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A Student's Video Résumé Gets Attention (Some of It Unwanted)

By MICHAEL J. de la MERCED

With his name and image on Web sites and his appearance on the “Today” show, Aleksey Vayner may be the most famous investment-banking job applicant in recent memory.

Mr. Vayner's curious celebrity came after an 11-page cover letter and résumé as well as an elaborate video that he had submitted to the Swiss bank giant UBS showed up on two blogs, and then quickly spread on the Internet. The clip, staged to look like a job interview, is spliced with shots of Mr. Vayner lifting weights and ballroom dancing and has him spouting Zen-like inspirational messages.

The video clip flooded e-mail inboxes across Wall Street and eventually appeared on the video-sharing site YouTube.

Blogs brimmed with commentary, much of it mocking, about Mr. Vayner and his feats. Television programs and newspapers then picked up the Web's latest viral sensation.

Now Mr. Vayner, a student at [Yale University](#), is starting to speak out about his 15 minutes of fame, portraying himself as being victimized by the flash flood of Web interest.

“This has been an extremely stressful time,” Mr. Vayner said in an interview.

The job materials that were leaked and posted for public view included detailed information about him that allowed strangers to scrutinize and harass him, he said. His e-mail inbox quickly filled up, with most of the messages deriding him and, in some cases, threatening him.

Mr. Vayner's experience shows the not-so-friendly side of the social-networking phenomenon. While sites such as YouTube allow aspiring comedians or filmmakers to share their creations with millions of others, they also provide the ideal forum for embarrassing someone on a global scale. Materials can quickly make the rounds on blogs, via e-mail and through online hangouts like MySpace, becoming all but impossible to contain.

Wall Street workers may be especially quick to hit the send button. Last month, a compromising video of a [Merrill Lynch](#) banker and his female companion on a Brazilian beach had much of Brazil's financial-services industry glued to their computer screens. Over the summer, a persnickety birthday party invitation from a [Citigroup](#) intern was e-mailed all over London's financial district.

Mr. Vayner's seven-minute clip, entitled “Impossible is nothing,” presents images of him bench-pressing what a caption suggests is 495 pounds and firing off what is purported to be a 140-mile-an-hour tennis serve.

The tone of the video seems too serious to be parody, yet too over-the-top to be credible. After sharing the clip, fellow students at Yale, he said, began telling their own tales about Mr. Vayner on the Web, fabricating stories of bare-handed killings and handling nuclear waste. The Internet scrutiny also raised questions about some of Mr. Vayner's claims in his résumé, including assertions that he ran his own

charity and investment firm.

There have also been questions over whether he copied sections of a self-published book, "Women's Silent Tears: A Unique Gendered Perspective on the Holocaust," from Web sites.

Mr. Vayner, 23, contends that both the charity and investment firm are legitimate. And the accusations about his book, he said, were based on an earlier draft that has since been changed.

He says he has been interested in finance since he was 12, when he was creating financial data models. So Mr. Vayner, who is a member of the class of 2008 at Yale, decided a few weeks ago to look for a job at a Wall Street firm. He thought that making a video would help him stand out amid the intense competition for investment-banking positions. By emphasizing his various athletic pursuits, which he said included body sculpting, weightlifting and tai chi, Mr. Vayner said he could show that he had achieved success in physical endeavors that could carry over to the financial world.

"I felt demonstrating competency in athletics is a good way to stand out, because the same characteristics are the same in business," Mr. Vayner said. "The need to set and achieve goals, to have the dedication and competitive drive that's required in business success."

Despite the mockery that the video has inspired, he still speaks proudly of his athleticism. Nearly all the feats in the video are his, he said, and they are real. But he says he is not certain that the skiing segment actually shows him.

In the end, though, Mr. Vayner said he was less concerned about the mockery than about what appeared to have been a leak of his application materials from UBS.

Mr. Vayner and his lawyer, Christian P. Stueben, said they were exploring legal options against the investment banks to which he sent the application.

A UBS spokesman said in a statement: "As a firm, UBS obviously respects the privacy of applicants' correspondences and does not circulate job applications and résumés to the public. To the extent that any policy was breached, it will be dealt with appropriately."

For now, Mr. Vayner said he was camping out at his mother's residence in Manhattan, having taken a short leave of absence from Yale when his video hit the Internet. (A Yale spokeswoman declined to comment.)

He said he may have lost his chance to work on Wall Street, and added that he may not succeed in securing a financial job at all.

Real estate development is an option, he said, but for now his future is unclear.

In the meantime, he plans on taking his midterm examinations next week.

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