

Expert Q & A

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Social media advertising revenues are expected to increase rapidly over the next five years. Companies large and small are clearly channeling more financial resources toward social media, but what is the biggest way that it is changing the way we do business?

Social and professional media sites reflect our open, fast-paced global economy. They enable HR and talent acquisition (TA) professionals to widely disseminate information that can be shared quickly with a larger potential candidate pool. These sites have profoundly impacted the way in which we source, communicate and engage with candidates. However, this technology also requires HR and TA professionals to learn a new set of skills, as it has shifted the dynamic of recruiting from the gathering of prospective resources to hunting for the most qualified talent.

The number of companies that use social media websites to recruit job candidates rose more than 50% between 2008 and 2011, according to SHRM's research. What are the drawbacks for HR professionals if they rely too much on social media for recruiting?

I strongly believe in taking a multi-faceted approach to hiring. The old adage of “don't put all your eggs in one basket” still holds true for the use of social media recruiting. While I believe that social media recruiting has become and will continue to be an extremely powerful and potentially dominant tool for talent acquisition, HR and TA professionals must continue to use and keep other channels of communication open with their target candidate audience. This should include employee referrals, multifaceted company marketing and branding campaigns, as well as traditional recruiting vehicles such as career fairs, job boards and other sourcing methods.

What are the risks for companies that do not use social media in some form, whether it's for recruitment, external communications or other aspects of operations? Can it be argued that the use of social networking tools is not necessary for all types of businesses?

The post-Great Recession era is a leaner, faster, more adaptive “new economy,” which means the ways in which companies conduct business and their definitions of success are different. This new economy requires that we be constantly plugged in, always on and do more with less resources (time, money and human capital). It is imperative that all firms have some sort of social and professional media presence for three main reasons:

1. This is where their candidate pools socialize, congregate and share valuable information.
2. This is where their customers (business-to-business or business-to-consumer) are and will increasingly be in the future.

3. This is where information sharing, trend setting and brand awareness will dominate in the years to come.

What are the best tactics for a fledgling company that wants to strengthen its brand and attract job candidates through social media? Does anything specific in this area attract job seekers?

Social and professional media cannot be seen as a silver bullet for the firm. However, if a well thought-out social and professional media campaign is implemented, the return on investment can be huge. My advice is to stay true to your firm's mission and values and figure out a creative way to articulate why top talent should work for your firm versus the next. If you're not a creative type, engage members of your firm who are. By bringing other employees into the mix, you may gain different perspectives on your firm's presence, leverage those employees' unique skills and abilities, and hopefully engage their social and professional networks as well.