

GOING BEYOND FACEBOOK AND LINKEDIN: HOW A SOCIAL STRATEGY CAN SAVE RECRUITING

BY ABBY EULER, PRODUCT MARKETING MANAGER, KENEXA[®]

Some of us may remember when recruiting was about pulling names from a Rolodex and dialing a phone—when the classifieds were an effective means of recruitment. Then the job boards came along with hundreds of thousands (and now millions) of pages dedicated to job postings—talk about search engine optimization. Job boards changed the game. And while this was a good thing, due to their popularity, job boards are often cluttered and disregard how to appeal to quality candidates.

Enter social media—simply defined as the creation and exchange of user-generated content that includes email, blogs, IM, Facebook, LinkedIn, photo sharing, dating sites, file sharing and even recruitment technology systems. Social media has changed how we approach everything from life to love to business—so why shouldn't it change recruiting?

For some companies, it has. But for most, it's been a difficult transition. Questions of confidentiality, management, usage, productivity, analytics and ROI all get thrown around as roadblocks. But it's hard to argue against social media when Facebook and LinkedIn collectively have 600 million active users worldwide. This social world is impossible to ignore when analysts like Gartner are predicting that "By 2014, social networking services will replace email as the primary vehicle for interpersonal communications for 20 percent of business users," (Gartner, 2011).

Setting up a company Facebook page or LinkedIn Career Page won't entirely solve the problem of recruiting the right talent. According to the Bureau of U.S. Labor Statistics (Weddle, n.d.), only 16 percent of the actual talent pool is actively seeking a job, which leaves 84 percent of the U.S. population untapped. To reach that 84 percent, we need multiple tools, strategies and people to recruit the right talent.

Too often we focus only on tools that push jobs to the web, automate the application process, launch a Facebook page or career site and expect traffic to come to us. But no amount of search engine optimization and job board placement is going to pull the right amount of quality candidates. Instead, flip your approach and think of yourself as a brand manager. We need to focus on the three key aspects of hiring good people: attraction, connection and recruiting. To feed your talent pipeline, your recruitment technology system and your recruiters must have a way to attract and connect with people, not just find them. This goes beyond Facebook; it's mobile, it's advertising and it's about approaching recruiting with a strategy that rivals that of consumer marketing.

Understanding the tools and tricks that are available to you is crucial in this social world. We'll discuss why this social phenomenon has rocked the recruiting world and how to create a strategy to address it through attraction and connection. You'll learn about consumer online marketing

tactics, why your career site is important and the significance of candidate relationship management. The important thing to remember is that we aren't just going to focus on Facebook and LinkedIn. While they are the behemoths of social media, they are not the only social answer. We'll cover creating multi-faceted approaches to attracting and connecting with the right talent.

IF YOU SELL THE RIGHT MESSAGE, AND PLACE THAT MESSAGE IN THE RIGHT ENVIRONMENT, YOU WILL ATTRACT AND CONNECT WITH THE RIGHT CANDIDATES.

So why is making the transition to building true attraction and connection strategies such a struggle? There are a few reasons. First, the talent acquisition world has focused on recruiting for its entire existence, which makes sense, because to hire, you have to recruit. In response, the industry created recruitment technology systems to automate the process of recruiting, to stay compliant and increase efficiencies. It was an amazing improvement. For the first time ever, workflows and standard job descriptions became a reality. And now assessments, HRIS and even onboarding integrations are available.

But none of these additions addressed candidate attraction—defined as creating awareness of your company in the passive talent pool. Recruitment technology systems, in base design, were meant to do nothing more than automate the hiring process and make it as efficient and compliant as possible. We've added some flair to them since the 1980s like job aggregation, reporting, mobile approvals and posting to social networks, but even with all those improvements, they still can't place recruitment ads, manage a social strategy or set up SEO landing pages.

For the actual recruiting process, we typically employ agencies, create Boolean search strings, use LinkedIn recruiter

accounts, staff internal recruiters, hire an RPO vendor or post to job boards—all necessary tools. But none of these tactics go beyond finding the existing 16 percent of active candidates—some who are qualified and a lot who aren't.

Recruitment technology and recruiting models were inherently created to do one very specific thing—help recruit. But we need to stop expecting that recruitment technology systems will, for example, generate ads or create SEO landing pages—without some drastic changes. We also need to recognize that agencies and recruiters may not be in the business of understanding how to place targeted ads to passive candidates, or maintain a Facebook page. That's why we need to look at how we attract and connect with new talent.

