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# USING SOCIAL MEDIA FOR RECRUITMENT: THE RISKS AND BENEFITS

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Social media is one of the most accessible ways to connect with an audience. So, using social media for recruiting can be an extremely effective tool. According to research conducted in 2016 by the US Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)<sup>1</sup>, 84% of organisations now recruit on social media compared to just 56% in 2011.

So, it's clear that social media is fast becoming part of employer recruitment strategies. But how efficient is it? And, what are the pros and cons of recruitment via social media?

Based on research by the Acas (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service)<sup>2</sup>, who looked at social media recruitment pros and cons through case studies of organisations like Pets at Home, we've compiled some of the risks and benefits of recruiting through social media.

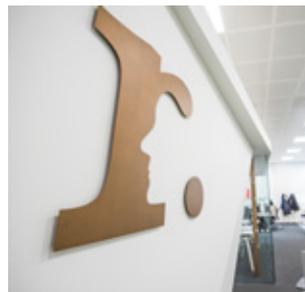
## The Benefits

### Positive brand experience

With potential employees using social media to research companies online, a positive brand experience is vital to being seen as an attractive employer. Candidates want to work for an organisation they've heard of and a name they trust.

Establish a positive brand image and candidates will be more likely to respond to job adverts as well as more open to sharing your content with their network. Ultimately leading to a wider pool of prospective employees.

As part of Acas' research, G4S, a security company who recruit 250,000 staff a year, found social media strengthened their brand image and generated traffic to their corporate career website.



## Target your candidates

When posting jobs on Facebook, LinkedIn or Twitter, you're actively targeting people who are already engaged with and already follow your company. They're more likely to have an understanding of your business and be more enticed to submit an application. You therefore have access to a talent pool, including passive candidates, at relatively little cost.

If you're looking for candidates to fulfill a more niche role, you can use LinkedIn to target industry or skill-specific groups who may be interested in the role, as well as people who are correctly qualified.

Using LinkedIn also means you can gain from their email marketing strategies. Candidates who may be attracted by roles you're offering will get job adverts landing in their inbox without you having to be the one who pressed send..

## Develop your relationships

Trusted relationships are imperative when using social media to recruit. By sharing engaging content, like industry news and trends, you can develop relationships with potential employees before you've even posted a job advert. That way, when it comes to hiring, some of the hard work is already done.

Likewise, cultivating relationships with influencers in the industry offers the possibility to rapidly widen your potential reach. By investing time in finding these influencers, who regularly reshare content and updates from businesses, you could be reaching 20-30 times more people.



# The Risks

## It's time-consuming

The process of reviewing CVs and job applications is notoriously time-consuming. Put your opportunities out there to a significantly wider audience on social media and expect the volume to increase.

Not only that, according to Acas, you can expect the volume of low-quality applications to increase as well. Due to this, their research reported that staff time was the biggest cost associated to using social media for recruiting. Be aware of negative cost implications on staff resource, which can

## It's not all positive

Social media provides a forum for negative comments and feedback, and that's no different when recruiting through social media. Prepare for disgruntled employees, or unhappy customers, to voice their negative opinions.

Ensure you have a strategy to deal with this feedback. Turn any negatives into positives and outline how you will rectify any issues. It's not advisable to simply delete the comments as they'll likely return with even more to say.

## Equality and diversity

Relying on social media for recruitment could unfairly disadvantage those who don't have a social media presence. There are likely to be generational, racial and gender differences in how people have access to or use social networking sites.

Be wary of using social media as your only recruitment tool so you can ensure certain candidates aren't being unfairly eliminated.

## Privacy issues

Although social media can provide a greater insight into an applicant's abilities, we're also being given a window into their private lives, offering us information whether we were looking for it or not.

Using social media as a screening tool is, therefore, a contentious issue as there could be a possibility of breaching privacy and data protection. As such, it's advisable to use social media as part of the initial screening process, but face-to-face interviews and traditional background checks should still be carried out.

## Legal implications

As a relatively new tool for recruiting, social media holds a few blind spots in terms of legal pitfalls. Using social networking sites, it's easy to stumble across information usually protected, such as age, race or gender.

This allows the potential for candidates to argue discrimination if they believe individual biases have affected hiring and screening decisions. Be aware of these challenges when using social media for screening.

# Social Media - A Small Part of A Bigger Whole

Overall, using social media to recruit employees is a useful tool in recruitment. Particularly for strengthening brand image and reaching unique candidates.

But, there are certain risks that could prove damaging if a formal strategy isn't implemented. Therefore, using social media for recruiting is most effective when used as part of a wider recruitment process. With informed decisions, its benefits and successes can go a long way in helping you to win your perfect candidates



### Sources

<sup>1</sup> Maurer, R. 2016. Survey: Employers Using Social Media to Find Passive Candidates. [Online]. [Accessed 2nd December 2016]. Available from: <https://www.shrm.org/ResourcesAndTools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/Pages/Using-Social-Media-Find-Passive-Candidates.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> Acas. 2013. The use of social media in the recruitment process. [Online]. [Accessed 2nd December 2016]. Available from: <http://www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/0/b/The-use-of-social-media-in-the-recruitment-process.pdf>