

Employer brand trumps job listings as recruiting tactic

By [Bruce Shutan](#)

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As social media stakes more territory in the war for talent, legions of foot soldiers in benefits and recruitment are expected to keep a close watch on killer apps and strategic messaging to advance their mission.

“You can tweet a job, or announce an event on social media, but this is a marathon, not a sprint, and those that focus on celebrating their employer brand via [social media channels] will be those that benefit most in long run,” believes Fred Goff, CEO of Jobcase, an affiliate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory.

Recruitment dollars should not be spent on basic job listings, but instead on data science and employer branding, which are converging to identify company matches right alongside skills matches, according to Goff, whose company provides the technology to power more than 100 job sites and serves 40 million Americans.

Also see: [7 tips to better recruit, engage millennials](#)

“It’s not just skills,” he says. “It’s the cultural and mission orientation in an employer’s brand, as well.” And the thinking behind this approach is that improved recruiting methods ultimately will increase retention.

But some industry insiders say social media isn’t being used to its fullest strategic potential when it comes to recruiting or communicating about benefits. Most employers don’t do much beyond tweeting out links to job postings on their applicant tracking systems, laments Mir Ali, VP of global technology solutions for Futurestep, a Korn Ferry Company that provides talent acquisition services.

He views this application as backward, explaining that social media should be geared more toward enhancing the company’s brand, “thereby making it easier for recruiting to happen because people will want to come to an organization based on the brand that’s created.”

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A related concern, he says, is that Facebook or Twitter postings that are devoid of actively moderated conversations can actually harm an employment branding proposition, as well as clog feeds with negative comments or spam.

A 2013 survey on social networking and recruiting by the Society for Human Resource Management shows that 77% of organizations say they use social media to find talent, which is up from 34% in 2008 and 56% in 2011.

But the number is expected to be much higher when the survey is redone in December, notes Aliah Wright, manager of SHRM.org and the author of *A Necessary Evil: Managing Employee*

Activity on Facebook, LinkedIn and the Hundreds of Other Social Media Sites. She says the results could mirror Jobvite's 2014 social recruiting survey, which found that 93% of recruiters use or plan to use social media to support their recruiting efforts.

Also see: [Dangers of social media recruitment: Why recruiting managers could be at risk](#)

“Employers are using algorithms to scour the Web to look at a person’s brand online,” she says, citing websites such as Stack Overflow and GitHub that allow job seekers to demonstrate their skills and chat with recruiters.

Cashing in on fan loyalty

But as much as there’s a growing focus on data and analytics, organic efforts can be just as effective in luring top talent.

Although Silicon Valley was an earlier adopter of social media for recruiting and has its eyes on the next wave of apps or websites, Stepframe founder Chad Langford has noticed it’s evolving as more of a grassroots campaign across virtually every square inch of corporate America.

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“A lot of companies are trying to recruit via social media now that were never doing it before,” observes Langford, whose company specializes in integrated marketing campaigns and digital experiences. “One of the great things about social media is anyone can do it, even if you’re a one-person shop. I think it’s highly effective to get online and post something on social media. It can kind of have a domino effect when other people hear about it and pass it on. And it’s free.”

A product’s loyal following on social media can easily burnish any recruiting effort. Consider, for instance, the experience of LaRosa’s, Inc., a pizzeria with more than 1,200 employees serving Greater Cincinnati, Northern Kentucky and parts of Southwest Indiana.

“Our Facebook company page is very active,” explains Steve Browne, executive director of HR at LaRosa’s. “We have a huge, loyal customer base, so it gets a lot of eyes from our fans, who already like us. And from a recruiting standpoint, that’s a big advantage versus just saying it’s a company page. ... We’ve had good success with people.”

Also see: [Social media, new technology drive healthy behaviors](#)

Social media is helping spread the news about every aspect of this 61-year-old regional pizza chain just as old-fashioned word of mouth, including personalized recruiting messages for cooks and other positions.

“We will have literally generations of people that have worked for us,” Browne notes. “So the thing that’s great about social media is, just like in-person word of mouth, it allows us to be where our people are. It’s accessible. So it doesn’t go contrary to what we do. It kind of supplements what we do.”

Demographics come into play in so many other ways. Some recruiters are using Snapchat, Vine and YouTube to promote companies for college-age students, Wright reports. She also says that while social media may be a treasure trove for finding candidates with marketing skills who are expected to be well-versed in the use of these platforms, truck drivers or nurses may not have a strong social presence. “So recruiters really need to tailor how they find people who fit that expectation,” she explains.

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In addition, younger generations that have grown up with social media may be more comfortable building their career online, but that’s not to say their elders aren’t embracing this technology. Mir sees baby boomers using Facebook and Twitter “much more than I think they’re given credit for” in addition to reviewing job postings on Monster or CareerBuilder. Millennials, on the other hand, are gravitating toward Snapchat and Instagram, he adds.

There also are popular platforms that defy age or generational differences. “LinkedIn is definitely a titan in the industry at this point, and it is where all generations of people, in the professional world at least, are going to keep in touch with others, while also looking at jobs,” according to Mir.

He also notes that LinkedIn recently decided to cut back on e-mailed job postings to combat perceptions from users that it felt like they were being spammed. “If you are on a social media that is sending too much communication, you start tuning it out,” Mir adds. “And I’m guessing that’s what LinkedIn was starting to see.”

Next generation of apps

Looking ahead, Mir highlights a few emerging apps that should be on the radar of HR executives and recruiters. “I’ve seen a couple of interesting tools that can help you moderate content and manage from a central location,” he reports. One example is CareerBuilder’s Broadbean service, which provides a central location to view everyone in a company’s database and manage social media needs.

Also see: [Facebook is the new ‘first interview’](#)

Stepframe produced a customized Facebook application for Starbucks that enables baristas or others at the coffee chain, as well as people who don’t work there, to select the type of position they’re interested in within a certain ZIP code.

The app automatically notifies these job seekers through Facebook about positions that open up based on their employment specifications. If they’re interested in applying, then all they have to do is click on a link and upload their resume to the appropriate hiring manager, who later can contact them via Facebook. The same application was built for Moss Adams LLP in San Francisco.

Stepframe also is thinking about producing some 20 to 30 second spots for different social media platforms that portray a company’s culture. In fact, it’s creating social media tools for Australia-based Atlassian to show a day-in-the-life glimpse of what it’s like to work for the software

development company, whose main U.S. office is in San Francisco. Jobvite found that 73% of the recruiters it surveyed are highlighting company culture to attract top talent.

Also see: [Research suggests Facebook powers productivity](#)

While social media may be driving workforce recruiting, it's part of multi-pronged effort that still includes running an ad in the local newspaper or a Monster.com job board, according to Langford. He predicts that it will be the primary communication avenue for recruiting candidates within the next five years.

But in spite of this transformation, there will always be a need to underpin changing technology with traditional virtues and values. When using social media, it's also important to create an accurate image. Mir recalls working with a chain of pet hospitals that touted itself to prospective hires as an animal-friendly organization that welcomes dogs in its workplace.

“You could bring your animal to work, but it would sit in a cage for the day,” he says. “So they would have people applying and starting who were thinking they were going to this more family-oriented type of organization when they were going to a place that was really strict, counting every 15 minutes that you're on the clock and trying to use data to actually drive efficiencies through their business and maximize profit, which was not a fit. So they had a high turnover rate, and they had a negative employer brand.”

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