

## **Social Media in Recruiting : New Mantra for HRM**

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### **Abstract**

*The world of human resource recruiting is experiencing immense challenges due to increased competition among industries to get the best talents in every sector of the economy, globally. The race is to acquire the best talents in the quickest possible manner , so that companies can leverage the power of human resources as a key differentiator in generating more business growth for a firm. Social media has now become mainstream in our everyday life, with thousands of social networks available to everyone across the world. In this context, social media recruitment seems to be emerging as a potent tool for harnessing the power of technology to get access to the best hires and talents all over the world. This topic has become an important area of discussion and hence deserves attention on the part of researchers.*

*This paper seeks to explore the various issues related to social media recruitment. In particular, the focus would be on*

*finding out the various advantages and disadvantages of using this tool for hiring, while stressing on the issues like the pre-requisites for getting the process right. Some of the best practices in the field of social media recruiting will also be explored to get a total view of the pros and cons of this new recruiting tool. In the end the endeavour would be weigh and conclude whether this process is just a hype or has enough commercial potentiality for being used as a tool for effective hiring.*

### **Introduction**

Recruitment is the process which involves steps, such as, attracting, selecting and appointing suitable candidates for any specific vacancy. Generally, recruitment involves certain steps. The first step is to analyse a job (documentation of the details of the job itself; knowledge, skill, and, abilities, required to perform the job). Second step is to use of one or more strategies to attract or identify candidates to fill job vacancies. Third step is to screen and shortlist the prospective candidates.

There is a wide range of 'traditional' ways of reaching out to potential employees, which include, advertisements, paper applications and CVs, or face-to-face interviews, and so on. Joos (2008) opined that, these tools largely rely on the so-called 'spray and pray' method where large numbers of advertisements or applications are sent out, while both employers and job seekers wait for feedback. With the emergence of the internet and social media, more specifically, new approaches have entered the sphere of employment and recruitment.

In recent times, companies are turning to social media as a potential source of attracting and finding candidates who could be possibly be employed in the company. In many companies, the policy is to ask current employees to share their contacts in social media to tap potential candidates. This platform is being tapped by companies as they believe this is a quick way of reaching potential job seekers who may be dormant but otherwise be interested to move on.

This paper seeks to explore the various issues related to social media recruitment. In particular, the focus would be on finding out the various advantages and disadvantages of using this tool for hiring, while stressing on the issues like the pre-requisites for getting the process right.

### **A Brief Background of Social Media Recruitment**

Social recruiting (social hiring or social media recruitment) is recruiting candidates by using social platforms as talent databases or for advertising. Popular social media sites used for recruiting include LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Viadeo, XING, Google+ and BranchOut. Social recruiting is at the intersection of recruitment and social media (Alder, 2011). There has been some deliberations in the recruitment and social media circles about whether simply using social media as a communication and marketing channel can be called “social recruiting” ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social\\_recruiting](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_recruiting)). The argument is that for recruiting to be truly social, it needs to build a community, facilitate communication within that community, and rely on social connections between community members to recruit.

Social recruiting essentially makes use of social media profiles, blogs, and online communities as a talent database to locate and search for passive candidate data and information. It also uses social media to advertise jobs either through HR vendors or through crowdsourcing where job seekers and others share job openings within their online social networks. Jobvite, an applicant tracking system (ATS) and social sourcing provider, released a report in May 2011 (<http://recruiting.jobvite.com/resources/social-recruiting-survey.php>) indicating that 80% of the 600 employers surveyed answered “Yes” to the question, “Do you use social media for recruiting?”

Social recruiting’s effectiveness and return on investment have been difficult to determine, since applicants do not usually apply through the social channels which first attracted them. In May 2013, Maximum Employment Marketing Group released the Social Recruitment Monitor, which ranks the reach, engagement, and interactivity of employers’ social recruiting efforts around the world ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social\\_recruiting](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_recruiting)).

#### **Social Networking Sites and Tools (Broughton et. al., 2011)**

Following are some of the most popular social networking tools, which are being used for the purpose of recruitment:

**Blog** – It is a discussion or informational site published on the internet that consists of entries (‘posts’). Posts are typically displayed in reverse chronological order, i.e. the most recent post appears first. Until 2009, blogs were

usually the work of a single individual, occasionally of a small group, and often covered a single subject. Recently, 'multi-author blogs' have been developed, with posts written by large numbers of authors and professionally edited. Blogs consist of regular entries of commentary and descriptions of events (*blogging*). The content of a microblog is simply smaller in size.

