Getting serious about social recruiting (part 1)

By Matthew Gray   15 Apr 2013

Social recruiting brings about a powerful new way of finding hard-to-reach candidates as talent increasingly shifts online.

This concept is commonly understood as building relationships with the right candidates through the most appropriate Internet channels. Using social tools, corporate recruiters can target the right types of talent, build relationships with them, and possibly bring them into an applicant tracking system, adding them to a pipeline of scarce skills. From there, candidates can be managed via ongoing communication, for example, alerts about new jobs matching their skills or invitations to exclusive events aimed at building relationships with scarce talent.

As social media is still such an embryonic field, social recruiting isn't a clearly defined approach or set of tactics. Everyone is approaching it in different ways and trying different things while trying to keep up with this fast-changing, rapidly moving storm cloud of disruptive technology.

An unstoppable force

In the US, recruiters have already widely adopted social technology to make connections, but in Africa our online migration has been slower due to the challenge of access to affordable bandwidth.

Social recruiting is here to stay and it's generally accepted that it will become the norm for corporate recruiting in times to come. World Wide Worx found that by end-August 2012, 5.33-million South Africans were using Facebook on the web, 2.43-million were on Twitter, 1.93-million on LinkedIn and 9.35-million on Mxit. As social media services become more mobile focused, combined with mobile's prevalence in Africa, we are expecting further growth in uptake and use of these services. Official updated statistics are expected soon. (Download the executive summary here.)

In South Africa, companies are generally still scratching the surface of social recruiting. Use tends not to be tied to a greater strategy with job adverts automatically tweeted, posted to a Facebook page, or published on a recruiter's LinkedIn profile. Social recruiting can go far deeper than this, creating the risk that candidates will see the automatic posting of job adverts as spam, which can quickly tarnish potentially valuable relationships.

The time is right for companies to get moving with a long term, well thought-out social recruiting strategy.

How to get started

Before entering the social recruiting space it's important to follow some basic steps to ensure desired results. In our ten-part series on social recruiting we will look into each of the points below to help companies achieve maximum impact with their social recruiting strategies.

• *Step 1: Plan & prepare* - "Failing to plan is planning to fail." Putting time and effort into the planning stage is key, from getting the buy-in of every level of business, to identifying relevant channels for targeted candidates, to hiring qualified social media skills.

• *Step 2: Execute* - After your well thought-out social recruiting strategy is complete you are ready for action. Execution is not the end-point of a recruitment campaign, but rather the starting point of the engagement. You will also need to execute according to your immediate requirements - be it a big bang approach, or a more phased implementation.

• *Step 3: Measure & optimise* - Post execution begins the constant process of measurement and optimisation. Ensure you have some realistic targets to work with as a starting point and take things from there. Tweak campaigns to align them to your goals, and if required, adjust the goal if the initial targets were too idealistic.

Success factors shouldn't be based on the volume of responses. Rather look at conversion rates - how many hires were successfully made through a specific platform versus how much effort was expended in the process. Did your latest LinkedIn targeted in-mail campaign deliver great niche talent? Is your Facebook page suddenly attracting and engaging the right types of graduate talent? Are you noticing a new source of referrals? It's all about optimising efforts, measuring what worked and making adjustments with your next strategic planning to improve the results.

ABOUT MATTHEW GRAY

Matthew Gray is client service director at cloud based e-recruitment company, Graylink. Passionate about the growth of digital and its role in rapidly changing business processes, Matthew has been at the forefront of solutions delivery, driving recruiting process change to Graylink's customer base, since the inception of the business in 2003.
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