

Application of Social Networks for Human Resources

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Abstract—Social media is changing the way people interact and share information. LinkedIn, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and other social media are revolutionizing the way we communicate, and numerous organizations are struggling to respond. Given the potential risks and benefits of social media in the workplace, it is critical for managers to develop policies and procedures governing its appropriate use. This paper will identify key issues and pose strategic questions to help guide managers in making more informed decisions when navigating social media issues in their organizations. After a brief introduction, current most popular social websites and tools are described concisely. Relationships between social media and human resources are then discussed. Utilizing social media in organizations are not without risks which are thoroughly talked about further along with the benefits of such websites for recruitment. Lastly, suggestions are made for companies that are considering utilizing social media and for companies that have already benefitted from such networks to improve their strategies.

Keywords—human resources, recruitment, social media, workforce

I. INTRODUCTION

There has always been a high demand on human resources decision makers and managers. The change in demographic and expert scarcity has dramatically increased competition for expert employees. Companies must constantly move forward in order to keep in line with advancements in the employee market whilst being up to date with latest market trends. The most prominent key trend that has emerged among young people is the internet which has transformed from being a one-way information platform to becoming Web 2.0 that features interactive user base information exchange. With the transformation of the mobile phone to smart phones, social networks are accessible at anytime from anywhere and have become a major part of everyday life. Social media applications are being launched every day. Social media platforms are being utilized by companies to showcase themselves and as a means of communication with their customers and employees. Once social media are correctly utilized, they add considerable value in the field of human resources.

However, a properly thought through decision making and implementation process is required to guarantee success. The way in which company efforts to attract expert employees that harnesses the potential of the digital world is crucial in today's competitive workforce market.

II. SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS

YouTube

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.

Twitter

A popular micro blogging 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.

LinkedIn

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.

Facebook

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.



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III. REASONS FOR IMPLEMENTING SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is well-established as a consumer and brand oriented set of tools. Increasingly, social media is being offered as an innovative solution for internal effectiveness. When strategy and governance are integrated with social media tools, they can positively impact any organization. Using social media places new demands on corporate culture. And given the nature of Web 2.0, these demands cannot be ignored. Transparency and trust are essential in order to provide employees with the information and skills they need to manage a platform, because whoever is entrusted with this task requires comprehensive powers and knowledge of business activities. The willingness to share information and to disclose this to a wider audience is an essential prerequisite to successfully embed social networks within the organization. This also involves relinquishing a certain amount of control, however. The sheer volume of data created by a user-based web alone makes it virtually impossible to control the flow of company-related data. Listed companies in particular are put off by this, and often shy away from using social networks as a result. Nevertheless, the trend seems to be moving in the other direction: away from control towards greater trust, combined with rules on how to correctly use social media. A digital corporate culture is characterized by flat hierarchies and fast decision-making. Employees can experiment and take on risk within predefined boundaries. Mixed teams work interdepartmentally and pursue innovation and continual improvement, seeking to overcome challenges. The market, as well as customer and employee needs, set the tempo and priorities. The web has a clear advantage for job seekers; users can react quickly and flexibly to enquiries and can search and filter job offers in line with their own requirements. Moreover, it is significantly cheaper to post online advertisements than publish printed ones. It is little wonder, then, that traditional newspaper advertisements have long been on the way out, and that more than 80% of students now search for jobs using online job portals.

IV. HUMAN RESOURCES-SOCIAL MEDIA LINK

World class leaders enable prominent employees to become evangelists for the company on social media platforms, assisting customers, brand building, attracting talent and giving a personal face to the firm.

Apart from external advantages, social media leaders are becoming more and more engaged and bonded to the company, its mission and goals if done precisely. Such employees can come from anywhere in the company, including interns, line personnel, managers, products leaders and executives. Social media is well known as a consumer and brand oriented set of tools. Social media is being offered as an innovative solution for internal effectiveness. Once strategy and governance are coordinated with social media tools, they will impact the company positively. Any organization that utilizes social media thoughtfully will find opportunities in four areas: speeding up talent acquisition and talent management, mobility and collaboration, attaining a multigenerational workforce and the ability to manage potential risks.