**Facebook** – It is a social networking service where users create personal *profiles*, add other users as *friends* and exchange messages, including automatic notifications when they update their own profile. Additionally, users may join common-interest user groups, organized by common characteristics (e.g. workplace). Users can instant message each other through the website.

**Google** – It is an American multinational corporation specializing in Internet-related services; most famously its core search engine, but also a large chain of products including Google+, the second largest social networking site in the world (as of January 2013).

**LinkedIn** – It is a business-related social networking site mainly used for professional networking. Users maintain a list of contact details of people with whom they have some level of relationship, called *connections*. This list of connections can then be used to build up a contact network, follow different companies and find jobs, people and business opportunities.

**MySpace** – It is an online community of users' personal profiles. These typically include photographs, information

about personal interests and *blogs*. Users send one another messages and socialize within the MySpace *community*.

**Podcast** – It is a type of digital media consisting of a series of audio, video, PDF, or electronic files subscribed to and downloaded or streamed online to a computer or mobile device.

**Twitter** – It is a *microblogging* service enabling its users to send and read publicly visible messages called *tweets*. Tweets are text-based posts of up to 140 characters displayed on the user's profile page. Users may subscribe to other users' tweets.

**YouTube** – It is a (Google-owned) video-sharing website on which users can upload, share, and view videos. A wide variety of *user-generated* video content is displayed, including film and TV clips as well as amateur content such as *video blogging*. Media corporations including the BBC also offer some of their material via the site. Most videos enable users to leave and exchange comments. Organizations are increasingly using YouTube as a way of sharing information about their company and its vacancies with potential applicants.

**Wikipedia** – It is a collaborative web-based encyclopaedia project; its 18 million articles have been written collaboratively by volunteers around the world, and almost all articles are freely editable by any visitor. A prominent web 2.0 site but not an example of social networking site per se.

**Yahoo** – It is an American multinational internet corporation widely known for its social networking services and user-generated content including online discussion boards (Yahoo! Groups), community-driven Q&A site (Yahoo! Answers) and photo sharing (Flickr).

### **Survey Results on Social Media Recruiting**

According to Inc.500, Jobvite has been named by Inc. Magazine as one of America's fastest growing private companies. In an increasingly crowded and competitive SaaS market, Jobvite continues to maintain steady growth by supporting recruiters with the technology and insight they need to succeed not just today, but in the future.

A survey carried out by Potentialpark in 2011 of over 30,000 graduates, students and early career professionals worldwide found that in Europe, almost 100 per cent of survey participants would like to interact with employers online. The preference was for LinkedIn (48 per cent), with Facebook scoring 25 per cent (Potentialpark, 2011).

Jobvite , for the last 6 years in a row have been conducting surveys regularly on social media recruiting. By using email and a variety of social networks, Jobvite invites recruiters and HR personnel to share their experiences with the company regarding their use of social media in the hiring process. This invitation is deliberately broad, extending beyond our customer base to provide as wide a perspective as possible. On the survey, Jobvite asks specific questions about which networks participants prefer, how they use

each network, projected value of and investment in social media, and so on.

Nigel Wright Recruitment (2011) found that more than half of all UK jobseekers use social media sites in their search for employment, including 18 per cent who use Facebook and 31 per cent who use LinkedIn.

According to the survey results the economy is finally bouncing back after the Great Recession. Businesses are growing, companies are hiring and quality talent is in high demand. For the skilled worker, the job market has shifted in their favor, and professionals all around are taking advantage. The findings of the sixth annual Job Seeker Nation Study which explores the progression of the job market, the modern job seeker's approach to job hunting, and what this means for the workforce in 2015 are summarized as under (<http://www.jobvite.com>):

- The job market is looking up compared to 2013 and everyone has their eye out for a better opportunity. 45% of workers will jump ship for a new job even though they are happy in their current position.
- Job seekers are surfing the wave of career opportunities. Technology sees the highest short-term turnover, but no industry is exempt from job-hopping.
- Over a quarter of job seekers view their current position as a stepping-stone, another indicator that people see their jobs as a growth experience rather than an endgame.