CREATING MULTI-FACETED ONLINE ATTRACTION STRATEGIES

When it comes to talent attraction, it's important to think outside of the box. It's time to start defining target talent audiences and creating an attraction plan around their specific online consumer behaviors. Do they read the paper every morning? Do they check ESPN twice a day? Do they write or contribute to blogs weekly? Do they spend time reading the tech section of CNN news? All this information is attainable at a fee, and if that's outside of your budget, you can do a little internal research. Talk to your top performers and find out what makes them tick. How did they come to your company? How do they stay current with what's going on within their industry? What message would really resonate with them?

This is the same approach that consumer branding uses when trying to attract customers to a product. It's the same approach we need to take as talent management teams. Your company, your jobs and your benefits are products that you need to sell. To do it right takes research, messaging and reallocation of funds currently spent on traditional methods, like job boards. If you sell the right message, and place that message in the right environment, you will attract and connect with the right candidates.

Take for example the famous Google recruitment billboard advertisement (Figure 1). Google is always looking for extremely smart engineers to hire and the company is willing to try creative new methods to attract these individuals. Google placed a single billboard on California's South 101 highway in Silicon Valley. The billboard featured a difficult math equation—the solution to the equation led people to a website with even more equations to solve. After solving the equations, the visitor was asked to apply for a career at Google. Google used a genius marketing effort, with social appeal to attract and connect with its target audience before even recruiting them. Google has said about its strategy, "We've always worked hard to hire the smartest engineers we can find, and we thought this would be a cool way to find a few more," (Google, 2004).

FIGURE 1: THE GOOGLE RECRUITMENT BILLBOARD AD PLACED TO HIRE THE BEST AND BRIGHTEST TALENT



As HR professionals, we have detailed information that can be used to generate our own target audience data at our fingertips. Information about the job you are trying to hire is excellent in creating a target profile—degree needed, salary, experience needed, job title, etc.—all this information helps craft a good picture of the target audience. If you find that your best engineers spend time on wired.com reading up on industry news, this media outlet would then be a great place to find and connect with more engineers. Creating a talent profile then helps guide how, when and where to place recruitment advertising. The benefit for your organization is getting your job opportunities in front of the people you really want to talk to, like Google did. You may get to leave those job boards behind and try something that makes more sense for your target audience.

The amazing thing about the Internet is it allows us to try again quickly even if we fail. In the words of the online analytics guru, Avinash Kaushik, “The cost of taking risk on the web is low. You can try an idea. As soon as it is live, data starts following. You can take dramatic risks, at very low costs and learn big,” (Kaushik, 2009). Be willing to try something new when it comes to recruiting; the best people are out there, you just haven’t cracked the code in attracting them yet. There are multiple tools available in the recruiting world like pay per click advertising, retargeting and contextual targeting. Don’t let the usual suspects of niche job boards be your only choice. Below are some interesting options available for those interested in reallocating budgets to new and interesting options.

Online Display Advertising

All the advertisements you see on websites (the banners and boxes with interactive or static images and text) are called display advertising. Most often, online advertisements are placed on websites via

an ad network, or company who aggregates ad space from its network of various sites. Ad networks are able to use consumer online data to sell ad space that best fits their customers’ advertising needs. Ad networks and websites use strategic insight about their online users so that advertisers can place relevant ads. Below are some of the most popular insights and targeting methods available to us.

- **Behavioral Targeting** uses information collected from an individual’s web-browsing behavior, like previous sites visited and specific content viewed, to build a common audience behavioral profile. In essence, advertisers are able to buy the behavior of the audience.
- **Contextual Targeting** is used to match ads that include keywords or selected topics to sites within a given ad network. Ads are contextually matched to concepts on a page, rather than just simply the individual terms on a page. (Google.com/adwords)
- **Retargeting** uses a pixel to keep track of people who visit a site. Once visitors leave the site, the pixel can, in essence, follow their online path and display an ad to them as they visit other sites. (Adroll.com)
- **Geo-targeting** is the method of determining the general location of a visitor, by zip code or IP address, and serving ads that are relevant to that visitor’s physical location. Geo-targeting is especially helpful if a company is not willing to pay relocation fees and wants to only recruit within a local area.