V. TALENT PROCUREMENT AND MANAGEMENT

Acquiring talent is one the main areas within many companies to take advantage of social media. If utilized correctly, this can include speeding up the recruitment process from posting openings to sourcing candidates, reviewing resumes, making offers and hiring. Talent acquisition advances may be challenging for company's internal communication and human resources. Newly hired employees with great online experience may be surprised to find that the internal systems and culture are not as sophisticated or advanced and may not even have access to those same recruiting sites at work. Once employees are on board, social media can be leveraged for connecting employees to interest groups (e.g. volunteerism, mentoring, and diversity). More sophisticated companies are using technology and social media tools to create deep expert directories that are populated by employees with information about themselves and others. Progressive organizations are dispensing with the annual performance cycle and moving to more real-time feedback and coaching. Social media tools make true 360-degree feedback a reality.

VI. MOBILITY AND COOPERATION

The combination of new technology and mobile devices with the changing needs of employees presents a significant challenge for organizations. The ability to access information and applications from a laptop, BlackBerry®, Android™-based phone, or iPhone® from around the world has created an expectation of immediacy for today's workforce.



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Increased availability of “on-demand” tools can be a double-edged sword: the information is easily accessible. Many innovative and fast-growing companies place a premium on collaboration. Finding the right expert to repair a piece of equipment, reusing an existing piece of market research, convening a geographically dispersed “team” are faster and less expensive with social media tools.

VII. MULTI-GENERATIONAL EMPLOYEES

While the 16-30 generation employee may have no issues being asked to suddenly use a certain social media tool, a 47-65 generation employee may feel overwhelmed and frustrated by such a request. The 66-86 and 47-65 generations alike prefer face-to-face meetings or phone calls, while the 31-46 and 16-30 generations don't necessarily need, or want, face-to-face encounters and would prefer to pick up the phone to send a text versus make a call. Relationship building for this group often occurs through simply pinging their social media networks.

VIII. ADVANTAGES AND RISKS OF UTILIZING SOCIAL MEDIA FOR HUMAN RESOURCES

Advantages:

- Improved sourcing of high quality candidates
- Enhanced candidate quality
- Greater organizational identification and commitment
- Reduced turnover
- Improved employment compatibility and job satisfaction
- Reducing training costs
- Greater training effectiveness
- Continuous skill enhancement and self-directed learning
- Fast and inexpensive dissemination of information
- Easy knowledge sharing from few up to many
- Ability to reach new customers
- Enhancement of customer loyalty
- Increased cost efficiency
- Increased accuracy for problem solving
- Innovation spread throughout organization with minimum effort
- Reinforcement of organizational culture
- Culture change through communication

Risks:

- Employment discrimination (e.g. obtaining personal information that is not job related from websites such as Facebook and using it in hiring decisions)

- Variability in applicant use of social media disadvantages those who do not use it (some age groups or racial/ethnic groups maybe be underrepresented on social media sites)
- Spread of inappropriate or damaging information (e.g. negative information posted by disgruntled employees could discourage new hires)
- Creation of division rather than inclusion (e.g. establishment of cliques or subcultures)
- No positive effect on learning or development (e.g. skills to be learned are not transferred to the job)
- Unequal access or usage (e.g. those who do not use social media have fewer opportunities for training or development)
- Too much information (e.g. work time consumed with reading social network posts)
- Quick spread of negative or private information (e.g. co-workers learn of an employee's serious medical condition)
- No relevant effect on customer metrics (e.g. investment in social media does not generate sales or customer growth)
- Hidden costs with maintenance of media (e.g. staff time to monitor social network sites and constantly provide fresh content)
- Consensus process slows decision making (e.g. the higher number of people involved in decision making increases time needed to resolve an issue)
- Consensus leads to pursuit of poor choices; lack of critical thinking (e.g. groupthink or an influential employee generating support for a bad idea)
- Broad resistance to organizational change (e.g. employees bond together to resist change)
- Facilitation of undesirable company culture (e.g. employees use social media to form coalitions counter to the organization culture)

IX. MANAGING SOCIAL MEDIA RISKS

Many companies that use social media struggle to successfully integrate it into their daily business routines. The challenge is frequently found within the creation, execution, and enforcement of social media policies. Many companies do not establish policies to govern social media usage or can find their policy difficult to enforce due to lack of employee engagement and training on the topic. Given these challenges, it is not surprising that many executives prefer to avoid the topic by saying that they have no need for social media or policies to manage it.



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However, as companies begin to realize the true value to be gained by social media adoption, consideration of workforce risk is essential for avoidance of loss of employee goodwill, information breaches, and reputational damage. Many companies' social media policies are negatively oriented, directing what not to do. Consider the impact to organizations of a positive social media policy with a positive orientation. Successful organizations clients have successfully delivered real value through formally engaging their workforce with enhanced social media policies and engagement models. When these are defined and communicated to employees, a new set of evangelists are created. They can aid the organization in carrying positive messages to the marketplace regarding the quality of their products and services as well as the nature of the workplace itself being a collaborative environment where creativity and expression of new ideas is both welcomed and encouraged.

