



# Social Media– Best Practices in Today’s Recruiting Environment



**Recruiting the right person at the right time is not an easy task. It's no wonder why recruiters are always looking for the silver bullet and why every vendor touts their ability to provide the bullet itself!**

The original silver bullet came in the form of applicant tracking systems that promised to streamline the recruiting process, save recruiters time, and provide an abundance of candidates through the company's career site. Although there is great value in properly using an ATS, many recruiters relied exclusively on the candidates that came to them, creating a highly transactional, highly administrative recruiter. In essence, applicant tracking systems did not necessarily produce better hires.

Approaching the idea of sourcing with a one-size-fits-all approach can be suicide for most recruiting/sourcing leaders.

After the ATS began to lose its luster, online job boards promised to be the next solution to every recruiter's needs. Although moderately successful at first, job boards began to create an attitude of "post and pray" with many recruiters and their hiring managers. Corporations now spend millions of dollars annually posting open positions and hoping the right candidate applies. In fact, hiring manager's wonder of their position is being worked on if the position is not posted! Today, many organizations' ATSes are so tightly integrated with these online job boards that it has almost become too hard not to "post and pray." So now that ATSes and job boards have fallen short of their promises, what's next? It seems that the newest catch phrase is social networking!

At last! A goldmine of LinkedIn groups to plunder, MySpace and Facebook profiles to examine (and even vet in advance), Twitter tribes to meet and join. Passive candidates are now available across the Web, collecting in groups and revealing a wealth of information about themselves. Self-proclaimed social media "experts" spring up almost daily, teaching classes on how to find the perfect candidate fast and cheap. Starry-eyed recruiters are again dropping all other methods and focusing on social media as their ultimate sourcing tool.

But of course, there is no silver bullet.

## **Hazards of Relying on Social Media Alone**

Although the technology to support the recruiting process continues to evolve, the basic principles of recruitment have not fundamentally changed in the past 20 years. Technology, if used appropriately, is meant to automate and further enable the recruitment process. Unfortunately, with all of the buzz about social networking, the technology often creates a distraction for the very recruiters it was meant to help.

In its purest form, recruiting contains the same steps of any sales process:

- Identify the prospect
- Build a relationship with the prospect
- Uncover the prospect's needs
- Overcome the prospect's objections
- Fill the prospect's needs
- Advance the sale

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Selling is a personal, emotionally driven process when executed correctly. Of course the use of technology, especially social networking, can advance the recruiting process if used effectively. However, relying on a single tool and focusing on complete automation of the recruiting process will continue to create ineffective, transactional-focused recruiters who will move on to the next silver bullet of recruitment when it is developed – and it will be developed!

With all of the articles, seminars, whitepapers and experts talking about the benefits of social media, let's not forget the hazards of relying on social media alone:

- Focusing on a single tool and inadvertently creating the next "silver bullet"
- Focusing on access to potential candidates, not on engagement
- Replacing personal interaction and relationship-building only with technology – reliance versus enablement
- Breeding recruiters who are focused on the transaction, not the end result
- Not calculating the time spent on social networks as an expense
- Not understanding who is using social media and how
- Not tracking the success of candidate by each tool
- Focusing on the tool itself, not how to leverage it

Recently, the Director of Talent Acquisition and Sourcing Strategy of a Fortune 100 company invited me to visit his team of 30+ sourcing and recruiting professionals dedicated almost exclusively to social media and e-recruitment. As we walked

from cubicle to cubicle chatting about the tools his team used, I realized that the only sound that could be heard was the click of typing – not one real conversation, not one phone call. I asked my host about this and he indicated that almost all communication with potential candidates was made through email, text, Twitter, in-mail, etc due to the number of names his team surfaced daily. As I continued to probe, I found that that the only personal/telephone interaction with a potential candidate was made well after that person expressed interest in a specific opportunity – leaving thousands of potential candidates untouched! So, after spending millions of dollars, what was the cost per hire? Eventually we identified that less than one percent of all hires made in the past 13 months had come from their social media recruiting efforts!

## What Social Media is Good For

Let's be clear: social media is here to stay for the foreseeable future and can be an effective recruitment tool if used properly. It is also important to understand that this same tool can work against your organization. These new media channels can help identify candidates whose skills and interests match those of your organization. The double-edged sword is that these same channels can destroy your organization's brand as an employer of choice. The experience each candidate has with your organization, your recruiters, and the recruiting process can end up spread across dozens of social media channels – the same ones your recruiters use to identify potential candidates.

