UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA TO COMPLEMENT ATTRACTION STRATEGIES

ROBERT WALTERS

FOREWORD

Social media has an increasing impact on the way the world connects, creates and communicates; more than 175 million business professionals use LinkedIn.com and a billion of us are connected on Facebook. Therefore it's about time we took a step back and assessed just how much of a role social media plays in the recruitment process.

Although people seem to be spending more time using and interacting through social media during their private lives; just how much influence does it have upon our professional lives?

Many organisations have started to look at embedding social media campaigns into their attraction strategies but few have had great success. Are organisations using the power of this medium in the right way and are they harnessing a positive ROI from their campaigns?

It's also worth considering the moral values behind using social media in the recruitment process. Is it right that some organisations are using social media sites to screen potential candidates in their search for the perfect employee?

Our research has shown us that an organisation's use of social media can have an effect on a jobseeker's perception of an employer and their propensity to accept a job offer. That is why I am pleased to present this whitepaper, which offers excellent insight into the social media recruitment landscape and the most effective ways of using it.

James Nicholson
Managing Director - ANZ

METHODOLOGY

This whitepaper is based on the findings of research undertaken by Robert Walters in February 2013. To compile this research, Robert Walters surveyed over 700 jobseekers and over 400 hiring managers across Australia and New Zealand.

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INTRODUCTION

This whitepaper has been created to help employers better understand the role social media can play in the recruitment process. By assessing its effectiveness from the perspective of both the jobseeker and the employer we have been able to assess the most effective way of using social media to complement an organisation's recruitment and attraction strategy.
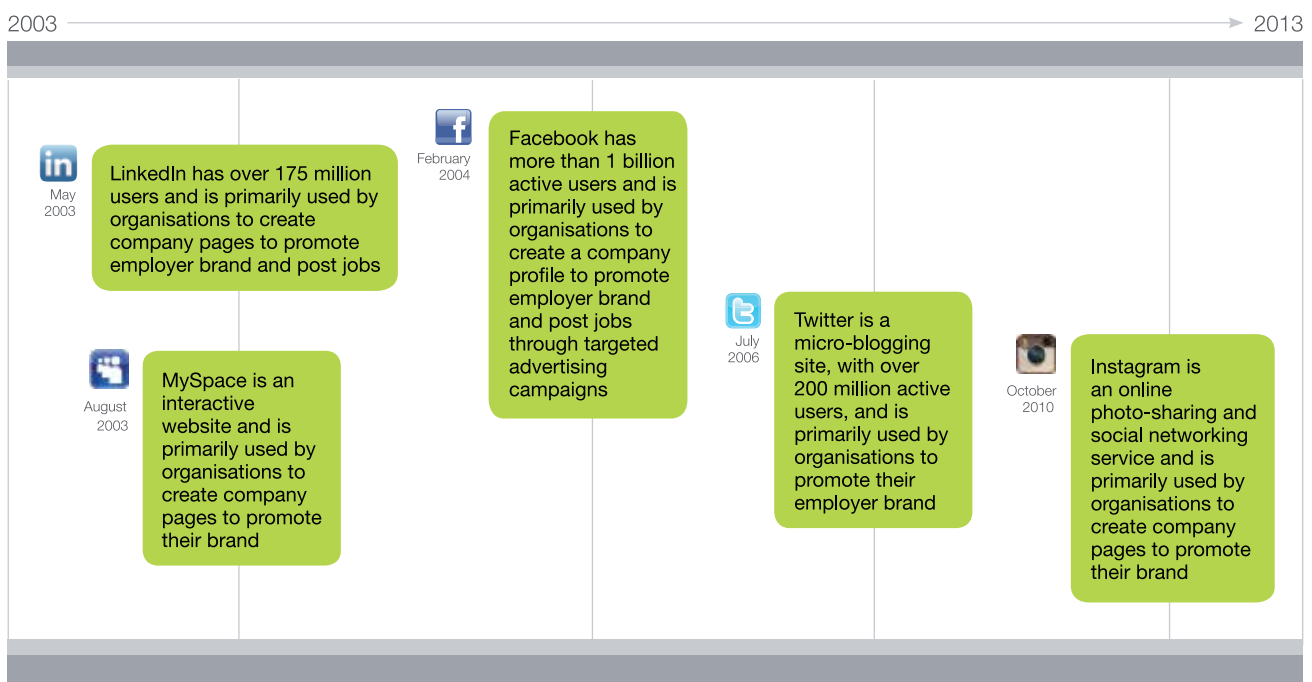
Specifically this whitepaper explores:

- Understanding the social recruitment landscape

- How professionals use social media to conduct a job search

- How organisations use social media in their recruitment process

- Best practice when using social media in recruitment

UNDERSTANDING THE SOCIAL MEDIA LANDSCAPE

Many organisations have started looking to social media to add another dimension to their recruitment and attraction strategies. However, despite their huge numbers of participants, social networks are still immature in terms of business models.