X. RECRUITMENT VIA POPULAR SOCIAL MEDIA WEBSITES

Recruitment through Facebook

Facebook is now the most visited place on the web. Facebook is a relatively closed network it can make direct sourcing a challenge. Depending on the user's security settings, visitors are allowed certain access making sourcing on this platform somewhat difficult. Even still, there are ways to grow candidate pool, source, and fill positions recruiting on Facebook. Facebook's ad network offers recruiters a unique opportunity to target job advertisements to Facebook users by keyword, education, location, and even age. Facebook users are providing detailed information and news about their own interests, hobbies, education, and activities throughout the day and at staggering rates. The average Facebook user now spends 15 hours and 33 minutes per month on Facebook. Facebook's ads capitalize on their members and the information that is voluntarily submitted by offering advertisers very small and specific areas in which to target for not a lot of money. To keep up with the competition for top talent, companies must recruit with Facebook ads. Facebook Fan Page can serve as a recruiting and sourcing tool just like a company blog or opportunities to directly engage and educate target candidate market. Approximately 81% of Facebook's monthly active users are outside the U.S. and Canada. Facebook has seen a 41% growth in active users from Russia, South Korea, Japan, India and Brazil during 2012. 70% of Facebook-using job seekers are male, 63% are under the age of 40, 40% earn more than \$75,000 and 36% are college graduates.

Recruitment through LinkedIn

LinkedIn had more than 187 million members in over 200 countries and territories. 63% of LinkedIn members are located outside of the United States new members sign up to LinkedIn every second. There are more than 1 million LinkedIn groups. 38% of job seekers use LinkedIn to help find work in 2012, 19% of job seekers had a contact share a job on LinkedIn, 11% of job seekers searched for jobs on LinkedIn and 79% of LinkedIn users are 35 or older; the average LinkedIn user is 40.5 years old. 60% of LinkedIn-using job seekers are male, 62% are under the age of 40, 51% earn more than \$75,000 and 50% are college graduates.

Recruitment through Twitter

Recruiters and hiring managers can also leverage recruiting on Twitter as a Social Media candidate source in a number of different ways. Searching for candidates via hash tags can net a solid list of job search and recruiting leads long before candidate has responded to a resume-mining database like CareerBuilder or Monster. Hash tag feeds on Twitter allow companies to go beyond their audience (followers) when posting, and when reading hash tagged Tweets, companies can target thought leaders in the industry. Like any job board or social network, finding top talent is the top priority of e-recruiting. 67% of Twitter-using job seekers are male, 69% are under the age of 40, 46% earn more than \$75,000 and 44% are college graduates.

XI. STRATEGIC PREPARATION

Choices about how to engage or respond to social media must first be addressed from a strategic perspective. When considering strategic issues, it is helpful to create a cross functional task force represented by key stakeholders. These stakeholders may include leaders from relevant areas such as finance, human resources, legal, IT, marketing, accounting and operations. Because social media has the potential to affect all parts of the organization, it is also important to get feedback from a diverse cross-section of the employee population and perhaps even customers and shareholders or investors as well.

XII. RECOMMENDATIONS

If social media are implemented correctly, they can add value in the field of HR. Nevertheless, a well thought-through decision-making and implementation process is needed to ensure success.



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The results also bring to light which hurdles and stumbling blocks an HR team may encounter while trying to successfully implement social media, and what they should pay particular attention to. Here are some prominent recommendations for action, which are of use for every HR department, irrespective of sector or focus.

- Build top management consensus to drive digitization across human resources processes. The success of a large-scale digitization effort depends on top-management support. Top-management resistance towards digitization in HR is often linked with a lack of understanding of the business benefits of digitization. To build top-management consensus, HR should develop a clear vision for digitization that takes a long-term, holistic view of talent acquisition and engagement. The vision should be clearly aligned with the overall business goals of the organization so that HR is positioned for a more strategic role that of a profit driver rather than an administrative cost center. The vision should be backed by a strong business case for technology investments. As part of the vision, HR must also lay down clear guidelines for the use of social media by employees, to ensure that the employer brand is not negatively impacted by the information shared by employees on external media.
- Upgrade to a flexible, interoperable IT structure. In order to roll out initiatives that cut across departments and geographies, HR will need IT systems that are interoperable. Since the current HR IT landscape in most organizations consists of fragmented, localized systems that do not support end-to-end process integration, this means HR will need to graduate to a more flexible IT architecture. Additionally, HR IT systems will need to support mobile and social media integration and at the same time, be flexible enough to accommodate future advancements in technology. The shift to a cloud-based model can address many of these requirements as cloud based platforms are easily scalable and upgradable, can be managed centrally, and implemented at lower costs than a full-scale legacy upgrade.
- Deliver a seamless multichannel experience. HR should use social and mobile platforms to build stronger relationships with employees as well as prospects. For the user, the experience of interacting with HR should be seamless across channels. Mobile websites and applications should be designed such that they are easy to use and simplify the applicant's access to information. HR should also aim to personalize the experience based on the user's profile.

