

RECRUITMENT VIA SOCIAL MEDIA: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Recent studies have shown that social media platforms such as Facebook and LinkedIn, have become emergent agents for employers and recruitment agents to search for potential employees to work for their companies. Employers and recruitment agents are using social networking sites for recruitment as these sites offers a vast database of people information.

Social media has made an easy pathway for employers and recruitment agents to narrow down their search to the targeted group of people and hire the best employees, thus elevating online recruitment to a greater height. However, there are risks associated with the use of social media as a recruitment tool and users must understand that once they become part of a social media community, their online profiles can be accessed by almost everyone. By knowing the risks and complications of social media, it will be a step in the right direction towards managing the apparent risks.

The objective of this paper is to study how social media is used in attracting quality job applicants and examine the risks associated with social media recruitment.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

It's easy to make fun of Facebook. The depressed stock, the misguided political comments, the unguarded vanity of high school "friends"—all tend to reinforce the inanity of the social network. But a billion people still use it. Even those who complain (like me) still use it. And for large, multinational companies, it's becoming an increasingly valuable tool for recruiting employees. -Forbes

The use of social media as a modern approach for recruitment of employees has a number of important advantages compared to traditional forms of recruitment. Social media platforms such as Facebook and, LinkedIn, have been widely used by employers and recruitment agents for the past few years to search for potential employees to be hired by companies. It allows the employers and recruitment agents to ascertain and filter potential applicants based on job requirements and thus shorten the hiring process whilst promoting a more efficient and effective way of enlisting talented applicants.

As more and more employers and recruitment agents adopt this revolutionary way of sourcing and recruiting, it gives them the benefit of offering more advertisement space to include important and necessary information such as corporate culture, nature of job, clear job description, required skills and other relevant criteria. Failing to do so will lead to employing low quality applicants or limited applicant choices to fill up the vacancy.

2.0 THE POPULARITY OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Social network is commonly defined as a set of actors, consisting of people in the organization and the links between them via social relationships, which will bring some value to the respective parties (Gibb, 2014). Also, Slovensky, et al, 2014, has stated that netizen’s belief that their life is assumed to be complete and structured with social networking sites. Research strongly suggests that social media plays an important role as a growing job seeking and recruitment tool (Bonhard, et al, 2006).

In today’s society, individuals want to be heard and seen by others. They want to be valued for what they can offer to others. They build and develop connections with others, mainly for social interaction. They keep in touch with friends and family members, in addition to making new friends, express opinions by sharing thoughts, criticize others, seek for up-to-date information and stay connected online. And for all these reasons, social media fits perfectly well in this digital lifestyle era.

For those people who have started working, they maintain their career presence online by building and enhancing their social media profiles so that they can make themselves relevant in the fast pace information- changing era and gain a competitive advantage.

Table 1. Statistic of Social Media Users as of Q1 2016.

Social Media Platforms	World Users	Malaysian Users
Facebook	1.5 Billion	10.9 Million
LinkedIn	433 Million	2 Million

Table 1.0 shows the significant explosion of popularity of these social media websites transcending language, borders and cultures. Social media has permeated almost every aspect of people’s lives, whether it be on a personal, social or professional level. There is no denying that social media can become a huge of information of individuals available publicly, unless of course if the user makes it private. As such, there is no denying that social media is a valuable tool that can be used in retrieving data for enlisting new employees.

It has been reported in 2014 Kelly Global Workforce Index that three out of four job seekers in Malaysia use social media in their job hunt, which is a much higher figure than the global average of 36%. This makes Malaysia’s ranking fourth, worldwide, in the use of social media for career decisions, in a list led by India, Thailand and Indonesia.

Employers and recruitment agents use social media which provides modest socializing channels to view and connect to the profiles of a wide-ranging of capable and talented applicants, mostly situated in niche communities (Ellahi, et al, 2013). Facebook.com has become a popular general screening tool among recruitments (Stecker, 2009), for some obvious reasons, which will be explained further in the next section.

2.1 FACEBOOK

Facebook is undoubtedly the top social media brand. If Facebook users are making their profiles public, then it becomes like a goldmine for the employers and recruitment agents. Facebook has extensive database mainly of the younger population. The younger generation are the group of people who are full of potentials, having the ability to come up with fresh and creative ideas, constantly re-inventing themselves and always looking for the next big opportunity.

From the Facebook posts they create, they are able to show how well they can communicate with others, how impressive they are in communicating ideas, how much knowledge they possess of the industry, their accomplishments and strengths, and how they spend their leisure time. Such information is very important to the employers and recruitment agents as to identify how they can contribute to the company's development and progress as well as provide clues of their personality and how they can fit into the company's work culture.

