

## Recruitment Challenges in a Technology Driven Competitive Business World

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### Abstract

*The recruitment scenario all over the world has witnessed massive changes in the last few years, primarily due to the advent of technology. Hunting for new talent, resourcing, has undergone a huge transformation. The entry of social media recruiting has made possible the availability of a large number of potential candidates at all times and at the click of a mouse. Along with this, has emerged several issues like the importance of employee diversity, the presence of a relatively young workforce with clear goals and aspirations, the need of more visibility of a company to attract the right talent which has dramatically changed the way recruitment is being done and poses new challenges before the recruiters. This article focuses on what the challenges are and what should be done in order to hire those whom the company needs to thrive in the competitive world.*

### INTRODUCTION

Today there are 18 million LinkedIn users, 60 million Facebook profiles and 20 million Twitter handles. Those are the top 3 social media numbers for India. Global statistics reported by InSites Consulting suggest more than 7 out of 10 internet users are members of at least one social network, implying that over 1.5 billion people use social networking websites. A huge chunk of these people are in the age group of twenty five to forty years of age, which is the time period of an individual's life when he is actively pursuing better job opportunities.

Gone are the days when companies had to hunt for prospective employees through traditional channels like employment exchanges or classified advertisements. An approach more direct and focused has emerged with the ever-expanding reach of social media. According to Aadil Bandukwala, Talent acquisition advisor, Social media and Community professional, Dell India, the social media is effectively used not only for marketing, public relations or even for effective customer support but is also used as a means to connect directly and engage with prospective employees. As far as quantity is concerned, more potential employees are available on the social media platform like Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter than on the company's database.

The candidate's information available on the company database with respect to certifications, experience, location and also contact details may have changed as against the above social media platforms where the current details of them would be available. This makes the work of sourcing candidates easier and simpler. The entry of the various social media platforms have lessened the time and money spent on resourcing. Till now, what we apparently see are the advantages of using the social media for recruitment but what is important is that this easy way of resourcing also brings with it, its own challenges.

### Challenge in Optimizing Social Media for Recruitment

The social media platforms do provide subtle information about prospective candidates, information which can go a long way in influencing actual job performance. Increasing number of companies are these days, using the social media platforms to screen candidates. While searching for candidates on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, the recruiters should not restrict their focus on the career snapshot of the candidates but also look into the posts and comments made by the candidate which will give an indication of his nature and personality. According to Pete Maulik, chief strategy officer at Fahrenheit 212, a New York-based innovation consulting firm, companies can look for work styles of the candidates through a more detailed look at the posts and comments about the candidate. For instance a person, who in all his comments says things like "I did this" and takes credit for everything, seems to be a person who works alone and will not be able to contribute as a team player. Another example is that of a person who in general is critical of everything happening around him, as indicated by his comments, on these sites will be more of a critic and hence will not be a very productive employee. Companies can refrain from employing such persons and save themselves from the impact of a bad recruitment decision.

Social Media is now used by the recruiters to gain more authentic information about the candidates, in addition to what is normally available to him from the one hour interview with the candidate. It helps the recruiter to arrive at a conclusion about whether the prospective employee will fit into the company culture. According to Mr. Sandeep Aurora-Director Marketing, Intel South Asia the company posts jobs on various social media platforms and also uses them to validate information provided by the candidate about himself through his presence in the social media.

### Challenge in Optimizing Mobile Technology for Recruitment

The public addiction towards mobile phones has been on the rise since the last few years. With the entry of Smartphones, people are increasingly using the mobile to check their internet mails and messages and this trend is going to increase in the years to come. Given this situation it will become imperative for companies to develop an effective mobile recruitment strategy that helps them to attract young talents who are always on the move and need to speed up everything they do. Using mobiles for recruitment also makes it easier for the companies to approach candidates for senior managerial positions as the candidates for these positions are normally very busy and mobile recruitment will enable them to access new job related mails and messages in a matter of seconds and also in privacy which is vital for such persons. Using mobile technology makes the world of recruitment accessible to individuals irrespective of their location.

To make use of mobile technology purposes of recruitment the companies have to keep in mind that applying for jobs through internet and through mobiles are not the same. For instance, it takes more time and energy to type on mobiles. Hence companies need to make provisions for applicants to upload their resumes instantly once they come to know of a suitable job opening with the company, probably through a job alert message they have created through the various job sites like monster.com, naukri.com, etc. The applicants should not be required to fill up application forms on the company website which would be inconvenient for him given the time and location constraints, but just a link on the company website would be sufficient, where he can upload his resume which will take only a few seconds and can be done anywhere, anytime. It would be more recruitment friendly, if the applicant is given the opportunity to use his profile at the social networking sites like LinkedIn to apply for the position. It is important to keep in mind the ease of applying, the company should take all the necessary steps to

make it easier for individuals who are busy and always on the move and who are suitable for the position to apply for the position.

### **Challenge of Dealing with Negative Publicity**

The wide presence of the social networking websites can give rise to new dangers for the company. Most of the individuals registered with the various social networking websites are past employees of some organizations. These websites provide them with the scope to post, comment or to write a blog on a public platform and their comments, posts or blogs may not always be flattering for the company. The company practically has no way to prevent the situation where a previous employee of the company highlights any dissatisfaction experienced while working with the company or any negative situations encountered. Such a comment, post or blog would be immediately viewed by all other individuals registered on the website and bring in negative publicity for the company. These may contain details about negative practices followed in the company or past employees may write negative things about their previous bosses who are still employed by the company. This poses a difficult situation for the company because of the widespread capability to influence the net users, many of whom could be potential employees of the company.

While it is true that the company can do nothing to prevent such an unpleasant situation from happening, it can always take measures to reduce the negative influence on the minds of the net users. This can be done through an intense and a well thought out proactive approach and not an aggressive one. For instance, the company can use its current employees to create a positive image of the company. This can be done by creating a membership group among the registered net users on any particular social networking website which will consist exclusively of the employees of the company. This membership group will automatically be in the name of the company and these particular group members can then write about their good experiences, good practices followed in the company or why their company is a good place to work in which will enhance the image of the company. However the tone of all such discussions, blogs, posts on the internet should be subtle and not an aggressive one and should not appear to be in direct response to the negative post, comment or blog made by the ex-employee. This will help to counteract the negative impressions created earlier. However some of the negative practices and issues raised by the previous employees of the company, as mentioned earlier, may be genuine areas that need a serious review by the company to produce happier employees. Here the company can seriously look into those issues while at the same time taking measures to improve public image of the company. The company can also create ways to improve its public image by displaying comments and testimonials from the employees of the company on the company website. Current employees can mention about their career growth, future prospects, incentives and awards received in their tenure with the company on the company website. All this will definitely help to nullify the impact of negative comments made by some past employees of the company.

### **Challenge of Increasing Company Visibility**

In these days of intense competition to get the right talent, a company needs to build on its public image; it needs to build a good brand name as an employer. Here also technology plays an important role. Just as social media plays an important role in recruiting the young and talented professionals who are registered on various social networking sites and most probably use Google to search for any kind of information that they need, following the same logic it becomes a necessity for organizations to make themselves more visible on the internet and create a good image. The talented young professionals which the company wants to recruit, will no longer rely on word of mouth information or take a decision to

join a company based on their gut instinct or take a decision based on remuneration criterion alone, but will take a very informed decision, taking into account the long term impact of joining a particular organization. To do this they will visit the company's website, start a discussion on a social networking website or look for posts or blogs on the company.

Hence it becomes necessary for the company to create an attractive company profile on the company website, doing things like uploading videos where current employees talk about why they prefer working with the company or even a video where the CEO and senior company official's talk about good practices followed in the company. According to industry experts, CEO's presence on social media helps in talent acquisition and employment branding. Not only videos, but blogs written by the company's CEOs help to enhance a transparent image of the company, one of the factors considered necessary by potential employees to take a decision to join a company. Apart from videos featuring the CEOs and those from higher echelons of the company, the company can also include videos of how interviews are conducted with the company. In these days of growing internet use, Google seems to be the most important tool to search for any kind of information and this also holds true for potential employees, when they want to do their own investigation about whether it would be a good decision to associate themselves with a particular company. A properly maintained blog can provide a wealth of content for search engines to index. The more content indexed, the more chances are of that particular blog to appear in search results and hence increase the company's visibility. Adding blogs to websites helps. However it needs to be kept in mind that the content of the blog should be right, attractive and serve the main goal of attracting bright talent to the company and this may require a lot of time and effort on the part of the company's current employees, who might not be able to spare time or may not be able to write the content needed, to attract most of the potential employees. For this purpose there are outside agencies to carry out the work. Apart from this the company can also add social events that it has engaged in, on the company's website. Another important thing the company can do to increase its visibility is to create a company webpage on the social networking websites where professionals are registered like LinkedIn. Company Webpage provides information about the company, its' products and services and job opportunities with the company. Company webpage includes all the employees of the company who are registered on the networking site and in fact it can also be opened by a current registered employee of the company. The company can then make use of its current employees who are registered on the website to post important updates or work related articles on the company webpage. However it is important to keep in mind that too many updates tend to have a negative impact as the public may ignore updates related to the company webpage.

### **Challenge of Reducing Recruitment Agency Contribution**

In the current scenario of intense competition, where there is strict cost cutting happening in all activities of the company, there arises the need for reduction in the budget for recruitment. Hence it becomes imperative for the companies to reduce the money spent on outsourcing recruitment activities and do as much of the work as possible by the company recruiters only. Social media recruitment has helped tremendously in this respect.

In earlier days it was the recruitment consultants who used to hunt down prospective employees, make the initial conversation with them with regard to the offer in hand and the company, explain the job duties and responsibilities and the probable remuneration for the position and then if everything was fine from both ends, the candidate would attend the interview with the recruiter of the company. But with the advent of the various social media platforms, the above work is no more required to be done by

third parties alone but as required or on a priority basis can be done by company executives. This is crucial because it leads to only the most suitable candidates being called for the face to face interview. Also, the impact of a company official establishing contact with the candidate is never going to be the same as that of the recruitment consultant. These may be some of the reasons why certain companies like Avaya prefer to use the social media platform exclusively for recruitment. However this does not mean that use of third parties in resourcing can be done away with. That will not be possible because of the need for dedicated resourcing work which can be done by the recruitment consultants alone and in cases of position which involve frequent hiring, the recruitment consultants will be much needed since otherwise much of the recruitment staff of the company would be using up their time only in resourcing which would in turn not be cost effective. In case of niche position requirements the company recruiters can do the job themselves.

### **Challenge of Effective Rehiring**

Re-hiring is something that is generally not a common practice in India. The trend of re-hiring previous employees needs to catch up in the country because these are individuals who are familiar with working within the company and can easily assimilate in the company culture and can now bring in more value to the company with the added experience they have acquired since they last served the company. With this added information, they would be in a better position to understand what is lacking within the company and what other players in the market are doing and what improvements need to be made to stay ahead in the competition. Rehiring is most effective in case of middle and higher management levels. Not all employer-employee relation terminates on a bad note. People resign due to various reasons which can range from personal to simply the desire to move on. Indian companies earlier did not pay much importance to the necessity of maintaining good connections with their previous employees. Recruiters need to keep a tab on the current positions held by past employees and if they are actively pursuing employment. For instance just like educational institutions maintain alumni portals to keep linkage with them, so also the companies can create and actively maintain alumni portals to reach out to former employees. If the need arises the recruiter should be able to make an offer to them. There are companies like ADP which is actively engaged in re-hiring past employees.

