**More Than Memes**

**Social Media Has Become Indispensible Recruiting Resource**

Facebook and Twitter have become much more than spots to find cute cat pictures, engage in political debates, and catch up on friends’ dating adventures. These days, social media sites like these are invaluable tools that can help your company connect with its next marketing pro, engineer, or IT manager.

“Every recruiting project utilizes a mix of resources; I like to call it a tapestry,” says Michele Colbert, director of talent acquisition for Houston-area human capital firm, Voyig. “For each of these projects, social media should be one of the threads. If you’re not using social media, you’re not competitive.”

**Going Where the Talent Is**

During the last few years, Colbert says, increasing numbers of candidates and employers have been going to social media sites to find and learn about each other. Employers can scan candidates’ profiles to locate people with the experience, skills, and education they’re seeking. Candidates can watch for job announcements and research specific employers.

The sheer volume of this kind of activity on social media is notable. In 2014, Jobvite ([www.jobvite.com](http://www.jobvite.com)) reported that 94 percent of recruiters were using, or planned to use, social media for recruiting. That same year, a study by Aberdeen Group found that 73 percent of candidates ages 18-34 found their last job through a social network. For many candidates, social media has become the information source of choice for their generation.

Colbert says that if employers who want to reach potential employees — especially younger, tech-savvy candidates in the 18-34 bracket — social media is a must.

“It’s the preferred way to recruit today,” Colbert says. “Candidates are busy, but this is a way you can get in front of them.”

Not only can social media help you access candidates, but today’s high volume of social media usage also improves employers’ odds of finding highly qualified, experienced talent. Jobvite’s 2014 research showed that employers that were using social media to recruit noticed a 49 percent improvement in the quality of potential employees, compared to the candidates they sourced from traditional recruiting avenues such as online job sites.

**Improving Your ‘Shelf Appeal’**

It’s true that companies can find ample talent on Facebook, LinkedIn and other social media sites. But before you embark on a social media recruiting campaign, it’s important to remember that candidates are likely using social media to check out your company, too.

Candidates generally want to know about a company before they commit. They want to have a feel for its culture, its role in the community, and how it lines up with other employers. “You have a much savvier consumer today,” Colbert says. “Employers don’t think of candidates as consumers, but that’s what the Internet has done. Candidates have a shopping basket, and they can ‘walk up and down the aisles’ and compare employers.”

This new role of potential candidates as “consumers” has turned the recruiting and hiring process into a two-way street: To stay competitive and appeal to potential employees, companies need to put some thought into their branding and make sure their social media sites reflect their company’s personality, values, and culture. They’ll also need to keep their sites current with regular posts; compelling, timely information; and speedy responses to comments. A company with an outdated social media profile filled with out-of-date news and unanswered comments will be less than impressive, both to the public and to prospective talent.

**Information Overload?**

Most employers appreciate the opportunity to get to know candidates on social media: Looking at a potential employee’s LinkedIn or Facebook profile can put a human face on an otherwise impersonal resume. But there’s a flip side to this benefit: Employers can find themselves overwhelmed with information they weren’t necessarily seeking.

Colbert says it’s easy to get bogged down in details like political stances and personal information. That’s why she recommends setting some goals and deciding what’s important before doing extensive research on a potential new hire.

“You do get to learn more about the candidate,” Colbert says. “Sometimes it’s frightening how much you can learn. There’s so much to evaluate. Ask yourself, is what you’re reading worth the time? In the end, does it really help you evaluate whether that candidate is the best fit for your company?”

**‘It’s Almost Like Online Dating’**

Ideally, both candidates and employers can use social media to learn about each other without going into the “too much information” zone.

“The best hires are when both parties are making well-informed decisions,” Colbert says. “As a candidate, I understand the company’s culture and know what will be expected of me. As the employer, I can see the candidate’s skills and experience.”

Social media also can help candidates find a company culture and working environment that aligns with their preferences, Colbert says.

“A prospective employee may see that working at an unstructured company like Google is not the best fit. If that candidate likes predictability -- if they like leaving at the same time every day -- they don’t care if Google gives them free lunch. Social media allows the employer to communicate their brand. It allows the candidate to communicate their brand, too, so you get the best match. It’s almost like online dating.”

**Not Your Parents’ Want Ads**

Just as sites like eHarmony have helped people connect with their best romantic matches, social media sites like Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter are revolutionizing the way job seekers connect with companies. Colbert sees this new dynamic as a valuable opportunity. “Employers can have interaction with the talent community that they couldn’t have done in the past,” she says. “You can’t be personal with a want ad or by reaching out on a large job board. You have to be personal when you reach out on Facebook and Twitter.”

Nervous about using social media? Colbert says there are plenty of online resources to utilize. “If you want to learn how to use Twitter, you can search best practices for businesses using Twitter. And don’t forget to ask your employees how they use social media.”