

Social Recruitment in HRM

A Theoretical Approach and Empirical Analysis

THE CHANGING CONTEXT OF MANAGING PEOPLE

Series Editor: Emma Parry

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Foreword

Over the past 20 years, we have seen amazing advancements in information and communications technology. From the advent of the Internet to social media and mobile technology, the ways in which we communicate and collaborate with others will never be the same. Today's levels of connectivity mean that we are no longer restricted by time or location in our communications but can instead interact with others from across the globe from anywhere and at any time of day or night. Our social networks have grown exponentially and the shape of the working day has been revolutionized as we can now work (and play) from home, or while on the move. As such, the development of these new communication channels within the digital era has affected virtually everyone regardless of location, age, or social status.

Along with these transitions have come equally dramatic changes to the ways that we attract and recruit new employees into organizations. Recruiters are faced with the need to engage with a workforce that now communicates electronically, is used to having access to large amounts of information at their fingertips and to receiving immediate feedback. Organizations are faced with a new generation of potential employees who not only use different modes of communication and interaction, but also have different expectations of how they want to build relationships with potential employers. Against this backdrop we have seen recruiters forced to develop online resources and to interact with both active and passive job seekers via social media.

It is for these reasons that I am very pleased to launch the series "*The Changing Context of Managing People*" with a book that focuses on social recruiting. The aim of the book series is to examine the ways in which the context in which we are all working and living is changing and how this affects human resource management and the workforce. As series editor, I wanted to develop a series that would help those of us who undertake research, teach or work in human resource management keep up

with how these changes might affect the ways in which we manage people. This text fits squarely into this theme and provides us with an exciting analysis of how new modes of communication are affecting the ways in which employers engage with potential employees.

Emma Parry
Series Editor

Introduction

In an period characterized by the huge growth of social media, it seems natural to wonder what impact the new modes of communication can have in the lives of companies and in particular on the recruitment processes. This will be the main theme of this work, which aims to offer a detailed, though not exhaustive, analysis of the issues posed by the radical transformation of human relationships, offering to managers and scholars some reflections intended to animate the debate on social recruitment.

The starting point of each reflection will be, therefore, the awareness of living in a new model of society, which cannot easily be catalogued into clearly defined canons, because constantly changing. Actually, it is not to persuade companies to accept the use of new communication systems, since the transfer of recruitment procedures in a new space-time dimension is certainly more economical and convenient than the traditional one. Rather, it is necessary to stimulate the attention on the deep cultural change leading awareness about the need to adapt different management approaches; these new strategies will allow companies to overcome the traditionally used categories in order to interpret the new environment, and to catch before the others the evolutionary lines of our society, adapting to it the management strategies.

Therefore, it comes out the need for the companies to properly organize themselves to attract the best “brains”: they are those who are in harmony with new communication systems, those who express their creativity, and who are able to take advantage of new media by applying them to managerial know-how. In order to successfully complete the recruiting process, managers will have to fully understand the new technologies, but also the psychology of the potential candidates, so to prepare more effective ways to present their work place as fascinating and rewarding. On the other hand, job seekers have a profile characterized by complex identity, they speak a digital language,

interact in two worlds, the virtual and the real, they have an incredible number of contacts that allows them to immediately share ideas, opinions, knowledge and experience and, above all, they are able to judge and choose the best job opportunities.

In this setting, HRM is now gradually abandoning traditional forms of recruitment to develop new processes such as social recruiting, able to guarantee a profile of quality collaborators able to face the challenges of Digital Era.

The present work, correlated by a multi-level empirical research, intends to answer the following questions: May a company keep anchored to the old methods of recruitment? What are the risks of a sudden change if not well planned? What is the identikit of a talented candidate? Which are the new managerial policies to be put into being?

Therefore, this book was born from the desire to analyze the role of the social recruitment in the human resources management in the process of creation of a sustainable competitive advantage for the company. The selection of human resources is becoming a precious and unique process because today we live in a period of social change, of environmental complexity, of turbulent markets and systems that transfer companies from real to virtual and from virtual to real, when firms no longer feel the limitation of time and place but the immensity of a reality that has no communication constraints.

In the first chapter we have highlighted the evolution of web-based communication models and how it has contributed to the achievement of an active role for users in the creation and distribution of content (Ozuem, Howell, & Lancaster, 2008), producing a review of the marketing strategies adopted by firms. The two pillars of communication tools are based on the interaction or need to listen to and satisfy the users' desires as well as the participation and encouragement of companies to the creation of new needs.

The nature of these new forms of communication, attributable to Web 2.0 (O'Reilly, 2005), is then: (i) the horizontal dimension, (ii) bi-directionality, (iii) the active participation of users, and (iv) the auto-generation of content.

This chapter, after analyzing the theoretical background of the social media communication, will focus on the trend of use of these instruments, in particular in recruiting activities. It also proposes a particular focus on public sector and no profit sector which, today, through the web, may legitimize their role in the competitive world of work.

In the second chapter, we have analyzed social media and companies, through a comparison among generations.

The new media have brought important changes in social sphere. We have highlighted them through three perspectives: (a) how I.T. has changed the identity of the individual bringing out new virtual identities; (b) the relationship between I.T. and aspects of personality, showing what types of individuals are more likely to use social networks; and (c) the relationship between social media communication and “I” or “We” intention. The chapter also proposes an interpretative model that allows analyzing the relationship between social media communication and the cultural dimensions of countries as emerged from the huge analyzed literature.