- Money talks: it's the most influential factor both in deciding to leave a job and in choosing a new one.
- Men and women agree on one thing: both genders (38%) value work/life balance equally when considering a new job.
- Job seeking is now a 24/7 activity: job seekers search for new positions on mobile during their commute (38%), on the job (30%) and even in the bathroom (18%).
- 45% of job seekers are satisfied in their current job, but open to a new one.
- Millennials are twice as likely as 30-somethings to leave a job after just three years — and this gap only widens with age.
- 50% job seekers and especially younger job seekers in particular consider their positions temporary growth opportunities.
- Job seekers primarily leave for higher compensation and better growth opportunities.
- Compensation has the biggest impact on job seekers' decisions to take a new job — company mission, leadership, and culture are negligible.
- The factors that matter most for jobseekers by age is as follows:-

**Table 1 : Factors considered most important for job seekers by age**

| <b>Age</b>   | <b>Major concerns</b>               | <b>Percentage</b> |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Middle aged  | concerned more with health benefits | 44 %              |
| Baby boomers | concerned with location             | 44%               |
| Millennials  | concerned with location             | 44%               |
| 30-somthing  | concerned with growth opportunities | 43%               |

**Table 2 : Factors considered important while applying for a job**

| <b>Major concerns</b>   | <b>Percentage</b> |
|---|-------------------|
| preferred ability to see job posting without registration                               | 49%               |
| considered amount of time required to complete job application as an important criteria | 28%               |
| considered to apply to jobs via mobile as an important factor                           | 21%               |

While Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn are still the favorites for social job seeking, new channels are encroaching on their territory:

- 67% of job seekers preferred using Facebook as a social media recruiting platform
- 45% of jobseekers preferred using Twitter as a social media recruiting platform

**Table 3 : Time usage by job seekers on mobile**

| <b>Parameters</b> | <b>Sub-categories of parameters</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Time              | Under 6 minutes                     | 20%               |
|                   | 6-10 minutes                        | 32%               |
|                   | 1-30 minutes                        | 28%               |
|                   | Over 1 hour                         | 14%               |
| Place             | in bed                              | 47%               |
|                   | during commute                      | 38%               |
|                   | in a restaurant                     | 36%               |
|                   | on the job                          | 30%               |
|                   | during meetings                     | 21%               |
|                   | in the restroom                     | 18%               |
|                   | in a gym                            | 5%                |
|                   | in a bar                            | 8%                |

- 40% of jobseekers preferred using LinkedIn as a social media recruiting platform
- Job seekers are devoting time on mobile to find their next job in the following way:

### **Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Social Media**

It is very clear that, social media recruiting is becoming the preferred choice for many job seekers. However, companies need to carefully look into the advantages and disadvantages of this recruiting tool before plunging into it. Let us look at some of the advantages and disadvantages of using this platform as a recruiting tool.

## **Advantages**

Shifting hiring processes from the paper and time-intensive manual method to social media recruiting saves time and money. It also helps in enhancing productivity by leaving positions vacant for shorter periods of time. In addition, the cost associated with posting on a job board compares favourably with placing job ads in newspapers, and, in some cases, may be more cost-effective." (Smith and Rupp, 2004). Clements (2012) quotes Jon Hull, Global Head of Resourcing at RS Components – an electronics distributor headquartered in the UK – who states that, on average, hiring for a senior post using social media costs them £714, compared with £7,500 via more traditional methods.

Employers become benefitted by collecting significant amount of information on a candidate, than what a paper resume is able to provide. Web searches using tools such as Google and popular social media sites can give an employer an overview on a candidate. Information such as interests, social interactions and even work samples can be searched and gathered by an internet search. (O'Neill, 2013).

Social media can also help to improve the recruitment experience for candidates who are not successful. For example, if a candidate has engaged with an organization through two-way interaction via social media, they might be more inclined to feel that they have had a personalised experience, rather than limited interaction via letter.

Social media, with its ability to search and sort, job seekers can find jobs across many sites that match their specific abilities. This has emerged as an alternative to searching the newspaper every day to find jobs that do not always necessarily match specific skills of job seekers. (O'Neill, 2013).