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If we are going to properly leverage tools such as social media, it is imperative to understand **who** is using these tools and **how** they use them in order to target the right candidate segment. Forrester Research finds that the greatest use of social technology is represented by the following three groups:

- Highly paid professionals (Annual wages in excess of \$100,000),
- The well-educated (Some post-graduate education), and
- New entrants into the workforce.

The real challenge is in understanding how each of these groups uses their medium of choice. Forrester Research further segmented users of social media into six primary categories:

1. **Creators** – Includes 18% of the population that engage in activities such as publishing blogs, maintaining Web pages, or uploading video to sites like YouTube at least once per month. The average age of this group is 39 and users are evenly split between men and women.

2. **Critics** – Includes 25% of the population that engage in commenting on blogs or posting reviews on websites like Amazon.com. The average age of this group is several years older than Creators and is again split evenly between men and women.
3. **Collectors** – Includes 12% of the population that engage in activities such as creating metadata that's shared with the entire Web community: bookmarking. This is the most male-dominated of all groups.
4. **Joiners** – Includes 30% of the population that engage in direct networking sites like MySpace.com, LinkedIn.com and Facebook.com. This is the youngest of all groups, and these individuals are highly likely to engage as Collectors, Critics and Creators.
5. **Spectators** – Includes 48% of the population. They engage in more passive activities such as reading blogs. This is the most female-dominated group.
6. **Inactive** – Includes 44% of the population, have an average age of 50 and are more likely to be women.

Understanding who your target audience is and understanding how they use the vast social media tools is key to developing an effective targeting strategy leveraging these tools.

## Social Media Best Practices

Although there are many social networking opportunities available, for the sake of space we'll focus our attention on the Big Three: LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter.

### LinkedIn



LinkedIn is a professional networking site based on leveraging your network's network to create new relationships. You can build a network quickly by gathering the people you know first-hand and then asking them to introduce you to the people they know, ad infinitum. It offers detailed professional information (in most cases) and flexible searching capabilities. The site allows you to join up to 50 subgroups, many aimed at specific professions.

However, LinkedIn is a business, like any other, and the functionality of their free accounts is diminishing rapidly as they charge up to \$500 per month for premium accounts. The site is also time-consuming if not used properly. It is also important to keep in mind that this is often the #1 networking site used by recruiters today – in other words, you are competing with thousands of recruiters every day for the same candidates!

Recruiting starts by developing relationships, human to human and not email to email



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### When and How to Use LinkedIn:

- To generate organizations/geographies to focus your search on
- To stay in touch with potential candidates
- As a jumping-off point when telephone sourcing
- To track down people who may have changed organizations

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Do NOT use LinkedIn to establish initial contact through electronic means with candidates. Recruiting starts by developing relationships (don't forget about the steps to recruiting listed above), human to human and not email to email. No technological capability can replace the effectiveness of the human voice in the sales process.

### Facebook

Facebook is a personal social networking site with over 300 million members. It is more interactive than most networking sites and provides deeper insights into personal backgrounds. You can join groups and Fan Pages aimed at specific criteria.

However, it is time-consuming to develop a quality network, as you cannot view people's profiles without them accepting you as a "friend"—which they are unlikely to do if they don't already know you. Billed as a social site, not a business site, there is often little relevant professional information given.

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### When and How to Use Facebook:

- If you are focused on a particular niche for of longer period of time and want to establish deeper relationships with candidates.

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Do NOT use Facebook for quick sourcing, or if you are more broadly focused or more transactional in your recruiting process. That won't fly here.



### Twitter

Twitter is a microblogging site where you can "follow" the 140-character updates of people you find interesting. There are also "twibes" (groups), professional and otherwise, to join. The network is now estimated at over 4 million members. The service is simple to use and enables you to "follow" many people at once and, using an application like TweetDeck, even categorize them into groups.

However, it can be time-consuming to establish the right kind of following. Users are often anonymous, using pseudonyms to log on. And thus far, Tweeters are more focused on their personal lives than their professions.

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### When and How to Use Twitter:

- If you have information that is relevant and of high interest to your target audience.
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Just tweeting about what you had for dinner or the color of your suit this morning won't win you any followers in this medium.


### So What Does All of This Mean?

That Fortune 100 recruiting chief, once so convinced that social networking was THE answer reassessed his company's strategy. "Social media is now an arrow in our quiver," he says—"one of many possible weapons in the war for talent. If we are going to out-recruit our competition that has access to the same tools, we need to use all of the tools available to us and have recruiters trained on how to leverage these tools, not rely on them."

Let's not forget the one tool that has been the constant in the evolution of recruiting – the telephone! No matter what new technologies crop up in social media and networking, and many more will, nothing will ever replace the human voice. Successful recruiting is, and always will be, a relational activity.


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