In the third chapter, we have focused on Social Media recruitment. In a complex and competitive world of work, such as the present, social tools become important drivers in the process of recruiting, even of those “passive” candidates otherwise difficult to find. Adopting a culture which is oriented to social recruiting means, however, also engaging in building a strong Employer Brand (reputation and external image). In an employer-centered perspective, therefore, companies must interact with potential candidates, should encourage and engage them, offer both symbolic values (style, personality, sociability, affection) and pragmatic ones (report, workplace) and they should act in a relational communicative context. In this chapter, therefore, we are going to analyze marketing management that enhances online communication (with particular reference to the web 2.0) and we will outline both tangible and intangible elements, identified using the Resource Based-view approach, outlining a strategy of Employer Branding to generate an *employer identity* easily recognized by potential candidates.

The use of social recruitment raises a few issues regarding legal matters. Privacy is a right, which must definitely not be invaded, but it is necessary not to emphasize too much this idea, which interferes with the quality of the recruitment process that an organization can offer. Actually, the present laws should be modified in organizations as well as in the administration of social networks. An inappropriate use of Facebook may create serious problems: provocative and inappropriate photos, comments on drinking and use of drugs, negative judgments about the organizations where one has worked in the past or about colleagues, scarce communication capacity, discriminatory comments, sharing of confidential information, inadequate

qualifications, all these elements might have a negative influence (Lorenz, 2009), persuading company's recruiters to choose some workers rather than others.

What is more alarming, however, is not only the legal issue but rather the ethical-moral aspect. Some published information could be the same as "nosing" into other people's lives: if someone does not want to allow other people to get to know specific information, this very same information should not be published. In the long-run, the truth is that even when the users are sure that information on a profile is visible only by some specific users, there is the risk that, because of a simple technical error or a premeditated violation, this information will be published.

In this book we analyze potential ethical-social and legal risks in using social networks, suggesting new forms to limit negative effects.

The empirical research on the use of social recruitment in European countries and in the United States has been carried out in the fourth chapter. To allow a multi-perspective reconstruction of the object under research, our analysis has been divided into several levels, each characterized by a different degree of analysis.

The first level is aimed at the study of the social recruiting use in organizations operating in Europe and in the United States in the private, public, and no profit sector. This research represents an integrated approach to the social recruiting. As a matter of fact, through a perspective of multidisciplinary methodological analysis – which considers sociological and psychological factors in relation to today's technological and cultural evolution experienced by organizations – we have analyzed the degree of diffusion of the social recruitment. Using a multivariate statistical model, it has been shown that the spread of social recruitment in HRM's policies and practices varies among countries and that there is a relationship between the size of a company and the use of social recruitment.

The second level of the research is aimed at understanding what are the drivers of the communication of recruiting strategies, activated through the tools of the social web communication within the contexts being surveyed. The analytical framework is based on an interpretative model for extracting information from the web, processing it through the techniques of text mining and interpreting it. In particular, for processing the extracted data, it uses the logic of quantitative content analysis (Berelson, 1952; Krippendorff, 2012; Weber, 1990). Content analysis is a research technique for the systematic and quantitative description of the

content of communication (Berelson, 1952) and for the measurement of specific variables (Kerlinger, 1986).

Adopting the statistical methodologies of co-occurrence analysis and cluster analysis, some macro-themes have been individuated, which work as drivers of the communication process of social recruiting, as well as the differences and similarities of the channeled messages by Smes, public, and no profit organizations in the European and American country.

A third level of analysis has concerned the web usability of corporate web sites. We have tried to show, through logistic regression, that, for those websites that contain detailed information in terms of Identity-Employer brand, there is a positive correlation with the recruitment, the presence of career opportunities, the presence of information on Facebook. The theme of the relationship between social media and recruitment processes has prompted us to analyze the impact that “virtual information” is having on companies and ways of doing business. This is the topic of the fifth chapter. The increase of web traffic, that has been registered in recent years, is also pouring out on businesses and in particular on the methods of recruitment, requiring them to use new forms of web-based recruitment (Lawrence & Giles, 1999). Many scholars have, in fact, focused their research on how to combine the recruitment process with the world of the web in general and social media in particular (Bohnert & Ross, 2010; Broughton, Foley, Ledermaier, & Cox, 2013; Ellison, 2007; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Parry & Tyson, 2008). In this perspective, the company will operate in compliance with fundamental principles such as transparency (the ability to be accountable to the candidates), responsiveness (ability to respond to the expectations), and compliance (in terms of principles and policies).

With this in mind, the new recruiter will have to be able to operate a balance between inclusiveness (meaning the ability to satisfy the needs and expectations of the candidates), relevance (knowledge of the candidates), completeness (understanding of the aspirations), creating superstructures or contexts in which they develop facilitation procedures.

In an age where there is a “war for talent,” being able to capture the talent becomes a priority for the company. However, if, on the one hand, the talents have distinctive skills, are willing to move geographically and to change to improve their outlook for growth, on the other hand, they are difficult to manage. They claim high salaries, career progression, training, and they often

change company and do not develop any systems to look for new jobs. They constitute, in reality, a high number of passive candidates. Therefore, the new role of the recruiter will be as a seeker, the “modern gold digger.”

Certainly, to do that, it is necessary a change aimed at creating an open culture that knows how to live with the new generations in order to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage.