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Social Recruiting Guide:
How to Effectively Use Social Networks

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Introduction

Social networking sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn are some of the most powerful tools available to recruiters today. Facebook has more than 500 million members and regularly surpasses Google in site visits per day.[1] LinkedIn has increased its number of registered users from roughly 40 million in 2009 to more than 100 million in 2011.[2] As usage continues to skyrocket, more businesses are recognizing the fact that high-quality candidates can be reached faster and at lower cost using social networks than traditional recruiting methods. Social networks can give recruiters a competitive edge in locating and engaging the best candidates available to reach your company's recruiting objectives.

Your company may recognize the potential for social recruiting or may already be using the tools, but a social recruiting strategy needs to be part of the company's overall goals and objectives to deliver true return on investment (ROI). This white paper will help you get started in reaching highly qualified candidates and passive job seekers, building company brand recognition, reducing sourcing costs, and meeting company objectives.

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[1] "Social Media Facts 2011," July 21, 2011, http://googlemenetwork.com/social-google-social-media-facts-2011

[2] LinkedIn, "LinkedIn FAQ," http://press.linkedin.com/faq/

"Companies using social recruiting best practices realize that social media should not be used as a replacement for current talent acquisition strategies but, rather, as an extension and enhancement."

Bersin & Associates, "Social Media as a Recruitment Tool," 2009

Social Recruiting Benefits

Because people are your greatest asset, you need to find a means to connect with the best candidates within your industry. Social recruiting puts your organization in the mix with candidates that you would otherwise not be able to reach. This doesn't mean you need to completely replace your existing recruiting processes with social networking; rather, you need to leverage these new tools and add them to your efforts to enhance and improve your results.

When you make social recruiting a strategic initiative to find and hire new employees, you can

- **Find hard-to-reach candidates.** When competition for talent is fierce, identifying the best can be challenging. Social networking offers the ability to reach out to passive or hard-to-find candidates that likely could not be reached using other sources.

- **Reach higher-quality candidates.** Individuals who frequently use social networks tend to be "early adopters" of innovation and also tend to be more technically savvy.[3] These are the traits many companies look for in potential candidates. Social networks offer a fast way to connect with these individuals.

- **Increase ROI.** You can dramatically reduce sourcing costs and increase ROI through social networks. Posting and sharing job openings through Facebook or LinkedIn is more likely to deliver results than a single description on a job board, so the potential value far exceeds the cost.

- **Be the employer of choice.** When your company establishes an online presence, you send a positive message out to potential candidates that your company is connected and understands how to communicate with them. Being the employer of choice means candidates want to work for you and spread that message across social networks, magnifying your brand and message.

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[3] Sullivan, Dr. John, "The Many Benefits of Social Network Recruiting: Making a Compelling Business Case," The ere.net Blog, November 2, 2009, www.ere.net/2009/11/02/the-many-benefits-of-social-network-recruiting-making-a-compelling-business-case/

Where to Start

It is important to understand how to best leverage the social networking sites. It can seem daunting, with all the tools available today. However, sites and tools are only part of the equation. As with any initiative, you want to spend some time thinking about your objectives in order to reach them. It is a good idea to take a step back and ask a few questions before you dive into the social networking pool. According to the Human Capital Institute, there is a simple seven-step thought process you should go through before you get started with social recruiting:[4]

1. What are our organization's overall corporate goals?

2. What does our workforce plan look like in relation to those corporate goals?

3. Where do we have talent gaps based on our workforce plan?

4. What kinds of technology are attractive to the types of candidates we need?

5. What level of resource commitment are we willing to make?

6. How will we keep our content fresh?

7. When do we start?

Once you and your team have answered these questions, you can follow these next steps to plan for and launch social recruiting.

- **Establish a plan.** The answers to the seven questions above will form the basis of your social recruiting plan. You will know what sites and tools you will use, how much time to spend on social networks, and how to keep your content up to date.

- **Check your brand image.** Search on the internet for your company name or open jobs and see who is promoting your jobs. This will give you a good idea about what is being said about your brand. Determine who are your advocates and detractors. Use this information to control how candidates perceive your brand. Continue to monitor your brand image as you build your social recruiting program.

- **Engage with potential candidates.** Participate in your social networks by establishing a dialogue with potential candidates. Be real, mean what you say, and say what you mean. The type of individual who uses social networking tools expects your company to be transparent and approachable. If you hide behind an anonymous profile, potential candidates may not trust your communications.

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[4] Cann, Dustin, "What's Your Social Recruitment Strategy?" The Human Capital Institute Blog, March 2010, www.hci.org/lib/what-s-your-social-recruitment-strategy

Legal Considerations

HR professionals need to be cognizant of any potential legal ramifications from the use of social networking for recruiting. Many experts believe that the legal risks depend on whether or not the use of social networks is motivated by an intent to discriminate or whether the practice has an unintentional and unjustified adverse impact on members of a protected class. In addition, the use of social networks can also lead to disqualification from government contracts through failure to comply with regulations issued by the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP).[5] Leveraging social media in conjunction with an application tracking system helps to ensure compliance.

The potential legal risks with social recruiting are outlined here, as well as methods you can use to mitigate those risks.