With such targeted tools, finding the right match to a job becomes infinitely easier and more cost effective—no more post and pray. And with the creation of companies like Spongecell (an interactive ad hosting service), ads can be created that are social in nature, allowing a candidate to share or email the content of a viewed ad right from the website the ad was served on. Figure 2 shows examples of Spongecell hosted ads for a recent engineering campaign developed and managed by Kenexa[®]. The ads were placed on sites through an ad network based on behavioral, contextual, retargeting and geo-targeting methods. The three week campaign generated almost 5,000 clicks to Chrysler’s engineering microsite.

FIGURE 2: EXAMPLES OF SPONGECCELL HOSTED ADS FOR A RECENT ENGINEERING CAMPAIGN DEVELOPED AND MANAGED BY KENEXA



Pay Per Click on Facebook and LinkedIn

Remember the 600 million users on Facebook and LinkedIn discussed earlier? Well, you can place advertisements in front of them. Based on the amount of profile data on both networking sites, you can create targeted recruitment ads within Facebook and LinkedIn. You can select who you want your ad to be seen by location, interests, skills, education, gender, age, etc. After uploading an image, entering some text, supplying your website link and setting a budget, your ad is ready to run. The brilliant part is you only pay when someone clicks on your ad. Make sure that you log in daily to check the analytics so you can optimize the ads to perform at their very best.

Search Engine Marketing

Search engine marketing is a form of Internet marketing that seeks to promote websites by increasing their visibility in search engine results through the use of paid placement, contextual advertising, social media marketing and search engine optimization.

But did you know that search engine optimization can only take you so far? There are two key components to SEO—clean code and relevant content. “The goal is to be relevant to the user—and then think about search engine strategy,” said Chris Koller, president of IdealGrowth, a digital advertising agency in Dallas (Cited in Wood, 2011). Focus on building a great career and mobile site, and optimize them based on popular search terms. Then, when it comes to content in your recruitment technology system, build SEO landing pages to help increase visibility of specific jobs in your system. But don't expect that those pages will slay the beasts that are CareerBuilder and Monster. Remember, SEO is only one cog in the search engine marketing machine.

These tactical options discussed open up your recruiting machine to untapped

target audiences. They are highly targeted, cost effective and quickly deployed. If you are worried about drumming up the funds to pay for a new recruitment campaign, think about running a recruitment marketing assessment or audit to evaluate what investments are returning talent and at what costs. Understanding what is and isn't working can help repurpose funds that allow you to try new recruitment strategies.

ONCE YOU HAVE ATTRACTED THE RIGHT CANDIDATES, IT'S IMPORTANT TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH THEM.

BUILDING A CANDIDATE CONNECTION

Once you have attracted the right candidates, it's important to build relationships with them, especially when it comes to the Millennial generation (ages 16 to 29). Millennials are classified as “corporate skeptics” and want to feel like they are dealing with a personal or niche brand, even if you are a large corporation (Lyon, 2010). Being able to personally, but efficiently, handle the connection and stewardship process of recruiting is paramount.

Candidate Relationship Management

There are multiple resources that allow you to manage candidate relationships and search for talent at the same time. Some candidate relationship management tools even have the capability of integrating with your recruitment technology system and social network accounts, allowing you to connect with candidates all from one dashboard. With CRM tools, the input of key word search criteria will allow you to scrape the web for relevant talent profiles.

Once you have a talent slate, your recruiters can begin building relationships through email campaigns, direct mail and even text messaging. The important part is to create a strategy around how and when you interact with that talent pool. For example, when interfacing with a student candidate slate, start by wishing them success during finals week, or sending a Happy Holidays message before reaching out with specific job offers. Crafting a strategy for dealing with newly sourced talent is vital in building your employment brand and ensuring that candidates remain interested—even when you are not recruiting.

Connecting with your Career Site

When candidates visit your career site and start the application process, they are increasingly expecting a social experience. They may want to browse jobs, share jobs on your site with friends on their social networks, tweet jobs to their network or establish RSS feeds for your jobs. They may want to identify people in their network who work at your organization and connect with them. This can benefit both the candidate and the organization by allowing both to gauge cultural and skills fit.

When candidates reach the application stage, they want the process to be as straightforward and fast as possible. They may wish to use their social network profile to streamline the application process. Being able to allow candidates to learn, share and converse on your career site and within your recruitment technology system makes the potential of converting them to an applicant that much higher.

