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## MediaBistro.com becomes go-to place for online recruitment

**Sean Callahan**

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Laurel Touby is one of those people Malcolm Gladwell, author of "The Tipping Point," would call a "connector." One industry observer called her a "party diva." But with the success of MediaBistro.com, the media community business she founded, she's increasingly being called a smart businesswoman.

A former BusinessWeek reporter and Glamour contributor, Touby has made a business of bringing journalists and other media types together. Back in 1993, because she couldn't get enough of hanging out with reporters, she started organizing small get-togethers at various New York haunts.

Next she opened a Web site, called MediaBistro.com, and in short order the site and Touby's offline parties became a hub for the media world in New York. Eventually, she began to attach revenue-generating pieces to the Web site. There were educational seminars and premium membership offerings, to name two.

Additionally, MediaBistro became a job site for the media world. Today, this part of Touby's business model accounts for more than 50% of the revenue for what has become a 21-employee operation.

"I think MediaBistro has had a big impact," said Gary Rubin, chief publications officer for the Society for Human Resource Management. "I've been very impressed with the result we got. We still use a variety of other sources, but we get a lot of leads from MediaBistro."

This part of the business started essentially by accident. "I backed into it," Touby said. The way she tells it, being the organizer of the MediaBistro parties, she came into contact with an increasing number of media people and informally began matching people she knew to job openings. "Basically, I was a headhunter without being paid," she said. "I did it for three years without being paid. I did it for three years before I even thought of charging. For three years, we let people post jobs for free."

Touby began charging \$100 per post-"but only if people were happy," she said. The reaction was positive and immediate. "The next thing I knew I had checks pouring out of my P.O. box," she said. "Today, we have the same policy. It's totally voluntary."

The number of job listings is growing at MediaBistro, according to Touby. Last year, postings averaged about 300 per month. This summer, they averaged more than 1,000, she said, adding that more than 50% of the jobs are in editorial.

"MediaBistro.com is a place for top talent in editorial, production and even sales staff in our industry," said Valerie Piegare-Calabro, VP-talent management at Reed Business Media.

Not everyone is thrilled with the results, but at \$100 a listing, the price and the narrow focus on the media industry are tough to beat. "I'm not sure we've had great success, but we will continue to give it a shot," said Roger Dusing, VP-human resources at Ascend Media.

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