- **Candidate screening.** Using social networks to screen potential candidates can also open your organization to potential legal risks. Information that candidates post on Facebook or tweet on Twitter—such as religious or sexual preference, social activities, or family situation—could be argued as used against them in the screening process. The mere appearance of discrimination based on any of these criteria could create problems. Your company needs to ensure that you can demonstrate that a hiring decision was made based on job relevance using assessments, tests, or skills.

- **OFCCP compliance.** It is important that your organization uses a method to provide adequate records for OFCCP auditors. According to law firm Meites, Mulder, Mollica & Glink in Chicago, Illinois, a judge or a jury draws an inference that if you didn't maintain records, the records must have been prejudicial. It is imperative to rely on software applications that ensure compliance with audit trails and easy access to the date the candidate applied, Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) job category, stage within the recruiting process, gender, race/ethnicity, reason for rejection, and more for each candidate.

- **Disparate impact.** Although social networks are a valuable resource for tapping into high-quality candidates, they do not represent the total labor pool available. For example, according to the media analytics firm Quantcast, only 5 percent of LinkedIn's members are African American (versus 12.8 percent of the total population) and only 2 percent are Hispanic (versus 15.4 percent of the total population).[6] Relying too heavily on social networking sites leaves your organization open to potential lawsuits on the basis of discriminating against age and race. Look at your overall sourcing program to ensure that all classes, regardless of age, race, gender, or disability, get the opportunity for employment with your company.

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[5] "Social Network Recruiting: Managing Compliance Issues," Taleo Summary Report, April 2010

[6] Hansen, Fay, "Discriminatory Twist in Networking Sites Puts Recruiters in Peril," Workforce Management Online, September 2009, www.workforce.com/section/recruiting-staffi ng/feature/discriminatory-twist-networking-sites-puts-recruiters-in/index.html

Measuring Results

While you may understand the value of social recruiting, you need to show executives and management that your strategy affects the bottom line. Is there a way to measure results? Can you show how you saved money or drove value?

First, understand where you are today with your recruiting efforts overall. Then you can understand how social recruiting delivers value. Set benchmarks by tracking key metrics on your current sourcing and recruiting efforts. The right recruitment software application provides you with this information automatically. To determine the right metrics for your organization, refer to your answers to the seven questions outlined previously: what are your goals? Some key metrics used to demonstrate the value of social recruiting include

- Top sources of hire

- Source yield

- Source for high performers

- Time to hire

For every objective, you can establish a measurement to determine whether or not you met that objective. Present this information to executives and management in a dashboard view. Charts and graphs are much easier to understand than numbers on a page. Again, the right recruitment software application provides this information in a dashboard format automatically. Proper social recruiting efforts will improve your metrics over time, and you will be able to demonstrate the impact visually.
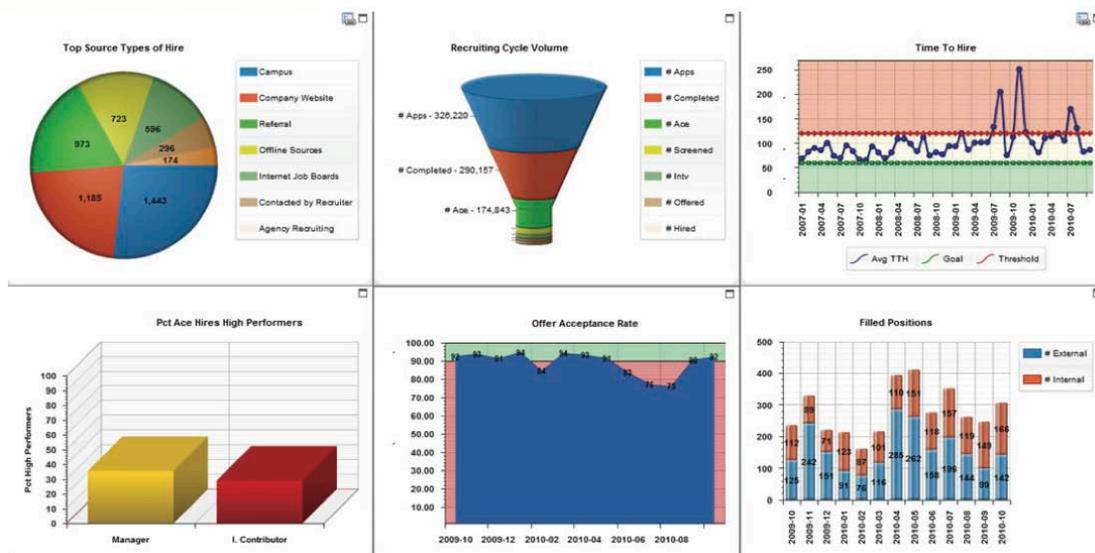

Figure 1. Using software to visually display metrics in dashboard format more clearly communicates the effectiveness of your social recruiting strategy.

Conclusion

Social networks offer a powerful tool for recruiters to reach a pool of qualified candidates that they might not otherwise be able to reach. Establishing your company within social networks also says a lot about your company to potential candidates and will create the perception that your company wants to connect with them. Social recruiting is another strategy you can use to find the best candidates before your competition, but it is not a complete solution. It must complement your other recruiting programs. The legal risks are real, and they should be considered as you examine your overall recruiting strategy. Once you educate yourself, establish your plan, and begin engaging with potential candidates, you can dramatically improve your recruiting results through social networks.

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