Before looking at the results and recommendations it is important to understand the differences between social media networks and how different types of interactions are taking place. The diagram below shows a timeline of when the main social media players were launched and provides an overview of each tool and its potential recruitment applications.

2003 ──▶ 2013

May 2003 — LinkedIn has over 175 million users and is primarily used by organisations to create company pages to promote employer brand and post jobs

August 2003 — MySpace is an interactive website and is primarily used by organisations to create company pages to promote their brand

February 2004 — Facebook has more than 1 billion active users and is primarily used by organisations to create a company profile to promote employer brand and post jobs through targeted advertising campaigns

July 2006 — Twitter is a micro-blogging site, with over 200 million active users, and is primarily used by organisations to promote their employer brand

October 2010 — Instagram is an online photo-sharing and social networking service and is primarily used by organisations to create company pages to promote their brand

It isn't essential to be heavily invested in all types of social media. What is essential is ascertaining where your audience lies. A good social media approach begins with knowing where your target audience are, and how they use social media. By choosing your target wisely there is a better chance of connecting with the right people.

Survey results

The most popular site for jobseekers is LinkedIn, with 74% of respondents having a LinkedIn profile. Facebook was second, with 69% having a Facebook profile, Twitter at 18%, Instagram 11% and 3% of people have a MySpace account. Only 9% of respondents didn't have any presence on social media.

When asked which social media sites their organisations have a presence on, 63% of employers have a company LinkedIn page, 55% a Facebook page, 35% have Twitter account, 1% a MySpace page and 2% an Instagram account. 22% of organisations have no social media presence at all.

When asked if they agree that LinkedIn is the only social media site that is acceptable to be classed as professional and others such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram should be regarded as personal, 91% of professionals agreed, as did 85% of employers.

Key learning #1

Not all social networks are the same

All social networks are fundamentally about the people in them. They are all about connectivity, engagement, shared interests, peering and influence. It's important to remember they are not all the same, and not all are suited to the purposes of recruitment.

It is also important to consider the differences between professional networks and social networks. In simple terms, many use social networks to keep in contact with family and friends, while using professional networks to manage relationships – the co-workers, ex-colleagues, recruiters, suppliers, experts, people met at conferences and so on – that make up their 'professional footprint'. Understanding these differences is paramount in determining whether or not social networks have a place in your organisation's recruitment and attraction strategies.

> All social networks are fundamentally about the people in them. They are all about connectivity, engagement, shared interests, peering and influence.

Key learning #2

Follow the talent

Finding and hiring the best talent can be difficult due to high levels of competition in the market, especially for niche and in demand skill sets. To access the best professionals, it's important to go where they are.

Targeting specific potential sources of talent does not mean people are being excluded. Rather, being targeted allows you to focus your resources on a specific market that is more likely to be attracted to the role and company.

There is no 'one size fits all' to sourcing the right talent. The approach to finding the best professional should be tailored to the role and the business needs. A good foundation can be laid with close self examination, knowing the job description and how the role will relate to your business. Assess your current top performing team members and methods used in the past that yielded great results. Research where your prospects go to find opportunities on and offline. Know what your ideal professionals care about and value, and make sure your employer brand values connect with them on those levels.

Having a better understanding of where your talent congregates will help you understand the right mix of tactics to use in your recruitment and attraction strategies, and will result in a more efficient process.

Chart 1.0 - Which social media site do professionals have profiles on?

LinkedIn	74%
Facebook	69%
Twitter	18%
Instagram	10.5%
No social media profiles	9%
MySpace	2.5%

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE JOB SEARCH

The explosion and uptake of social media in recent years has put pressure on organisations to implement social media across their business. This has extended to the recruitment function, with many organisations feeling pressured to invest in a broad social media recruitment strategy. Is an expensive, all encompassing approach the answer?

