions to consider like: How can this this information be quantified, or its quality checked, and what payment scale can be used for it ? Of course, there is the Auction-Bid-Buy model, but would that be too frivolous a method for someone who may regard oneself a world-class expert, and not want to waste time bidding for small projects ?

This site design employs an **Expert Intermediary** feature -- an agency or agent, who will be responsible for "managing" a group of experts, coordinating transactions between buyer and seller, even guaranteeing confidentiality to certain experts who want it, and undertaking payment negotiations. Every expert will get assigned such an intermediary coordinator by the site (or can choose one).

Examples of such Agents are: the company that owns/ operates the site, an external HR Company, an external Website (through a service partnership with this site), a qualified Individual (recruitment professional). Thus exchanging expert information ceases to be person-to-person and becomes person-to-agent-to-person/ company. (It will retain the person-to-person feature for those who want full exposure and/or want to manage their own transactions). The old model consisting

of buyers/ sellers will not be excluded, however sellers will have a choice to be affiliated with an intermediate Agent.

- Consider an expert intermediary Agent for Chemical Engineering experts -- the could be a company that locates consultation work for registered expert Engineers as per their field, and coordinates information exchanges and payment. The agent will also help to eliminate redundancy -- one of the greatest deterrents to user registration, is to enter one's information, only to be "lost" in a big database if one never gets selected as a seller. Such agents will actively scout for the type of "work" that an expert is looking for -- it could just be a request for wider professional exposure. The agent would find opportunities for the expert to publicize their views through various media channels. **By incorporating such innovative site structure and design features that are not expensive or difficult to implement, the site will be able to offer users a distinct competitive advantage.**
- Since the Auction model is still a viable and popular means of exchange, the intent is not to dispense with it. This design will retain the standard features for an online exchange platform, and as specified earlier, can share this with a "work" exchange/ freelance service (that may be offered through a separate front-end) to immense advantage. But, it will also offer innovative enhancements that adapt it better to exchanging information.
- At the technology level, the intent is to concentrate on integrating state-of-the-art Communication tools e.g. heavy-duty conferencing facilities for audio and VideoConferencing -- based on the critical need to ensure convenient communication between prospective sellers and buyers of information. An infrastructure offering these features would be a clear incentive to users of this type of site. Site planning also calls for the integration of software in order to drive Intelligent keyword search and matching logic.

9.0 Operating Plan

Simple Implementation Model

The project implementation will be split into 6-month phases. Phase I will officially begin with the launch of the web site (i.e., complete construction and submission to search engines). This stage will involve widespread marketing (see Section 8.0, Marketing Strategy) and advertising to build the customer base, and implementation of changes based on customer feedback. At the end of 6 months, the customer feedback, registration statistics, and total transaction value will be analyzed to ensure that minimum performance thresholds are met, which will allow continuation to Phase II. Payment will depend on what the buyer wants to pay for the information - buyers will be charged for access rights to the Experts database, and also a commission fee for each transaction. Registration is free for sellers.

Phase I Execution

Phase I activities will consist of the following milestones:

1. Official launch of fully constructed web site with registration functionality.
2. Marketing and advertising for building customer base.
3. Compilation of Experts Database.
4. Web site technical maintenance and support
5. Quality Control and Customer Support Services.

Table 1 provides estimated expenses for Phase I.

Table 1. Estimated Phase I Development & Maintenance Expenses

Task	Estimated Duration	Estimated Expenses
Web Site Construction	1 month	tbd
Marketing & Advertising Expenses	6 months	tbd
OTHER EXPENSES:		
Web Site Maintenance Expenses with secure E-Commerce features	12 months	tbd ¹
TOTAL	12 months	tbd ¹

10.0 Sales Forecast

- We plan to offer Free Registration for Expert sellers, but charge prospective buyers on a monthly basis for use of the Experts database: [first 3 months Free, \\$20 / month thereafter.](#)
- Even without registering, buyers can browse a listing of Experts' profiles without specific contact information.
- If the registered buyer selects Expert(s) from the listing and obtains Services, we will charge a commission on the transaction: 5% of what the Expert was paid for the service
- **Based on the above Figures, the goal is to build a database of at least 300 registered Buyers and 30,000 registered Sellers [Experts] at the close of 6 months (Phase I).**

11.0 Projections

Worst Case:

As discussed earlier, when operated in collaboration with a Networking community/ Career site, this will be beneficial to users even in its most rudimentary form. E.g. regular users of a job site would have a channel through which they can store and showcase details about their Area(s) of Specialization. In the event that the service does not attract the anticipated number of customers within the specified time, the technical infrastructure we would have incorporated into the site can continue to attract revenue through the other services.

Best Case:

Within the first six months, this service will make an entry and establish itself as a distinctive presence in the HR Information Services marketplace. Based on this benchmark, it will be able to offer numerous resources to its registered members, and also to general visitors.

12.0 Investment Offering

Investment funding in the range of (tbd)¹ is sought as development and maintenance capital. Subject to the first phase performance and growth factors (measured by number of site hits, number of registered

¹ tbd: Financial details have been removed from this version of the document since it is not intended for the purpose of seeking investment. These details can be made available upon request.

buyers and sellers, and number of service transactions) being positive and profitable, the plan is to grow and evolve as a specialized HR Information Management service.