

Is there a Fit Between Social Networking and Recruitment?

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Social networking site Facebook has gained three million users in the UK since October. It is possible that if you work in a big office, many of your colleagues have started a network and have started to talk about your company. So what impact does this have on recruitment?

Facebook is not confined to the UK alone - it has 30 million users worldwide. There are other sites too - MySpace has 100 million users. With this exposure to a huge marketplace - some employers are enthusiastically joining up and using Facebook as part of their recruitment strategy - Ernst & Young being one. Ernst & Young sponsor their own page so that graduates can drop in and learn more about working for the firm. It also encourages current and potential employees to talk to one another and has 15,788 members from 140 countries.

This exposure can work both ways - if a candidate can find out more about an employer - then the employer can find out more about the candidate if the information is available on the internet. There may be legal dangers in basing recruitment decisions on information found out through a Google search. Although it has yet to be tested in court, if it could be proved that a rejection was based on a "netrep" (internet reputation) rather than something more concrete, it could open organisations up to discrimination claims.

From

what is happening in the US we can see that the future of recruitment is less likely to happen on the high street and more likely to take place on a computer. Companies like IBM, PA Consulting and Sodexo are among the US employers that have taken part in "virtual job fairs" on an online community site, Second Life. Via this site, job seekers create their own personas online, speak to representatives and even attend interviews online.

Resourcing Matters launched its own networking site for graduates back in November 2006. www.1st-step.co.uk was designed in response to the large number of requests for information we received about the job search process. We have a message board where users can ask questions of us and others on the site about any job search situation. In this way, all those taking part in the discussion can learn from each other. At Resourcing Matters we have found that a question one person has - is likely to be shared by many. This is social networking - but with a purpose.

So whether they are being used for advertising vacancies, finding out information or checking out references, social networking sites are making an undeniable impact on the workplace. Whether it is positive or negative is yet to be proved.

Social Networking Facts:

- 20% of firms use social networking sites to research applicants
- 68% use search engines to check candidates
- 70% of London firms block the use of Facebook at work
- 51% of recruiters think social networking poses a challenge to traditional recruitment
- 60% of firms would check a candidate's blog
- 65% of university students are Facebook users
- 523% Facebook's UK membership growth in the past six months

For those looking to maximise their online presence www.1st-step.co.uk/ has a free job board where employers can advertise their vacancies to a graduate audience. Please contact Janet Cowell or Lindsay Hanson at contact@1st-step.co.uk to if you would like to take advantage of this offer.