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A Vision on Sourcing Talent on Social Media

Vision_Editor
#socialrecruiting is a relatively new phenomenon. How are companies using it?

HR Consultants
#socialrecruiting is not just posting jobs. It's about getting into the conversation

HR Staffing Specialist
Getting the ball rolling. Need to align #hr resources and skills.

Attracting applicants and burnishing an employer brand

Consultants:

- Peter Gold (United Kingdom)
- Jacques Froissant (France)
- Jacco Valkenburg (Netherlands)

Conveying an Employer Value Proposition on a global scale

- François Scholtz, Global Staffing Leader, ADP ES international

Faster, better focused recruiting

Academics & Consultants:

- Peter A. Rosen (USA)
- Donald H. Kluemper (USA)
- Jacques Froissant (France)
- Jacco Valkenburg (Netherlands)

Attracting applicants and burnishing an employer brand

As they appeal to huge numbers of users, social networks are a relevant place for a company to build up a talent pool. Asserting an employer brand online will be all the more effective on targeted web communities whose members are most likely to match the sought-after profiles. The company's employees, if present on these discussion forums, can act as ambassadors for their employer.

According to the 2011 edition of a study conducted by the American recruiting software platform specialist Jobvite[1] among 800 HR and talent acquisition professionals, 89% of US companies said they would recruit through social media, up from 83% in 2010. Another telling figure, two thirds of the respondents confirm that they have successfully hired a candidate through social networks. With a rating of 7 out of 10, social media are ranked fourth in terms of the quality of applicants, behind referrals, internal transfers and direct sourcing but before a company's own career site.

Recruitment via social networks is still a recent phenomenon. More studies and time will eventually tell whether it is a fad or a sustainable channel for attracting talent. But one thing is certain: with 800 million people on Facebook and 135 million on LinkedIn to cite only two examples, social media are undoubtedly a space where the talented applicants sought after by companies are present and expressing themselves. Combined with available survey results, these figures bear out the convictions of specialized consultants. *"Social networks give companies a means of finding the best people to fill their vacancies. It's an opportunity to be proactive and stop recruiting leavers,"* claims Peter Gold, founder of Hire Strategies, an online recruitment business in the UK.

> Being present on social networks is not enough. It is vital to think in terms of employer brand.

A LITTLE MARKETING

The Web's social space remains vast. For companies willing to engage with potential candidates, just being present is not enough. It is vital to think in terms of employer brand. Instead of simply latching on to the rise of Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter or YouTube, a little marketing is required. *"In seeking out potential candidates for the company, we have to ask ourselves where we are most likely to track them down,"* explains Peter Gold. Regularly published figures on social network traffic are a source of guidance: for executives experienced in international business, LinkedIn would be the best choice; for a younger and less highly-qualified target group, as well as localized recruiting in distribution or industry, Facebook would be a better option.

One of the best ways of targeting candidates with the required skills is to tap into "interest groups" or even professional communities. These are fairly easy to find.

Peter Gold (UK), founder of Hire Strategies Limited, online recruitment

Peter Gold (United Kingdom) is the Founder of Hire Strategies Limited, an online business that helps employers implement their e-recruitment strategies and use the Internet to find and hire people more effectively.

Peter Gold was previously the CEO of AIM listed Jobs.co.uk plc, a recruitment-focused technology provider. He has 15 years of recruitment experience after having worked for agencies before setting up e-cruitnow.com in September 1999 (subsequently acquired by Jobs.co.uk plc in April 2002).

> A genuine place to exchange opinions and share experience.

Whether as a group within a big social network, or completely independent, they bring together experts with experience in a certain sector or with specific know-how. Staying with the marketing analogy, these represent 'niche' social networks. In the United States, they exist for federal employees, healthcare workers, as well as for many others. Similarly, certain niches are geographical, for example Viadeo in France, Xing in Germany, Orkut in Brazil.

RUNNING A COMMUNITY

However, depending on what capabilities are needed, on how specific the required know-how is, even on how fierce the competition on the job market is, existing interest groups may turn out to be limited sources of good quality candidates. But companies can still make use of the Web in order to develop and run their own communities. A specialized blog, a collaborative forum or a job information site, each could provide a starting point. Indeed, the form is of little importance, as long as it offers a genuine place to reflect, exchange opinions and share experience. The curious will discover the company there, whilst the specialists can compare and contrast their skills and in so doing, introduce them to recruiters. *"So we run two communities for a web agency based around its two core specialties: web development and online marketing,"* confirms Jacques Froissant, founder of Altaïde, a French HR services consultancy firm.