Interactive tools such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter can play an important role in the general process around recruitment, providing recruitment information and fostering realistic job expectations among potential employees. Searle (2006) emphasized not only the importance of websites in attracting future employees but also the fact that they can help to present realistic job previews to candidates

Employers can target specific job seekers on social networking sites, such as, linkedin.com. This saves a company money and time spent on advertising and receiving hundreds of applications. Instead, employers can find employees that meet the needs of their business. (O'Neill, 2013).

Employers who are looking for niche skills or have jobs in unpopular geographic locations can have more luck and wider reach using social network sites to find employers than they have had in the past with advertizing. (O'Neill, 2013). They can make use of job sites which can be either generalist in nature (websites such as monster.com, hotjobs.com, headhunter.net) or focussed on specific industries (such as dice.com or computerjobs.com). If

looking for a certain skill that is more relevant in the international job market, an employer has more access to candidates, globally, when using social media. (O'Neill, 2013).

Social media could also be used as part of equality and diversity policies, as it potentially allows recruiters to tap into online discussions and forums that are engaging potential candidates in groups that they may be struggling to reach. This strategy could be part of a general net-widening search strategy, aimed at ensuring that organizations are not always searching in the same types of areas for potential candidates.

Social media recruiting can also help in brand-building for a company. On Facebook, for example, people can 'like' or share vacancy posts, even if they are not personally going to apply for the job; this raises the overall profile and public awareness of the company.

### **Disadvantages**

- Employers need to be cautious as to what information they are accessing through a candidate's social media profile. Accessing the wrong types of information can lead to discrimination cases.
- A social media profile does not always give the best overview of a potential employee and employers may miss out on certain important details of a candidate's profile by focussing on the small picture

- Streaming through applicants on social media profiles can be time consuming when it comes to comparing new candidates. If a company does not have enough man power it can become a drain on other hiring practices.
- When it comes to employees, with future employers scanning through social media profiles things such as poor grammar, spelling and behavior can all be noted and have an impact on future job search success.
- It can be hard for employers to make specific searches and get accurate results back due to all the information available. Finding the right employees is not always easier using social network sights especially, if the job requires specific types of skill sets.
- When it comes to using social media in the hiring process both employees and employers should weigh the advantages and disadvantages. They should also keep in mind the legal implications of information being misused in the hiring process.

Davison et al (2011) note, “these sites can be valuable ‘friends’ for HR, but also have the potential to be dangerous ‘foes’ if used improperly”, due to the following apprehensions:

The accuracy of information available on SNSs;

Their accessibility across the pool of potential applicants;

Issues of privacy;

The relative costs and benefits; and

The effects of the broader range of information they offer on commitments to equality and diversity in the hiring process

There are also certain technical issues which may act as deterrent in using social media platforms in the effective hiring process, some of which are listed below (<http://everydaylife.globalpost.com/disadvantages-using-social-media-recruitment-36520.html>):

### **Minimizing Information**

Social networks like Twitter give 140 characters to publish any vacancy. Given that a typical job post highlights the basic duties and educational qualifications and skills, it is impossible to provide all the information about a job in a single tweet. When a company minimizes the information they post on social media, it might risk deleting crucial details that might allure job seekers to apply.

### **Increasing Visibility**

Since, social networks are not technically recruitment platforms, employers have to work harder to catch the attention of Internet users who are focused on chatting with friends and family. Besides, according to Convince and Convert, a social media consulting firm, around 67% of social media users in the U.S. don't follow any brands.

### **Contacting Candidates**

Initiating direct contact with potential recruits on social media can be difficult. Most social networks, including

Twitter and LinkedIn, do not allow companies to send private messages to users with whom they are not already connected with. For instance, a company can only send a direct message to a user through Twitter if he follows that company

### **Protecting Image**

Some companies may face challenges striking the right balance between conducting a successful recruitment exercise on social media and protecting the brand image. For example, when a firm posts a job opening on social media, it may receive a large number of applications and may only choose to contact one or two prospective candidates.

Thus it is evident from the above that blindly using the platform as a recruiting tool may not yield best results for a firm as there is also completion in this arena. Every company needs to look at certain issues before making an informed choice to use social media recruiting for getting maximum benefits from this exercise.