2.2 LINKEDLN

Another very popular social media brand is LinkedIn, which is more business oriented. It is a famous social networking site that allows creating, managing and sharing compelling professional profiles or images. Users of this site can find people connections; look for career opportunities; and establish contacts with industry experts and business partners. Users have the advantage of promoting themselves by displaying or providing their working experience, academic qualification, related photos, information on awards and specific projects that they have developed or even charity programmes that they have been involved in.

Users or members of LinkedIn will normally get to introduce themselves to new members and add connections with well-known experts in their fields and establish communication with impressive contacts. This will help to build their online career presence, establish networking with other people, connect to important people in their fields and make themselves relevant. They can demonstrate their specific ability, previous work samples and state their views or opinion about specific works or projects. All this can help to create public awareness of the users' potentials and abilities.

3.0 CAN SOCIAL MEDIA ATTRACT QUALITY EMPLOYEES?

Social media can definitely help to identify and attract quality employees. It allows employers and recruitment agents to gain access to information on applicants' experiences and skills; have a better glimpse of their lifestyles; values and culture which is crucial for the corporate organization. This will aid in recruitment and hiring but also in engagement with employees and improve employee retention rates.

The impact social media has on the recruiting process is immeasurable. Instead of just glancing through the qualifications of prospective employees through their written resume, recruiters can now use LinkedIn to find out how involved these prospective employees are in the LinkedIn community and throughout the industry. This gives valuable insight that was previously unattainable, and is the key ingredient in identifying and hiring the most qualified prime applicants.

For example, in LinkedIn, the applicants can revise their profiles accordingly and perform a regular update of their work projects by displaying a schedule of their activities. The profiles created are stunning and impressive, with use of keywords for easier searching and browsing. Users are able to conveniently display a list of conferences attended, and abstracts of completed and on-going researches. This will demonstrate that the applicant is 'on top of everything' thus helping to increase the level of attention and the chances of getting more opportunities to be hired.

As for Facebook, the applicants can post pictures of themselves attending conferences, getting involved with specific projects, repost and share their posts or blogs with a wider community of people, post professional articles and news releases that are related to their career and comment on the posts which can further be shared and made viral to a wide number of Facebook users.

4.0 RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN RECRUITMENT

Employers have always been able to request background and reference information from job applicants but have been self-restrained in doing so because of the cost and legal requirements. This norm is now shifting, as employers are routinely conducting informal online background checks without applicants' knowledge. Based on the information they have gathered, employers are making smart decisions. Framingham, H.H. (2008), even questioned that though the practice seems to be taken for granted and as acceptable, few employers have explored the ethical aspect of such practices.

While it is certain that social media has made a positive impact on the process of hiring prospective employees, it has also taken a great deal of privacy out of people's everyday lives. It is imperative to be aware that in the process of getting a new job, the employers and recruitment agents will most likely conduct background searches by looking up on additional information about potential applicants through web search engines and investigate their online activities in various social media websites and portals. This will provide them a lot of important information and facts about applicants such as personal interests and online social interactions which exceeds the conventional information stated on resumes in the form of hard copies.

By being online, the user is exposed to the risk of over exposure of one's personal life and this can provide both a negative or positive impact to the recruiting process. Behaviours considered unprofessional such as posting too many indecent photos or making negative remarks or comments together with other social media users can absolutely harm the chances for a person to get hired.

Many studies have shown a huge bias in the online recruiting process, even in organisations which say that they are committed to eliminating discrimination. According to Breaugh, J. (2008), research indicates that white middle-aged men have a tendency to hire other white middle-aged men possibly due to biased views in the society and it should be noted that robotised recruitment is blind to that sort of human influence.

5.0 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, with the emergence of social media in the process of recruitment, it has created many opportunities which can be both positive or negative. It has become an increasingly important part of any business development. Social media is no longer viewed as trendy or a passing fad. Facebook and LinkedIn has become a must for any company seeking to secure potential employees in both the traditional and digital process of recruitment.

Although social media can be the best recruitment tool to hire the best people, one cannot ignore the risks it imposes. Disclosure of proprietary and confidential information, abuse of people identities, information theft, and legal violations will continuously raise the concerns of certain parties about the use of social media. Given the increased scrutiny of social media, governance and due diligence needs to be a top priority for employers, recruitment agents and social media users so that all the parties can share the same benefits since social media is destined for further growth and not decline.

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