Survey results

When asked what their favoured method of finding a new job is, 49% of jobseekers prefer to use job boards, 30% register with a recruitment consultancy, 11% use their existing professional networks, and 5% apply direct through an organisation's website. Only 4% will look at adverts on LinkedIn, and only 1% will look at job adverts on personal social media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter.

When asked what their favoured method of advertising a new role is, 42% of employers prefer using a job board, 24% a recruitment consultancy, 19% advertise directly through their own website/career portal, 7% access their existing professional networks, and 6% post adverts on LinkedIn. Only 2% will advertise on other social media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter.

When asked which social media sites they use as part of their job search, 62% of professionals will use LinkedIn in some way, while 38% don't use social media at all. Only 5% will use Facebook, and only 1% combined will use Twitter, MySpace or Instagram.

When asked which social media sites they use to advertise roles, 61% of employers don't utilise social media at all, 38% use LinkedIn, 9% Facebook and 6% Twitter.

When asked if they would apply for jobs that appear in the feeds of other social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc) only 24% of professionals would.

Only 9% of hiring managers would directly approach or headhunt a potential candidate through their personal social media profiles other than LinkedIn. 50% of professionals felt comfortable with organisations approaching them directly on social media platforms other than LinkedIn.

Key learning #3

Personal social networking sites may not be worth the investment

There has been much talk about using social media for job hunting. What this research shows is social media platforms are not widely used by professionals to find their next opportunity, with their preference still being the use of traditional channels such as registering with a recruitment consultancy and using job boards.

There is a lot of commentary in the marketplace suggesting recruiting via social is the way forward. However our research suggests a measured approach is essential to guarantee return on investment, with organisations needing to prevent an excess of time and money being invested to push career opportunities in a place where no one is job seeking. Only 5% of jobseekers said using social media would be their preferred method of finding a role. That is not to say companies should write off personal social networking sites completely, but only invest where your target audience exists.

Chart 2.0 - Social media sites hiring managers use to advertise

No social media is used	61%
LinkedIn	38%
Facebook	9%
Twitter	6%
Myspace	0%
Instagram	0%

61%

61% of employers surveyed
don't utilise social media at all
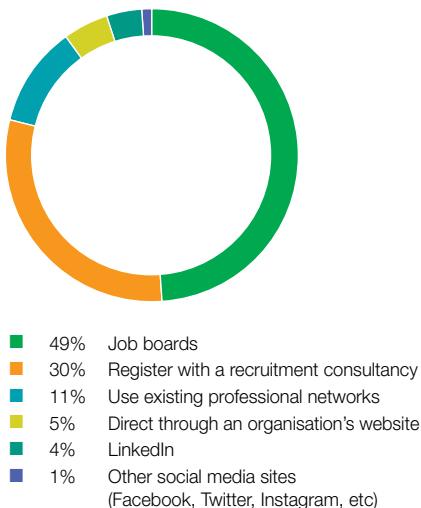
SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE JOB SEARCH (cont'd)

Key learning #4

Approach talent in a professional manner

Employers and jobseekers alike have made the distinction between their professional and social networks. With only half of professionals surveyed being comfortable with an approach on platforms other than LinkedIn, hiring managers should continue to err on the side of caution. If an online approach is necessary in the first instance, try to do it as professionally as possible. Or better still, find the professional's email address or phone number and contact them directly to help build a relationship – a personal approach is always more engaging than an online one.

More often than not the in demand professionals you desire are busy working in jobs they like.

Chart 3.0 - Jobseeker's favoured method of finding a role

- ■ 49% Job boards
- ■ 30% Register with a recruitment consultancy
- ■ 11% Use existing professional networks
- ■ 5% Direct through an organisation's website
- ■ 4% LinkedIn
- ■ 1% Other social media sites (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc)

Key learning #5

Take passive candidates into account

More often than not the in demand professionals you desire are busy working in jobs they like. The best talent don't worry about losing their jobs, nor are they concerned about looking for new ones. They rarely invest time in building a better LinkedIn profile or perusing Facebook job advertisements.

Instead, they are well retained by their employers and engaged in their current roles. However, they might be interested in listening to an attractive offer. The more niche the role, or high level experience required, the more likely it is the talent search will have to go beyond posting a role online and hoping for the best.

People who have been working for the same employer for a long time may not realise how much they're worth in the marketplace or the robustness of the job market. Having a relationship with a recruiter who is connected with these passive candidates and knows their background and career aspirations is one way to tap into this gold mine of top talent.

5%

Only 5% of jobseekers will look at job adverts on social media sites

THE RESEARCH PROCESS - PROFESSIONALS

The recruitment process is no longer a one way process. Top talent frequently get multiple job offers and are able to pick from a range of opportunities. To secure the best professionals an organisation must also aim to impress.

Just as organisations screen potential employees, jobseekers will also research and assess potential employers. Social media can add much value if used correctly. It is not simply another way to advertise, but plays a part in communicating brand values, defining corporate culture and connecting to the public.

Survey results

When asked which social media platforms they view before applying for a role, 46% of jobseekers would visit the organisation's LinkedIn page. The majority of hiring managers, at 76%, believe professionals will view their company's LinkedIn page before applying for a role.
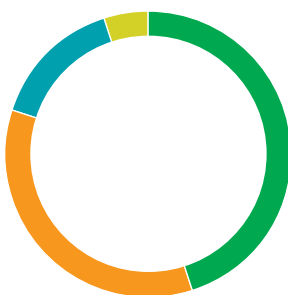
Only 27% will look at an organisation's other (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) social media profiles. In contrast, 68% of hiring managers believe potential candidates will view these other profiles.

Effectively communicating brand values that will appeal to potential candidates will help cement an organisation as an employer of choice.

Professionals indicated they primarily look for information on the organisation (45%), insights into company culture (35%), career opportunities (15%) and profiles of existing employees (5%) when researching a company using social media.

Similarly, 42% of employers believe candidates look for information about the organisation, 40% insights into company culture, 10% profiles of existing employees, and 7% believe they search for career opportunities.

Chart 4.0 - What professionals look for when researching an organisation on social media

■	45%	General company information
■	35%	Insights into the company culture
■	15%	Career opportunities
■	5%	Profiles of existing employees

Key learning #5

Make the social experience a cultural experience

The survey results show that professionals overwhelmingly look for the things that will give them an idea of who the company is, what they stand for, and an impression of the company culture. The brand, rather than career opportunities, is the focus of a potential candidate. When organisations cultivate awareness of their brand through social media, there should be attention given to communicating their employer brand proposition. Effectively communicating brand values that will appeal to potential candidates will help cement an organisation as an employer of choice.

46%

46% of professionals would visit an organisation's LinkedIn page before applying for a role

THE SCREENING PROCESS - THE EMPLOYER

It is essential to conduct pre-employment screening as part of an organisation's standard risk mitigation policy. In conducting pre-employment checks, it is important to strike a balance to ensure all necessary checks have been undertaken, and ensure the candidate's right to privacy is maintained.

There has been much discussion about the availability and use of a potential employee's social media presence outside of LinkedIn to assess their professional capabilities.

Survey results

When asked if they do, or have in the past, used social media sites to check on prospective employees before hiring them, 62% of employers admitted they do. 98% will screen their LinkedIn profiles, 68% Facebook, 26% Twitter, 7% Instagram and 3% use MySpace.

Most hiring managers will screen social media at the application stage, at 47%. A further 31% will do so during the interview process, 20% while conducting reference checks, and 2% during the offer stage.

When asked if they think it's appropriate for a potential employer to screen them via social media, 47% of jobseekers stated no, but they accept it occurs. Only 13% answered a definitive no, and 40% believe it's an acceptable practice.

However, 49% of professionals will edit their social media profiles during their job search to ensure it's appropriate if a potential employer checked it. This could include editing the content, or changing the privacy settings.

48% of hiring managers admit what they find on social media is more influential on their decision making process than what they discover during the traditional recruitment process, including how the candidate performs in an interview.

When asked if they've ever rejected a candidate after viewing their social media profiles, 25% of hiring managers said they had. More than half, at 59%, believed the candidate didn't suit the culture of the organisation, 18% due to inappropriate comments or photographs, and 9% due to inappropriate comments about a current or previous employer.

When posed the question if they believe it's fair that social media is used to make judgements on a candidate's ability to do a job, 50% of employers and 71% of professionals said no.

Key learning #6

Be cautious using social media to screen job applicants

Employers should be cautious when using information obtained from social media to make hiring decisions. Although the survey shows both employers and professionals believe using social media to assess a candidate is ethically unacceptable, it's known that it does occur. With technology in some instances outpacing the law in this area, employers should be sure that the information they receive does not lead them to infringing any state and federal employment or discrimination laws.