[1] Can be obtained at http://recruiting.jobvite.com/resources/social-recruiting-survey.php

Jacques Froissant (France), founder of Altaïde, innovative HR services

Jacques Froissant founded Altaïde in 2000. This consultancy specializes in providing HR services for innovative companies in the Internet, Web 2.0, mobile internet and software sectors, making use of blogs and tools made available with the advent of Web 2.0 to boost the recruitment process for start-ups.

After starting off his career in distribution, Jacques Froissant turned towards HR consulting in 1989.
Acting as associate director, this specialist in IT profiles developed the high-tech activities of one of France's largest general recruitment agencies.

To be visible online, these community forums cannot ignore a few standard principles: optimizing search engine visibility, using relevant keywords, and creating links from the corporate site and career websites and the company's page on Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn.

Running communities such as these means abandoning the traditional patterns of communication. The point is not to advertise vacancies; most companies have careers sites and already make use of job boards. It is all about being proactive, engaging potential candidates in dialog early on and forming a talent pool with an eye on positions that might not even exist yet. Community management around the employer brand is therefore emerging as a new activity within HR departments.

EMPLOYEES USE THE WEB

Methods to stimulate interest group activities or, quite simply, further enhance a company's image on the Web are gradually emerging. The required actions no longer rely on recruitment experts seconded to HR departments, but potentially on the entire community of employees and their ability to create momentum as web users. Already active on social networks, these employees are in an ideal position to act as ambassadors for their company. It may even be in their own professional interest.

> The point is not to advertise vacancies. It is all about engaging potential candidates in dialog early.

After all, it is not unreasonable to ask a sales manager to activate his network as a quick means of recruiting the resources he needs to achieve his objectives. What would be illogical, on the other hand, would be to deprive him of the keys to using social media effectively. Similarly, it would be in the interest of all the members of an IT development team with an ever-growing workload to speed up the arrival of new recruits. That, however, can only be done if the information is spread on the Web with optimal organization and coherence. At the initiative of HR teams, specific training courses in the use of LinkedIn, Twitter and any other appropriate tools for company employees are thus emerging. *"We are even introducing motivation programs on the use of social media,"* adds Jacques Froissant.

Yet in inciting their employees to be active on the Web and reveal their expertise along with the image of their employers, is there not a danger of their being snapped up by other recruiters? This question is clearly justified, but the answer is as simple as looking up the name of the person in the next office on Google! Employees don't wait for their boss's permission to sign up to LinkedIn, or join interest groups on Facebook. *"They're already on these networks, and that's the very reason why we're tapping into them!"* says Jacques Froissant with a smile. Besides, even when used for professional reasons, the Internet does not have much time for protectionism. Without advocating sharing everything online, those who don't contribute to activities on social networks have little chance of unearthing valuable information.

NEW HR ROLES

The employer brand thus becomes everyone's business. *"Social networks also provide the chance to boost a company's recruitment culture,"* claims Jacco Valkenburg, international recruitment consultant and author of two books on LinkedIn. Clearly, using social media pushes boundaries and creates new roles for HR teams. In particular, it is up to them to choose which social media they want to use and create optimal conditions for a sustained, dynamic online representation of the company and its employer brand – or even go as far as running and moderating special interest forums.

Naturally, the results of a company's "digital" strategy must be measured. Consultants agree on the need to take time to set it up and make minor readjustments before rushing into using indicators (see box). Yet once a strategy has been in place for a while, the number of spontaneous applications sent in by people who have discovered the employer's brand on the Web or were attracted by it, is no doubt the best proof of its success.

Advice from the consultants

Invest in ... six months of observation

The consultants we have interviewed insist that it is vital to select targeted online communities to promote the employer brand. They also add that the most important thing is to initiate a dialog, as opposed to merely taking up a position there as if one were advertising. However, they also agree that it would be unwise to draw hasty conclusions based on first attempts. Even with good preparation, there is still uncertainty with regards to what a company will get out of exposing its employer brand on social media. Six months of observation are required to ensure that the right information gets delivered to the right people.

Markers and statistics

During this transitional period, overlook markers such as "Like"s on Facebook, "Followers" on Twitter, contributions and reactions to a blog, etc. Take advantage of these six months: spend as much time honing your strategy as you do feeling your way around and searching for new leads. Wait until the end of this period to start examining the statistics, such as the number of suitable profiles found, applications received and people hired.

"Establishing an employer brand on the Web requires time and energy devoted to the process as well as digital marketing skills," Jacques Froissant underlines. The rewards of this investment can be measured on a medium-term basis by the quality of the talent pool and the company's enhanced agility in a competitive job market. For when the statistics finally do talk, they reveal just how efficient social networks are in helping with recruitment. See our article **"Faster, Better Focused Recruiting"** p. 8.

