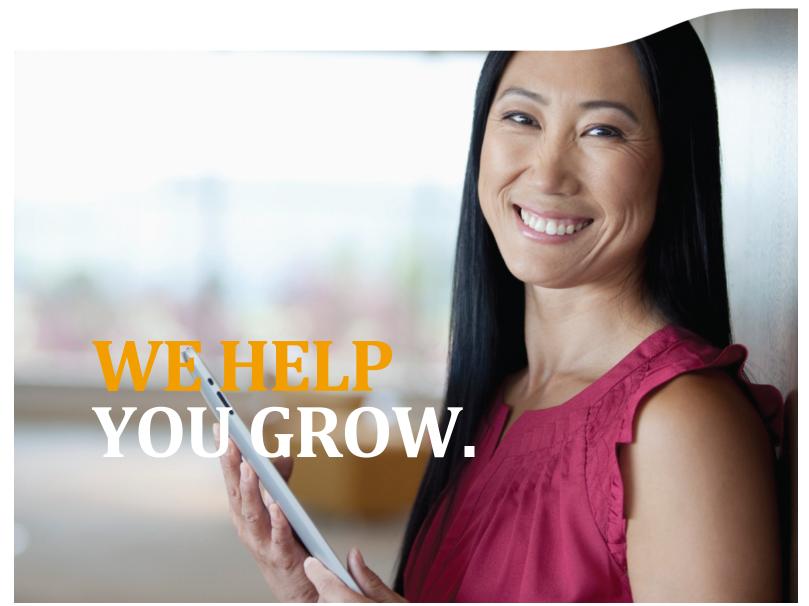# Using Social Media as an Effective Recruitment Tool for Nonprofits

A Nonprofit HR White Paper

August 1, 2013

Alicia Schoshinski, Senior Human Resources Consultant

WE HELP YOU GROW.

Contents:

Introduction

The use of social media as an effective recruitment tool continues to grow as its benefits extend beyond sourcing candidates.

Key Issue

More candidates are using social media as part of their job-seeking strategy, and organizations are using even more varied social networking resources to recruit. Nonprofits tend to be slower to utilize technology-based solutions, and to provide dedicated resources to the human resources function to manage functions such as recruitment.

Key Solution

In order to compete with for-profit organizations for talent, nonprofits must better utilize social media outlets for recruitment. They must develop social media recruitment strategies to use these tools effectively and to avoid legal issues.

Nonprofit HR's Guidance

If your organization is seeking guidance or consultation in the area of staffing management, please contact Patty Hampton at Nonprofit HR, (202) 785-2060 or via email at phampton@nonprofithr.com.

Introduction

The use of social media in recruitment continues to increase in popularity. As people spend more time on these sites the savvy organization will also need to utilize these sites to find candidates.

According to a 2013 SHRM survey, 77% of organizations are using social networking sites for recruitment. The same survey showed that for-profit organizations are more likely than nonprofits to use these sources, possibly because nonprofits often do not have the staff resources dedicated to effective recruitment [1]. The 2013 Nonprofit Employment Trends Survey showed that 39% of nonprofit organizations responding felt that their use of social networking sites in recruitment had a positive impact on the number of candidates applying [2].

Using Social Networking in Recruitment

There are a number of reasons why organizations use social media outlets as part of their recruitment strategy. The first is to source candidates.

Social media recruiting is a cost-effective way to source candidates. Gone are the days of having to pay a premium to advertise in a newspaper and hope that a group of candidates will see the job posting. Now, social media outlets offer "reasonable" pricing for job postings that reach high volumes of job seekers, and even passive candidates. A key benefit to social media recruitment is the ability to reach those workers who are not necessarily looking for a new position. Their social media site activity, however,, makes them aware of new job opportunities that might incite them to consider making a change.

Organizations also use social media to target candidates with specific skill sets. They are able to do this through websites of professional or trade associations or by networking through certain social media outlets. Over 80% of the positions targeted through social networking are managerial jobs or non-managerial salaried jobs, according to a 2013 SHRM survey [1].

Today, most are social media savvy. People now spend more time on social networking sites than searching for information. Since that is the case, organizations seeking

candidates need to go to where the candidates are. In particular, if an organization is trying to recruit candidates such as recent college graduates, many of them can be found on social networking.

In addition to identifying candidates through social media outlets, organizations are using these resources to screen candidates. They search sites such as LinkedIn and Facebook to find out more about the candidates. However, this can pose many legal risks which are identified below.

Organizations also use social media to brand their organizations and to market themselves to potential candidates. While companies are using social media to find candidates, the candidates are also using it to find out information about their potential employer. This means that organizations should have a well-defined strategy for their social media presence and must determine the most effective way to market themselves online. This can include ensuring that the company's website contains useful information for candidates. Sites such as LinkedIn should be updated to put forth the best image for the company.

Commonly Used Social Media Outlets for Recruitment

LinkedIn is one of the most popular sites for employers to post positions or to search for candidates. According to the 2013 SHRM Survey, 94% of organizations use LinkedIn for recruitment [1] and according to the 2013 Nonprofit Employment Trends Survey, 50% of nonprofits reported using it [2]. Employers can purchase a job posting or the ability to search for candidates with specific skills and experience.

Facebook is one of the more popular social networking sites and many see it as a valuable recruiting resource since many people on Facebook are not on LinkedIn. The caveat is that many candidates may not want to use Facebook for job networking, as they consider it to be more of a personal network.

Twitter is another popular social networking recruiting tool which is free. It is valued for its speed in sharing news of vacancies, particularly if the tweet goes viral. It also provides the ability to search key buzzwords in an industry to find candidates with specialized skills. Many find this a good resource for positions requiring technology backgrounds.

Pinterest has been emerging as a job search resource as well. People are pinning resumes they find appealing and are creating career pin boards. Since people share images they like on Pinterest, many organizations are using this to share information on their company.

Social networking sites no longer just provide venues for posting jobs. Many are adding enhancements, such as the opportunity to brand the employer on the site, promote the employer's job on Facebook, or send targeted emails to groups within those registered. Niche job boards are also growing.

Recruiting firms are also using social media in different ways than in the past. Rather than directly identifying candidates in their own networks, many are using job boards to find candidates to bring into their network. They are also creating greater networking relationships including networks among candidates or Twitter meet ups. Recruiting firms are also showing that they provide a value-added service by providing information to candidates using blogs or sharing employment trends.

Avoiding the Legal Pitfalls

While social media outlets provide valuable resources for recruitment, they can also cause legal concerns if not used wisely. Employers should train hiring managers and others handling recruitment to help avoid these legal pitfalls. They should also develop a social media recruitment strategy.

One of the key problems that arise with the use of social networking for recruitment is the amount of information an employer may obtain. Much of the information an employer can find about a candidate from a social networking site is information about protected characteristics such as religion, gender, race, age, sexual orientation, or disability. Employers that move from using social media for sourcing candidates to using it to screen candidates often find out information about the candidate before actually interviewing them and that information could potentially cause them to eliminate an applicant from consideration.

Another problem arises when an employer does not do enough screening of applicants and ends up getting hit with charges of negligent hiring. If the hired employee commits a crime or act of violence, for instance, the employer could be held liable if it is found

that they should have obtained information from the Internet that may have foreshadowed this behavior.

Issues may also arise if social media outlets do not produce a diverse candidate pool. Most sites do not adequately represent the national job applicant pools so if an organization depends solely on certain social media sites for recruiting, the organization may not obtain a diverse pool of applicants.

Finally, background screening companies have specific requirements under the Fair Credit and Reporting Act (FCRA). Employers must receive permission from applicants before performing pre-employment checks through the screening company and if an employment decision is made based on the information found, the employer has an obligation related to dispute challenges from that candidate.

Final Considerations

A good practice is to reserve social media searches of candidates until after meeting them in an interview. Another good practice is to have someone other than the person making the hiring decision do the social media screening. When screening is done, the screener should only focus on criteria that are directly related to the candidate's potential to perform the job. Companies should also ensure consistency in their practices related to searches so that they are applying the same practices to each candidate. If hiring managers do come across content that causes them to question the candidate's professionalism, they should make a screen shot of the relevant information in case they need to defend their hiring decision. Hiring managers also need to realize that social media contains items posted by a variety of people so they should consider the context of the posting before making a rash decision. It is always a good idea to let candidates know that that your organization will be reviewing public social media sites for additional information on them.

As the social media sites continue to evolve, organizations need to be able to fully utilize them and maximize their recruiting potential. In particular, hiring managers and human resources practitioners/recruiters for nonprofits need to be up-to-date on technology and the social media world so that they can effectively find top talent. Their organizations also need to develop and follow solid social networking recruitment strategies.

References

[2] 2013 Nonprofit Employment Trends Survey; Nonprofit HR

Bates, Steve, Use Social Media Smartly When Hiring: March 19, 2013;
http://www.shrm.org/hrdisciplines/technology/Articles/Pages/Be-Smart-When-Using-Social-Media-For-Hiring.aspx

Berkowitz, Melanie, Esq., Social Media Recruiting: Understanding the Legal Guidelines;
http://hiring.monster.com/hr/hr-best-practices/recruiting-hiring-advice/acquiring-job-candidates/social-media-recruiting-guidelines.aspx

Overman, Stephanie, Social Media Influencing Range of Recruitment Services – Taking Cues from Social Media Trends, Recruitment Firms Diversify Service Offerings: February 5, 2013;
http://www.shrm.org/hrdisciplines/staffingmanagement/Articles/Pages/Social-Media-Influence-on-Recruitment.aspx

Pickett, Rob: Social Media Screening: Navigating the Minefield: May 5, 2011;
http://www.shrm.org/hrdisciplines/technology/Articles/Pages/SocialMediaScreening.aspx

Smith, Allen, Twitter Recruiting Raises Legal Concerns by Allen Smith: February 4, 2010;
http://www.shrm.org/LegalIssues/FederalResources/Pages/TwitterRecruiting.aspx

Warga, Brad, How Social Media Helps Companies Obtain Better Talent: January 4, 2013; http://www.shrm.org/hrdisciplines/technology/Articles/Pages/Social-Media-Recruiting.aspx

[2] Wright, Aliah D., Social Recruiting Goes Viral – Facebook, Pinterest, YouTube, Quora, Twitter Catching on Rapidy as tools to Find Talent: March 12, 2012;
http://www.shrm.org/hrdisciplines/technology/Articles/Pages/SocialRecruitingViral.aspx