Chart 5.0 - Which social media sites do employers use to screen prospective employees?

LinkedIn	98%
Facebook	68%
Twitter	26%
Instagram	7%
MySpace	3%

Key learning #7

Judge a candidate on their professional abilities

Assess what a social media presence offers that the recruitment process can't. A personal social media presence is generally a reflection of that professional's life outside of their work, whereas their ability to do a role effectively can be assessed throughout the recruitment process.

The survey results indicate employers use social media to assess cultural fit, though what you find online might not communicate what you think is a cultural fit for your business. There are things hiring managers can do to form judgements on cultural fit, including;

- **Observe interactions**. Candidates can tell you they hold the firm's values, but it's far better if they can show you. Ask interviewees to participate in group exercises or interact with existing employees to test whether they demonstrate those values in an almost-real-life situation

- **Be clear about your culture**. Be open and honest about what it's really like inside your organisation. Some candidates will self-select out if they feel they can't fit in

- **Interview for values separately**. When possible, assess for values with a distinct process. This could be including some specific value based questions in the interview process. You will likely learn something you would've missed if you were trying to screen for values and skills simultaneously
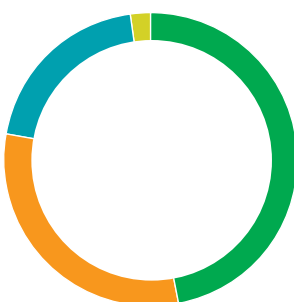
It should be noted that jobseekers are aware social media screening is a common practice, and almost half of candidates surveyed edit their social media profiles before commencing the recruitment process, this can also include extending the truth about their skill set. Using time and resources to check social media profiles that may already be carefully cultivated could be a wasted investment.

Key learning #8

Don't lose great candidates

The survey shows the majority of employers are viewing social media profiles during the application process. Screening and potentially culling candidates at this point could be extremely detrimental to an organisation. Hiring managers could be blocking great talent, and removing the chance for them to perform impressively throughout the interview process. Skills shortages are commonplace in the Australian job market and can make it very hard to source the best professionals as candidates often have multiple employment options to choose from. Give every professional with a great resume a chance to shine in an interview.

Chart 6.0 - At which stage do hiring managers screen on social media?

■	47%	Application
■	31%	Interview
■	20%	When conducting reference checks
■	2%	Offer

Key learning #9

Wasted time is wasted opportunity

Recruiting the best professional is a carefully driven process, with many steps between advertising a role, to having the right candidate accept the job offer.

Past research has shown the length of the recruitment process has an impact on jobseekers when forming an opinion of a potential employer, with 79% of respondents saying they are turned-off the job/employer by a long recruitment process. Adding in the step of using social media to screen candidates and uncover further information is only a wasted resource.

Information gained from an applicant's social media site is rarely information demonstrating that the professional is the most qualified for the role. A talented recruiter should be able to make those judgements on resumes and interviews instead of wasting valuable resources comparing social networking profiles of jobseekers.

CONCLUSION

Social media has clearly proven its worth in building brands and fostering communication between organisations and their audiences. In the recruitment process using social media is relatively new, and in some cases can bring value to the process, but it can also hinder an otherwise proven and fast moving practice.

Finding the best professionals is important to every organisation, with many companies seeing social media as another avenue to finding talent. However, our research shows social media isn't as effective as proven, more traditional methods professionals and organisations trust. The habits of passive candidates with in demand skill sets must also be taken into account - they aren't actively looking for a new job and will need a more personalised approach.

Using social media to screen candidates is peppered with ethical, moral and privacy issues. Even more concerning is that by screening based on aspects unrelated to the role, hiring managers may be excluding top talent from the process, eliminating a candidates chance to prove they are right for the organisation.

It is important that prior to launching a social media recruitment initiative companies take time to listen to the market. It should be evaluated whether social media is the right channel to reach the intended target audience, identify the investment of time and money, and decide if the resources used will be worth the return. Social recruiting is another strategy your organisation can use to find the best candidates, but it is not a complete solution. It must complement your other attraction strategies.

ABOUT THE ROBERT WALTERS SPOTLIGHT SERIES

This whitepaper is the seventh in the Robert Walters Spotlight Series. The Spotlight Series features a range of thought-leading whitepapers designed to help employers identify and address topical issues that could be affecting their recruitment process.

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