ADP Employer Services International

Conveying a consistent Employer Value Proposition on a global scale

For several years now, ADP Employer Services has been laying the foundation for talent acquisition on social networks in the US. François Scholtz, Global Staffing Leader for ADP ES international, explains the challenges of rolling out the approach globally.

WHERE DOES ADP ES STAND IN TERMS OF RECRUITING ON SOCIAL NETWORKS?

ADP recognized early on that social media were a game changer in the field of recruitment and the competition for top talent. ADP started with Facebook in 2007 in the United States and shortly thereafter added LinkedIn and Twitter. Now ADP in the US is on all three as well as YouTube. To leverage these new tools as effectively as possible, the recruiting organization formed its own social media team to train recruiters on how to use social media to find good talent. To date, 100 of our recruiters have been certified on social recruiting, which has become a core skill for recruitment staff in the US.

HOW ABOUT THE NON-US, INTERNATIONAL DIVISION THAT YOU ARE IN CHARGE OF?

Our objective is to globalize our social media recruitment practices from now on, making the most of the experience of our US colleagues. This falls under the umbrella of "Career One", a much larger global project encompassing all changes affecting recruitment. One important aspect of "Career One" is the adoption of a single Application Tracking System on a worldwide level. We are currently in the process of rolling this out to China and Australia. For me, being able to track how we source talent and gather the data is required before we rely on channels such as social media.

HOW WILL SOCIAL MEDIA FIT INTO THE BIGGER PICTURE OF YOUR RECRUITMENT STRATEGY?

Attracting talent is a multi-channel activity. We have the ADP.com/careers site, job boards, job fairs, search engines, campus recruitment to cite but a few. Social media are at the intersection of all these channels: we can create curiosity amongst talent pools there, as well as engage and cultivate a talent community so that we keep up with candidates we have met elsewhere. It's a way to keep them one click away from ADP.com, which we have chosen as our single entry point for applications.

HOW ARE YOU PLANNING TO BRAND ADP INTERNATIONALLY AS AN EMPLOYER ON SOCIAL MEDIA SITES?

Our challenge is to get across a global message, while respecting the needs of our subsidiaries in different countries. The starting point is certainly ADP's Employer Value Proposition (EVP). ADP invested heavily in its development in the US and we will leverage this as much as possible. Our EVP is based on an overall vision of our recruiting, marketing and strategic leadership teams. By the way, our EVP is not only aimed at candidates, but also at our associates: our ambition is not only to attract but also to retain the best talent in the industry. It includes seventy themes like leadership, growth, scope, training and development, personal impact, career protection...

ADP EMPLOYER SERVICES SOCIAL MEDIA RECRUITMENT PRESENCE

- **ADP Career site:** http://www.adp.com/careers.aspx includes two focused communities : ADP Talent and ADP Alumni
- **LinkedIn:** http://www.linkedin.com/company/adp/careers
- **Twitter:** https://twitter.com/#!/ADPCareers
- **Facebook:** http://www.facebook.com/ADPcareers
- **YouTube:** http://www.youtube.com/ADPcareers

WHAT WILL BE THE RIGHT BALANCE BETWEEN GLOBAL AND LOCAL CONTENT?

Part of our EVP is applicable in the US only, and some of it can be internationalized. Our international social recruitment team will have to globalize our EVP, leaving options for some work at the local level for better integration into networks of local candidates. In a sense, we will be personalizing our brand to make it resonate with the audience. Besides Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn or YouTube, we may be on social networks as diverse as Orkut to address Brazil, Mixi for Japan, QZone in China. We want our brand to accurately reflect our company identity across all of these media.

> Being able to track how we source talent is a prerequisite.

HOW WILL YOU MAKE SURE IT WORKS?

By setting ourselves clear goals in terms of the message we want to convey and driving that from a channel perspective. Social media give us the possibility to communicate, check the audience reaction, and then adjust. That's one of its advantages: it is more than a medium, it is a channel with a push/pull mechanism. You get as much information as you spread. The drawback is the need to remain active, to get into channel management activities, which obviously requires resources.

François Scholtz, Global Staffing Leader, ADP ES international

DO SOCIAL MEDIA REQUIRE NEW SKILLSETS IN THE RECRUITING TEAM?

The next generation of recruiters is coming through, with a more hybrid skillset. In addition to mastering traditional recruiting tools and techniques, they have to be effective communicators combining sales, networking, sharing skills and the ability to create content. Digital communication and tools and social networking will be part of their world, but the post also requires an in-depth understanding of where and how people meet and socialize. The content developed for LinkedIn – targeting mid- to senior-level candidates – is different from the content of a conversation for Facebook. All of this also requires the ability to draw a line between private and professional themes.