### **Challenge of Ensuring Employee Referrals**

Employee referral programs are a very good source for hiring. The company needs to have an effective referral programme in practice. There should be internal mails to all employees communicating the current vacancies within the company. In order to get good responses from the employees it is necessary to link each employee referral to the earning for the employee once the referred person joins the company. There should be a scheme of a certain amount which should be given for every successful referral which would vary with the hierarchical level of the vacant position and an award to the employee who makes the maximum number of successful referrals in a quarter, for instance a certain amount for referral to the assistant manager's position and a higher amount for referral to senior management position. Also it is necessary that the disbursement of the required amount should be prompt, within a specified time interval that is announced beforehand. The company can also extend the employee referral scheme to the previous employees of the company and the ex-employees of the company should also be able to refer candidates. Again for this to be possible, as mentioned before it is necessary that contact is maintained by the HR Department with the ex-employees of the company through alumni portals or other suitable means.

## Challenge of Ensuring Diversity Recruitment

The concept of employee diversity has been accorded high importance in current times. In the USA, diversity refers to inclusion of employee from different race, region, cultures, etc but in India diversity employment is primarily focused on inclusion of women employees in the workforce.

With respect to sales profiles, the previous trend was to hire people having experience in sales of similar product. For instance an insurance company would hire sales persons from insurance sales backgrounds only, but this trend is now changing. According to Anuraag Maini, Executive VP-HR & Training, DLF Pramerica Life Insurance (DLFP) at present, 35 percent of their sales force consist of persons from diverse industries and he expects this figure to reach 50 percent in the next few years. The company also aims to increase the strength of their female employees since female sales persons are more suited to sales of certain types of products and their attrition rate is significantly lower.

In order to improve their diversity ratio, companies today have resorted to offering higher fees to recruitment consultants and head hunters for sourcing competent women candidates, for example Deutsche Bank which offers an additional 2 percent to agencies on recruitment of a women candidate. With the same objective, companies sometimes advertise vacancies asking only woman candidates to apply for the positions. In certain cases, companies do specify to recruitment consultants working with them, that a certain percentage of the total number of candidates lined up for an interview must be women. The recruiting team also needs to gear up their efforts to reach out to more women candidates. Many advertisements for job vacancies include reasons why the company is a good place to work which includes reasons like a fun place to work, talent nurturing, great opportunities to interact with senior management, scope to grow to become an expert, but to reach out to working women, companies need to add on additional points that will attract women towards the advertisements like flexible work arrangements, healthcare benefits offered, emphasizing on fact like great commitment of the company to employees' needs which will see more women applicants for the job. A company where there are woman in senior leadership roles needs to highlight the same in their job advertisements which is what companies like Capgemini, Infosys are doing by including a senior female leader with her actual details like picture, name, designation in the advertisement which definitely creates the desired impression. It is also necessary that during the interview process the interviewers should refrain from asking questions centered on the personal life of the woman candidate with the notion that woman employees would not be committed towards their work.

## Conclusion

The social media has changed the way recruitment is done all over the world. The days of job consultants and recruitment agencies are gone. Just as any new technological advancement has eased human effort, the social media platforms have made available crucial candidate information that has enabled better recruitment decisions and connected companies to job applicants in such manner that it has become much easier for the recruiters to hire the best candidates for the company. However it has also brought along some formidable challenges which requires companies to use the same social media platforms to combat those challenges. Apart from the social media, the need to have a diverse workforce so as to bring about creativity and innovation in the organization, the need for hiring back valuable and competent ex-employees whose high quality performance has already been proved in the organization, the realization that current members of the organization are an ideal source for referring future members to the organization has also brought complexities to the recruitment process. But no doubt the challenges mentioned above will only help to foster the company growth in a global marketplace. The use of

technology in recruitment brings about challenges, but the same technology brings respite from those challenges. The benefits of using social media for recruitment can never be overemphasized. The prices to pay for using social media are not a huge burden on the company.

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