Building a digital HR strategy will need to be an ongoing process for organizations. HR will need to continuously monitor digital channels to ensure that it is listening and responding to the needs of its target audience. In a competitive marketplace, it is steps like these that will differentiate an organization and enable it to attract and retain the best talent.

- Use data to guide decision making. A shift to a data-driven approach to decision making is a crucial element of digitization that HR needs to address. Data should be used across all HR processes — including recruitment, learning and development, and performance management. As a first step, HR should develop a unified view of all employee data. To do so, HR will need to consolidate data that currently resides in multiple systems spread across business units and geographies into a centralized repository. The next step should be to invest in analytics tools and skill sets so that the data can be utilized effectively. Finally, HR should establish metrics and KPIs that will determine the effectiveness of its initiatives. These steps will enable HR to prioritize its investments and develop targeted programs. By not digitizing fast enough, organizations risk being left out in the race to attract and retain the best talent. Digital technologies offer a host of innovative ways to enhance employee experience and organizations that have realized this, have reaped rich rewards. For the others, it is time to take swift action towards envisioning, defining and implementing a comprehensive digital HR strategy.
- Get an overview of the platforms and their possible uses so you can find the most suitable platform for your purposes. Your company may already be represented or being discussed on certain platforms – perhaps among customers, perhaps among (potential) employees.
- Create space so that your company can gather experiences with social networks. Don't try to ban social networks and online communities from the workplace – thanks to smart phones, you'll never succeed anyway.
- Develop a strategy for using social media. Set rules so that social media is used consistently throughout the company. Don't only consider HR, but work closely with your PR, marketing, production and compliance departments as well. Don't set your strategy in stone; otherwise you won't be able to respond to short-term developments.
- Set clear boundaries for the use of social media. It's time-consuming and therefore costly to update social media. Concentrate on the platforms that are relevant for you – that way you can make more out of less.



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- Make use of the know-how within your company, hold training and brainstorming sessions and allow your employees to feed in their personal experiences with social networks. You'll be surprised how much knowledge you already have within the company.
- Provide sufficient human resources and equip staff with the necessary skills. It takes time to keep content up to date and communicate with users. Employees entrusted with these tasks need to be able to process input from outside the company quickly and flexibly.
- Integrate social media into your existing HR processes. The new media shouldn't be managed in isolation, but should be actively linked to on boarding, development and alumni processes, for example. This helps create a consistent and uniform experience.

XIII. CONCLUSION

It is clear that social media tools are transforming the way we work and will continue to do so in ways we can only imagine. It is critical for Human Resource professionals to understand what these tools are used for and assess the risks and opportunities they may present to an organization. Social media is redefining how companies innovate by connecting people and ideas in ways that have previously not been explored. Organizations now have the ability to utilize knowledge from external audiences around the globe that they could never reach before. It is changing the way we do business today. Additional benefits include the ability to enhance your public image, improve interactions with customers, and promote employee engagement. But it is not without internal and external risk. New technologies emerge quickly, and there is little legal precedent or research to steer appropriate action. Truly world-class leaders empower key employees to become evangelists for the firm on social media platforms, helping customers, building the brand, attracting talent, and giving a personal face to the company. Social networks offer a powerful tool for recruiters to reach a pool of qualified candidates that they might not otherwise be able to reach. Social media is here to stay and employers can gain a significant advantage by adopting hiring methods that have a social media element. There is no doubt that social media has improved the recruitment process by making it more open and democratic; increasing the visible talent pool from which to engage and recruit. Having an intimate knowledge of someone's capabilities or knowing who the best person for a role is, however, can only be gained through personal knowledge of an individual and of a particular industry sector.

The social media sites also recognize this, and new tools are becoming available all of the time that allow recruiters and employers to work together to take advantage of social media hiring but it is not without internal and external risk.

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