ADP EMPLOYER SERVICES INTERNATIONAL (ESI)

With about $10 billion in revenue and approximately 570,000 clients, Automatic Data Processing Inc., is one of the world's largest providers of business outsourcing solutions. Capitalizing on over 60 years of experience, ADP Employer Services offers a wide range of human resources, payroll, tax and benefits administration solutions from a single source. ADP's easy-to-use employer solutions provide superior value for companies of all sizes. ADP Employer Services International is the international branch of ADP Employer Services, covering Europe, Middle-East Africa, Latin America and Asia-Pacific regions.

Faster, better focused recruiting

Recruiting through social networks is still too recent a phenomenon to have been "benchmarked" on a large scale. Nevertheless, certain studies are already proving that these media are fertile ground for detecting talent. Similarly, initial experience confirms that they can provide recruiters with the conversational dimension that traditional job boards cannot offer. Can recruiters still afford to ignore them?

Internet recruiting existed long before social media came into being. For several years now, companies have had careers pages on their websites where job seekers can submit and keep track of their applications. Firms also use job boards, and general or specialized job search websites: in short, the same tools that recruitment agencies often use themselves.

These resources have the two-fold advantage of advertising vacancies widely, as well as processing applications automatically. They have their limits, however. Job seekers signed up for updates from job boards and career sites won't necessarily complain if they receive the same offer more than once. Companies, however, amass CVs with limited relevancy. Social networks are efficient since they offer the possibility of personalizing a relationship at a very early stage. On a job board, applicants talk to a machine. On social networks, they get to know the people behind the scenes. It's a great way for candidates to find out more about companies... and vice-versa.

For applicants, social networks are an excellent way of getting to know a company.

PERSONAL INSIGHTS

Even recruiters who haven't (yet) started promoting their employer brand online implicitly admit that social networks enable candidates and companies to get to know each other better. Which HR manager hasn't at some point googled applicant names in the hope of finding out more about them on LinkedIn and Facebook, or even from their tweets and comments they leave on blogs?

Whether the traces an individual leaves online give recruiters any useful information remains to be seen. American researchers Don Kluemper and Peter A. Rosen tried to find out, through studies of several hundred young graduates with Facebook profiles. They gave these participants personality tests whilst small teams of three to five raters – including recruitment specialists – drew up their psychological profiles based on information available on Facebook.

The results were clear-cut. Firstly, the profiles drawn up by different raters using Facebook coincided with each other. Better still, the personality traits established using the social network were very close to the results of the traditional self-reported personality tests. Surprising? Not at all: *"The information present on social networks is accumulated over years and is shared with friends and users with the fundamental purpose of maintaining social relationships. That is why people typically don't fake on social networks,"* posits Peter A. Rosen, Associate Professor of Management Information Systems at the University of Evansville, and co-author of the studies. Several complementary studies have also proven the social networks to be excellent indicators of personal capabilities and organizational behavior.

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Jacco Valkenburg (The Netherlands), international consultant

Jacco Valkenburg is an international consultant and trainer. He has more than 15 years of experience in global recruitment strategies and implementation spanning numerous countries. He provides companies with recruitment and talent management solutions and expertise.

Jacco Valkenburg is a pioneer in the usage of LinkedIn for recruitment purposes. He also launched refer2, a full service provider for referral recruitment campaigns. As of 2010 he has also been developing mobile recruitment apps for the iPhone and Android platforms. Jacco Valkenburg is the author of "Recruitment via LinkedIn" and "Career Management via LinkedIn".

QUICKER THAN A BATCH OF TESTS

"It takes our raters between five and ten minutes to establish an applicant's psychological profile using Facebook," says Don Kluemper, Assistant Professor of Management at Northern Illinois University, who timed the process. *"Quicker and cheaper than setting and analyzing a batch of personality tests!"*

A reciprocal investigation would be just as productive for applicants: social networks are an excellent way of getting to know a company, right down to its core values. *"Internet users can talk to friends and relatives who work there, to employees and managers who are pleased to answer their questions. They form a well-rounded opinion of the atmosphere within the company and its management style. If the recruitment process then gets underway, many questions on both sides have already been answered, and lots of time has been saved"*, explains Jacco Valkenburg, an international consultant and author of two books on LinkedIn.

The higher the quality of the discussions, the more interaction there will be and the more efficient the talent search will be. *"If you use a social network as a job board to post vacancies, you'll get the same results as with a job board: a pile of CVs to wade through,"* says Peter Gold ironically. *"The added benefit of using a social network is being able to have real conversations with web users."*

Nevertheless, there is one reason why these methods of screening profiles within social networks should not become a widespread practice, and it is an ethical one.