MANAGING A SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

There is only one hard and fast rule to managing a social media strategy, whether you're in consumer advertising or HR—you have to start with a goal in mind. Brian Solis, a principal of Altimeter Group, a leading research-based advisory firm, puts it best, "Today, a notable number of businesses are approaching branded social channels from a 'ready, fire, aim' approach. This method conjures a façade of achievement when in fact, any progress, if at all recognized, is short term and shoddy at best," (Solis, 2011). Understanding how your HR and recruiting team fits into the framework of your overall corporate social strategy is critical to your team's success.

Make sure that your marketing team knows and understands what you are trying to accomplish on social networks where they may already have a presence. The best approach is to have a target audience, mission, content strategy and staff in place before you even set up a Facebook page or YouTube channel. Social media strategy and management takes commitment and planning. Those employment brands that excel with social networks are the ones that post more than job opportunities. They create a sense of culture with career fair updates, pictures of company events, polls, recent awards, employee quotes and always respond to questions with a 24-hour period.

Putting it all Together

Your recruiting strategy should be an integrated partnership between strategy and tools. There is no silver bullet or secret sauce. However, if you broaden your approach and your definition of recruiting, attraction and connection, the goal of finding the right talent becomes increasingly attainable. Try creating a multi-faceted approach to talent attraction using target audiences and ads. Create a robust strategy to connect with talent on your CRM tool, social network, career site or recruitment technology system. Be willing to change and try new tactics, even if it means starting small. There are

countless ways to approach a truly social strategy for recruitment—when done right, they yield great results that can actually prove ROI. Let social media, social sourcing and social recruiting change how your team finds, attracts and connects with the next great employee for your company. ■

About the Author

Abby Euler

Abby Euler serves as a Product Marketing Manager for Kenexa's Social Solutions. Her primary focus is to understand market trends in social media and translate how those trends apply to the recruitment space for Kenexa's products and services. She has a passion for uncovering and understanding how to connect talent and companies with the newest social trends. With more than eight years of experience in branding, creative and social media, Ms. Euler continues to pursue research to uncover the most interesting trends in social media and marketing that apply to recruiting the very best talent. She has spent her career focused on creating and implementing strategic advertising and marketing campaigns for clients. While she started her career in advertising, she took her knowledge of consumer marketing practices and applied it to attracting top talent for organizations, spending four years building Kenexa's Employment Branding practice. Ms. Euler holds a Bachelor of Science in Journalism from the University of Kansas.

www.kenexa.com
866.391.9557

REFERENCES

- Adroll (n.d.). Retargeting Increasing Conversions. Retrieved July 5, 2011 from <http://www.adroll.com/products/retargeting>
- Google (July 12, 2004). Warning, we brake for number theory. [Web log comment]. Retrieved June 10, 2011 from <http://googleblog.blogspot.com/2004/07/warning-we-brake-for-number-theory.html>
- Google (n.d.). What is contextual targeting? Retrieved June 28, 2011 from <http://adwords.google.com/support/aw/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=91765>
- Kallas, P. (n.d.). Gartner: Social Software is an Enterprise Reality. Retrieved June 6, 2011 from <http://www.dreamgrow.com/gartner-social-software-is-an-enterprise-reality/>
- Kaushik, A. (July 27, 2009). This I Believe [A Manifesto for web Marketers & Analysts]. [Web log post]. Retrieved June 28, 2011 from <http://www.kaushik.net/avinash/manifesto-web-marketers-analysts/>
- Lyon, E. (February 23, 2010). Examining Generation Z: Stats, Demographics, Segments, Predictions. Retrieved June 28, 2011 from <http://sparxoo.com/2010/02/23/examining-generation-z-stats-demographics-segments-predictions/>
- Solis, B. (April 28, 2011) 14 Best Practices for Long-Term Social Media Success. Retrieved June 26 from <http://mashable.com/2011/04/28/14-best-practices-for-long-term-social-media-success/>
- Weddle, P (n.d.). The Art of Social Recruiting. Retrieved June 8, 2011 from <http://www.hcareers.com/us/resourcecenter/tabid/306/articleid/878/default.aspx>
- Wood, L. (June 1, 2011). Beware the dark side of SEO. Retrieved June 8 from <http://www.computerworlduk.com/advice/it-business/3283431/beware-the-dark-side-of-seo/>