### **Company Examples**

#### **GAP Inc.**

The Gap, Inc., commonly known as Gap Inc. or Gap, is an American multinational clothing and accessories retailer. It was founded in 1969 by Donald Fisher and Doris F. Fisher and is headquartered in San Francisco, California. As one of the most recognizable fashion brands in the world, GAP also recognizes the need to moderate the use of social media

amongst their employees within the work place. At a company conference in 2014, GAP handed out brochures to its employees depicting proper guidelines and decorum that had to be satisfied when contributing in social media. Few examples are given below:

1. Employees should show respect for others' opinions.
2. Employees should be careful about the effect of social media on individual performance. Unless an employee is an authorized Social Media Manager, he/she should not let social media affect your job performance."
3. If any miscommunication happens, employees should rectify the situation and be clear about what they have done to fix it. The social media team needs to be contacted, if necessary.
4. Financial information, sales trends, strategies, forecasts, legal issues, future promotional activities, are prohibited topics for discussing in the social media.

### **Adidas AG**

**Adidas AG** is a German multinational corporation, that designs and manufactures sports shoes, clothing and accessories. The company is based in Herzogenaurach, Bavaria, Germany. Adidas is one of the market giants in the sports apparel manufacturing industry. Adidas is a world-famous brand with offices and employees situated all around the globe. How exactly do they manage their employees' social media ventures? Adidas takes a very

encouraging but strict approach when it comes to their Social Media Guidelines. Here are some highlights from Adidas' Social Media Policy:

1. Employees are allowed to associate themselves with the company when posting the contents. However, they must explicitly mention that their online posts as personal and purely their own. The company should not be held liable for any repercussions the employees' content may generate.
2. Content, pertaining to sensitive company information (particularly those found within Adidas internal networks), should not be shared to the outside online community. Employees must not divulge information, such as, the company's design plans, internal operations and legal matters.
3. Proper copyright and reference laws should be observed by employees when posting online.

### **HP (Hewlett-Packard)**

Hewlett-Packard Company is an American global information technology company headquartered in Palo Alto, California, United States HP is one of the biggest in formation technology corporations in the world. The company has an interesting take on blogging policies by enabling its employees to post content online via a blog embedded in their company website. These are some important points from the HP's Blogging Code of Conduct:

1. HP promotes healthy and honest discourse with its readers.
2. The company reserves the right to edit or amend any misleading or inaccurate content depicted in blog posts. The company also reserves the right to delete blog posts violating the code of conduct.
3. HP values, respects, and upholds the intellectual property rights of its bloggers.

(Source:<http://blog.hirerabbit.com/5-terrific-examples-of-company-social-media-policies/> accessed on 30.9.2015)

### **Conclusion**

Thus, it is clear from the above, that social media recruiting can be effectively be used as a tool for recruiting relevant and key talent in organizations. However, the effectiveness of social media recruitment will ultimately be determined considering the country of operation, cultural factors, internet or social media friendly population (who seriously use this platform), professional and technical know-how and infrastructural facilities available to support such powerful tools and platforms.

In the end the question to quantify the benefits of using such platforms would ultimately be decided on the basis of the ROI that companies would be getting in comparison to traditional recruitment practices already in vogue in organizations. The following parameters can be a guide to assess the ROI a company get derive from using social media recruiting platform:

Free access to use social media resources — even if social media resources are “free,” there is a cost to use them. Employee time must be factored in when evaluating the effectiveness and the return on any social media campaign.

Conversion into hires — Social media recruiting must result in hires. Putting trackable URLs in any social media post that links to a job posting enables a company to find out how many potential candidates click through to the postings from the company’s different social media sources.

Set clear goals — Goals must be established for all social recruiting efforts in a company. Diving into social media recruiting without clearly stated goals and measurable outcomes is like heading off on a road trip without a map or any clear idea of where one seeks to go. Setting goals for number of followers or friends could be a measure, but it is clearly not the end goal. The end goal is to fill more jobs, faster, with high quality candidates.

([http://marketing.dice.com/pdf/Dice\\_SixSteps For Social Recruiting.pdf](http://marketing.dice.com/pdf/Dice_SixStepsForSocialRecruiting.pdf) accessed on 25/9/2015)

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