Focused online conversations selectively appeal to the best talents. An inexpensive form of natural selection.

Social networks give recruiters access to information that they are not allowed to take into account when selecting applicants: ethnic origin and religion, to name but two.

CONVERSATIONAL RECRUITING

The Web is unique and revolutionary in that it is the first space in which a recruiter can get in touch quite naturally with talented individuals without worrying about who their employers are. This is one major advantage of "conversational recruiting": namely, arousing the curiosity of "passive candidates", even those who are totally loyal to their current employers. In-depth discussions on appropriate topics within candidates' spheres of interest are likely to spark their curiosity and make them want to learn more...

Focused online conversations will be especially likely to attract Internet users with the knowledge required to take part in them. The discussion will hence selectively appeal to the best talents while discouraging those who are not capable of keeping track. An inexpensive form of natural selection that helps to create a highly valuable talent pool.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Consultants are now beginning to measure the effects of screening and stimulating interest with the benefit of hindsight. Running an online community focusing on the employer's brand and core activities encourages spontaneous applications. *"The number of applications is increasing, and, crucially, so is their quality – we are down to almost zero wastage,"* notes Jacques Froissant, founder of Altaïde, a French HR consultancy firm. Promoting a vacancy within a special-interest discussion group attracts a much more appropriate selection of applications than posting the same vacancy on a general job board.

As a result, recruitment teams spend less time sorting through CVs. This is reflected in the ratio of applications received to applicants contacted. *"Ten years ago, in high-tech industry sectors, five per cent of incoming applications were pertinent. Today, thanks to the input of interest groups and social networks, three CVs in four turn out to be interesting,"* explains Jacques Froissant. Depending on its needs and line of work, a company could even consider withdrawing from job boards altogether...

This development adds to the advantages of forming a good talent pool and attracting passive candidates. When HR departments have a vacancy to fill, this type of direct approach enables them to be very proactive and even do without headhunters. The number of spontaneous applications attracted, the quality of CVs received and the amount of subcontractors' fees saved already gives them three indicators by which to measure the returns on their investment in social networks.

Peter A. Rosen & Donald H. Kluemper (USA), first academics to validate the use of social networking websites in the selection process.

In 2008, Don Kluemper and Peter Rosen were the first academics to validate the use of social networking websites in the selection process.

Their major publications include:

- **"Social networking websites, personality ratings, and the organizational context: More than meets the eye?" in Journal of Applied Social Psychology (2010, co-authored with K. Mossholder)**
- **"Future employment selection methods: evaluating social networking websites" in the Journal of Managerial Psychology, 24, 567-580 (2009).**
- **"The impact of the big five personality traits on the acceptance of social networking websites" in Proceedings of the 14th Americas Conference on Information Systems (2008).**

Peter A. Rosen is Assistant Professor of Management Information Systems at the School of Business Administration of the University of Evansville, Indiana. Dr. Rosen's research interests include social media, personal innovativeness, technology acceptance and statistics in sports.

Dr. Rosen is looking for human resources managers to participate in a future study on the use of social networking websites in the employment selection context. To participate, please contact him at pr7@evansville.edu.

Donald H. Kluemper is Assistant Professor of Management at Northern Illinois University (located in Dekalb, near Chicago).

Dr. Kluemper's research interests are centered on personality traits in the workplace, particularly as they relate to measurement issues associated with self, peer and observer ratings of personality traits.

Advice from the consultants

Going all the way

Social networks can be tremendous recruitment tools... as long as you complete the process. Once the employer brand is visible on the Web, spontaneous applicants must not be kept waiting for a reply and a newly created group blog must not be left to its own devices. Driven by the instantaneous nature of the Web, social networks can damage a company's reputation in a fraction of the time it took to build it.

From public discussion to private dialog

Consequently, the onus is on the companies to ensure they have the necessary resources to keep up the conversations they initiated, with the aid of community managers and expert bloggers. These people must never forget that everything is visible on the Web. After all, aren't the first few members of a person's network – and hence the first people to follow his conversations – his colleagues and managers? Having started in a public sphere, the conversation will have to continue in a private space when the time comes.

Finally, HR teams in charge of recruitment have to be confident that they can deal with a potential influx of applications from social networks and efficiently manage a talent pool formed in this way. *"Like any campaign aimed at stimulating interest, the key to success lies in the company's ability to meet demand,"* concludes Peter Gold. The perfect e-recruiter hence combines the prestige of the employer brand with a policy of dialog and good operational qualities!

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